



HUMAN, TECHNOLOGIES AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION

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CILVĒKS, TEHNOLOĢIJAS UN IZGLĪTĪBAS KVALITĀTE

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Preface

Every year, the University of Latvia (UL) organizes scientific conferences to discuss current scientific trends, and work at the conference is organized in 12 scientific directions¹. In 2019, the 77th conference took place, where one of the scientific directions was “Humans, Technologies and the Quality of Education”, in which specialists in education, psychology, art and languages presented their research in various areas of innovations and challenges in different educational dimensions²: the vertical dimension ranged from preschool to higher education, while in the horizontal dimension they discussed issues of human development, including ideas about how to support learning outcomes, how to support moral development, and how to ensure an inclusive society. The participants also discussed issues of creativity and provided ideas on how to analyze educational and artistic materials. At the moment, educational systems all around the globe are going through huge reforms, and this is the also case for Latvia, where utterances like “education is in crisis” and “urgent reforms are needed” brought to the stage topics about the role of reforms in education and about how to deal with ongoing reforms, which are becoming a trend in education.

There are 15 chapters included in this volume, and they are arranged as follows:

Iveta Kēstere, in her chapter *Crises and Reforms in Education: Historical Perspective from Latvia*, analyzes topical problems arising in the context of education reforms. The study focuses on such issues as crisis and “crisis rhetoric”, reforms as a product of crisis, and the main actors of crises and reforms.

Manuel Joaquín Fernández González introduces the concept of relational-self-of-virtue – the personal deep disposition to virtue growth in communities of virtue – in his chapter *Relational-self-of-virtue: Classical, Modern and Christian Perspectives in Moral Education*. This expanded concept enlarges the theoretical foundations of an educational model for developing youngsters’ relational-self-of-virtue, which contributes to avoiding fragmentary moral education and to enhancing its effectiveness and sustainability.

¹ <https://events.lu.lv/77-zinatniska-konference>

² <https://events.lu.lv/77-zinatniska-konference/form?section=4&sub-section=106>

In her chapter *Managing Vocational Education to Facilitate the Employability of Graduates*, Anita Lice tries to find out which aspects of vocational education management processes in Latvia are implemented successfully and which require improvements. The results provide an overview of the current challenges in vocational education in Latvia and allow teachers to plan improvements to facilitate the employability of their graduates.

Kaspars Kiris, in his chapter *Excellence Centers of Education in Latvia*, explains the principles of promoting excellence in Latvia and gives recommendations on how to develop balanced excellence at the level of secondary education to ensure a united policy of excellence.

In the next chapter, *Incident Reporting in the Educational Sector in Latvia*, Antonina Jemeljanenko and Lubova Mackevica analyze the practice of incident reporting in other sectors, where it is successfully used, and establish the applicability of these methods to the education sector. Recommendations on how to effectively apply incident reporting to the daily routine in education management are provided as well.

Elena N. Letiagina, Julia A. Grinevich and Alexander V. Gutko, in their chapter *Ways to Improve the Competitiveness of Higher Education Programs*, analyze the possibilities of increasing the competitiveness of higher education programs implemented by universities. Particular attention is given to the factors and measures in the framework of internationalization that directly affect the competitiveness of educational programs.

Yan Lu, in the chapter *Investigation of Latvian Language Program Management Models in Major Worldwide Universities*, provides a data analysis on a comparison of the key factors in the six case studies and presents three main management models, which offered good examples for teaching the Latvian language in China.

Austra Celmiņa-Ķeirāne used the key principles of the contextual and iconological methods in her chapter *The Character of the Fairy Tale Devil in the Graphics of Latvian Books: The First Half of the 20th Century*, where the works of Latvian artists are analyzed with regard to illustrations in folklore stories or individual fairy tales and how they represent the stylistic diversity of books from the first half of the 20th century, the gradual emergence of national art features and the development of the iconography of the frequently appearing character of the mythical devil.

Ilze Kadiķe, in her study *The Variety of Visual Means of Expression in the Creative Work of Students*, focuses on a quantitative analysis of the means of artistic and visual expression that students have observed and listed as present in certain works of art. The ability to use the acquired knowledge in their own creative assignments is also analyzed.

Māra Urdziņa-Deruma, Mārīte Kokina-Lilo and Gunta Treimane, in their chapter *The Quality of Home Economics and Technologies. Opinions of Home Economics and Technologies Teachers*, explore the opinions of Latvian home economics and technologies teachers on learning and teaching different material in general education schools, find out what teachers understand as a high quality learning and teaching process, and compare it to public opinion.

Jolanta Zastavnaja explores and analyzes the development of transversal skills in English language textbooks and considers the possibilities of evaluating such textbooks in terms of transversal skills in *Analysis of Foreign Language Textbooks in Terms of Transversal Skills*.

Mārtiņš Geida, in the chapter *A Game for Self-Discovery in a Career-Choice Discourse for Adolescents*, examines the use of the didactic game for self-discovery in a career choice discourse for adolescents in order to develop and practically appraise the didactic game for the promotion of adolescent self-discovery.

In *Dynamics of Students' Psychological and Emotional States in Dance Movement Training*, Alexander V. Gutko, Elena N. Letiagina, Elena A. Orlova, Olga V. Suvorova and Larisa N. Kuzminykh present a study of the dynamics of students' psychological and emotional states in the implementation of the authors' program of dance movement training. The effectiveness of the training was monitored by evaluating the participants' types of psychological problems and their emotional and functional states.

Rihards Parandjuks and Ilvis Ābelkalns, in their chapter *Importance of Dual Career in the Development of Sports Schools in Vidzeme Region*, analyze the situation regarding the development of dual education in sports schools in the region of Vidzeme.

The final chapter, *Access to Interest-Related Education in Latvia for Children and Young People: The Parents' Perspective* by Dita Nīmanīte and Nellija Repina, seeks to find out the parents' perspective on children's and youth access to interest-related education and whether all children enrolled in all interest-related education programs.

I am very grateful to all the authors who put their efforts into the preparation of their chapters and the members of the scientific committee who ensured the quality of the conference presentations and of the papers subsequently submitted to the proceedings. All the chapters included in this book were double-blind peer-reviewed.

I hope that the book will contribute to the field and open up new lines of research, new ideas, and new concepts to be presented and discussed at upcoming conferences.

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CRISES AND REFORMS IN EDUCATION: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE FROM LATVIA

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ABSTRACT

Using cases of the past, the article aims at analysing topical problems arising in the context of education reforms. The study focuses on such issues as crisis and “crisis rhetoric”, reforms as a product of crisis, and main actors of crises and reforms. In the first part of the article, three cases of the 20th century crises and reforms are used to explain what is considered a crisis and why the announcement of the educational crisis in public space is so permanently attractive. The second part of the article focuses on common features of the 20th century reforms, namely, calls for moving school closer to life and for activating the learning process, as well as the role of social movements and political support in education reforms. The article looks at the divergent interests of reformers and consumers of education, the discrepancy leading to failure of reforms and forcing again and again to return to the tasks that have already been addressed by previous generations of reformers. The third part characterises reformers’ and “ordinary” teachers’ stance in relation to reforms and explains why reformers are interested and teachers are cautious. In conclusion, crises and reforms are acknowledged as an inevitable and cyclical part of the educational process, for in the field of education, all actors – reformers, education consumers (students and their parents), employers and teachers – play by their own rules and pursue their own agendas. So, to reconcile their interests is a laudable but utopian project. However, reforms also have their positive side – they activate school practices, expand teacher cooperation and raise public debate over education issues.

Keywords: crisis of education, education reform, education policy, history of education.

Introduction

The crisis in education has been reigning for 5000 years. Since the emergence of schools in the third millennium BC, society has been constantly dissatisfied with the curriculum, forms and methods of teaching

and teachers themselves. In their turn, teachers have been dissatisfied with students and their parents, and their pay. Long history tells a lot (Apple, 2015, 10). Sources list innumerable examples of the worst situation that had ever happened so that the education system was ready to collapse right there and then. For example, Johann Jacob Harder (1734–1775), the rector of Riga Charles Lyceum, complains that there are many indifferent among youngsters, for whom school is of secondary importance, those who think about other things during the lesson, who do not do their homework and have read close to no books beyond required reading. Instead, they are interested only in outings, promenades, parties and theatres. Reprimanded by the teacher, they become resentful and even more negligent of their school duties. There happen parents who tell their children that it is no worth studying much: with enough money and goods, one can always get ahead in life, so they have to sit at school so far that there is nothing else yet to do (quoted from Johansons, 1975, 155). Thus, in the distant 18th century, neither students nor their parents pleased teachers, and there was no shortage of problems in school.

Crisis announcements are heard in modern Latvian education space too: in newspapers published after Latvia regained its independence in 1991, a crisis in education or at some of education level is declared every year. For instance, in 1995, the article “Is it Only the Education Crisis?” (Seleckis, 1995); in 2000, “The Crisis in Education Threatens the Whole Country’s Future” (Gintere, 2000); in 2007, “School in the Centre of the Crisis” (Vēbers, 2007).

Regularly diagnosed crises as well as the current education reform ‘School 2030’ (*Skola 2030*) in Latvia gave me impetus to focus on the permanent appeal of crises and reforms, the attractiveness evident in historical discourse. In the following text, three cases of the 20th century crises and reforms which have affected education in Latvia are studied to address three issues, namely: 1) crisis and “crisis rhetoric”; 2) reforms as products of crises; 3) actors of crises and reforms.

Crises. Three 20th Century Cases

First of all, why in education crisis announcement is so popular.

Ethan Hutt has conveyed a US magazine analysis and his results are telling: since 1910, the use of the word ‘crisis’ has grown eightfold, becoming a permanently used lexeme in educational periodicals (Hutt, 2016). Heinz-Elmar Tenorth joins Hutt writing that “the rhetoric of crisis in pedagogy has become classic” (Tenort, 1999, 442).

The term ‘normal crisis’ has been introduced in the public space and a typology of crises, e.g. ‘Teacher Competence Crisis’, ‘Equal Opportunity

Crisis', 'Moral Authority Crisis', 'Value Crisis', 'Upbringing Crisis', has been created (Hutt, 2016). Scholars discuss scientific, publicity and private discourses of crises (Hemetsberger, 2018, 101). Crisis is a notion, concept, event. Paraphrasing Michael W. Apple (2015, 10), the word 'crisis' is used so widely that it loses any sense, it turns rhetorical, and no one is sure about its meaning anymore. Crisis rhetoric, however, does not lose its vitality.

Crisis appeal has various causes:

- 1) Crisis "opens" the future. It raises questions and forces to search for answers in assessing visions of future (Hemetsberger, 2018, 102). Everybody is ready to give their opinion about the future of education; it is "everybody's business" (Tyack, Cuban, 2003, 6), for all went to school and therefore they are certain of their expertise in education issues.
- 2) Crisis gives the incentive to work – it grounds, legitimises and justifies changes. Crisis can be used to justify mistakes in reforms.
- 3) Crisis allows an individual or a group to become a saviour or at least to look like one. The possibility of drama makes crisis especially attractive (Hemetsberger, 2018, 107). Pessimists always look wiser than optimists. Heralds of crisis leave the impression that they have some special knowledge and it, of course, makes them particularly smart and important in the eyes of general public. That is why crisis is often announced by politicians, education experts, mass media and community enthusiasts.

Further, using three cases of the 20th century, I will disclose mechanics, problems, and some lessons of crises and subsequent reforms, if of course we accept that it is possible to learn from history.

The first crisis and education reforms. The end of the 19th – the first third of the 20th century. "Old" school versus "New" school. In the end of the 19th century, not only politicians and professional pedagogues insisted on changes in education, general public demanded change too. The press did not only call for reforms, it called for a revolution. Society banded together against the "old" school with its physical and psychological violence and concomitant suicides of pupils. The latter had reached an all-time high level in Germany: in 14 years 165 children younger than 15 years old committed suicide in Berlin schools (Sheibe, 1999, 68). School were accused of ignoring the child's personality, suppressing freedom, naturalness and vitality, and of disconnectedness of learning from real life. School was given such names as "School of Books and Teachers", "Factory", "Drilling School", "Museum of Dead Treasures", "Squeezing School", "School of Punishment" (Sheibe, 1999, 75). Latvian pedagogues joined their western European colleagues: "The "old" school asked from the pupils

just to sit in the classroom, listen, learn and allow himself to be guided by the teacher” (Soste, 1920, 193).

In the public space of educational journal and conferences, ideas of school reforms flared up every minute. There appeared Dewey’s *Laboratory School* in Chicago, Montessori’s *Children’s House* in Rome, Decroly’s *Hermitage School* of learning for life through life (“Let the child prepare for life by living”) in Brussel, *Arbeitschule* in Hamburg and countless other education practices and theories around the world. In Latvia, the role Finland plays today was performed by Germany. Latvians were not shy – they went to study in Belgium under Ovide Decroly, invited to Riga Hugo Gaudig from Germany (Zigmunde, 2010). Latvia was inspired by the very best examples of the New School/*Reformpädagogik*. By the mid-1930s, the initiative of the Latvian Teachers’ Union brought a broad teacher-experimenter movement in operation, with its main task to step up school teaching and related search for new methods, including the introduction of *Arbeitschule* (Marsone, Ķestere, 2010). In *Arbeitschule* work, research, quest, study, defining problems and search for their solution were not conducted individually but in a close community with others (Dauge, 1922).

The second crisis and education reforms. The end of the 1950s – mid 1960s. ‘Sputnik-1’. In the history of Latvian education this crisis is the least researched despite its direct impact on the generation of current decision makers.

In October 1957, the USSR launched the artificial satellite Sputnik-1 into the Earth’s orbit and declared it the victory of the socialist society over capitalists. It caused shock and even panic on the other side of the Iron Curtain (Hemetsberger, 2018, 107). A so-to-say surprising conclusion was made, and it was that Sputnik was a proof of the superiority of the Soviet education system. Therefore, there was an urgent need to change education in Western democracies. In 1957 a US Admiral Hyman G. Rickover declared that “Education is our first line of defence – make it strong”. The slogans called: “Let’s win against Russians in educational competition!” (Hemetsberger, 2018, 106, 108). Western education moved to visible standardisation, centralisation and scientification of curriculum (Tröhler, 2014, 14, 19). During the time, there saw the light OECD-funded comparative education statistics accompanied by “specific ideologies how society and its citizens should be shaped.” (Tröhler, 2014, 17). Education became an important indicator of country development and its strategy of economic growth.

A nearly identical ideology governed Khrushchev’s Educational Reform in 1958–59, when Latvia was part of the Soviet Union. Censured by the Communist Party, mass media could only mildly criticise the situation in education, for example, writing that “teachers, parents and society have

to admit that there are serious shortcomings in school work” (Vītiņa, 1958). It prepared the ground for the export of the education reform developed in Moscow to Soviet Latvia. As in the West, the public space was full of slogans with a military colouring: capitalism may be overcome in a “peaceful struggle” through the economic superiority of socialism (increasing automation and productivity). Thus, schools should be brought closer to life, which, of course, would prepare the working force for national economic development. Within the reform science and crafts classrooms were well equipped, boarding and special schools for talented children, and particularly in mathematics and the arts, were open (Coumel, 2009, Arsenjev..., 1988, 66–79). By the way, the phrase about the need to connect school to life has not disappeared from Latvian media in any of the following decades, thus, demonstrating the permanent topicality of the issue.

The third crisis and education reforms. The end of 1980s – mid-1990s. Market-oriented education. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the USSR. Overnight the collapse of the Soviet Union put a large part of Europe, including Latvia, in transit between command and market economy: “In the unprecedented circumstances of introducing a market economy in the ruins of a non-market economy, there were no precedents to indicate what should be done and how” (Rose, 2009, 17). In the confused post-Soviet society, everyone was looking for a new life model. There began experimentation in all spheres of life. The crisis of the centralised system of education and Moscow-periphery relations was aggravated by an ideological crisis. However, at the “bottom” of education, or in school practice, there was no time for idle talk – in schools, children were waiting to be educated there and then. The school routine quickly turned to what could be described as ‘Europeanisation’, ‘democratisation’, and ‘market-oriented education’ (Chankseliani, Silova, 2018). The pedagogical press reported about the search for new forms and methods of learning, introduction of the latest developments in psychology, opening of non-traditional schools and, as always, called for school to be linked to real-life needs (Kestere, 2010).

This brief crisis-reform overview allows to answer the question what exactly a crisis or “disaster in education” as Hemetsberger calls it (2018, 101) is. The short and simple answer is as follows: if there is indeed a crisis, there is no time to theorize about it, it is the time to act. The term ‘crisis’ appeared in medicine, where it was used to mark “that moment when death or recovery hangs in the balance” (Rikowski, 2017, 10). A “catastrophe in education” or crisis may be compared with a car accident when there is no time to analyse the situation but there is an urgent need to rescue its victims. In the time of salvation or reform, everyone is short

of time (Hemetsberger, 2018, 101). Though if there is enough time for long discussions about reforms, there is no crisis, it is a “false alarm” or a “camouflage crisis”, as Glenn Rikowski calls it (2017, 28).

Reforms and Some of Their Lessons

Reforming education is crisis rescue. That is why every crisis produces reforms. The aim of reforms is with effective and inconvenient methods to change the useless present (Hemetsberger, 2018, 101). All reformers share the common belief that if we change the curriculum and system, expand access to education and differentiate outcomes, society will lead a better life and every individual will have better opportunities (Labaree, 2012, 144).

However, reformers need a credibility mandate, and therefore they have to convince the public that their plan is at least good if not the best. In other words, an education reform should be sold. One option is to declare all opponents of the reform back numbers, and to hide the opposition as far as possible from the public eye (Terhart, 2013, 488) or at least marginalise it. Another option is to inveigle with the new, because the word ‘new’ itself has special power. Nicholas Burbules argues that education has constant fascination with the “new.” He argues that in the educational market, promising that the “new” will definitely be better than the “old” works well, for the new is “exciting” and “cool” (Burbules, 2016, 9). Similarly, rapid innovations as a way out were offered in each of the three education crisis-reform cases examined above.

While each of the described cases is unique, they share a number of common attitudes that have to lead the community towards a happy future of education:

- 1) Studies have to be linked to real life. School should give skills required by the contemporary political, social and economic model of the society.
- 2) Learning process should be active. The environment is a learning tool. The boundaries of the subjects should be crossed. When learning, students should collaborate.
- 3) School should develop the child’s individual abilities and talents.

Here I do not want to decent into banality saying that all has already taken place at some point in history (though, in fact, all has already taken place). A much more interesting question would be why in 50 or 100 years education reformers have to come back to the same tasks which were brought to life by previous generations of reformers. Why again and again we have to admit that school curriculum is cut off from real life? Why it is again actual to cross disciplinary boundaries, the approach called ‘United

Learning' in Latvia in the 1920s and 30s, the 'Complex Method' in English, and the 'interdisciplinarity' in Soviet pedagogy? The argument that in each epoch "linking school to life" is understood differently will not be valid here. It is obvious that education keeps returning to easy-to-count knowledge and separated subjects. It can be said that, despite the efforts of reformers, the system of education elegantly continues to live its own life (Labaree, 2012, 155) – to do a good job, namely, teaching children.

David F. Labaree explains the failure of reforms very pragmatically – education is driven by evaluation (Labaree, 2012). Peter Abbs holds an even harsher view of education space: "In this grey institutional world of delivery and assessment..." (Abbs, 2003, 59). School is controlled by market and not by politicians and/or reformers. Whatever teachers might do in the learning process, it is ultimately reduced to assessment, namely, a diploma and a degree (Labaree, 2012). The conception of good education keeps changing, but the diploma remains a fundamental value. The diploma "normalises" institutions and careers (Apple, 2015, 3, 10). Before yesterday's pupils are given possibility to demonstrate their sustainable knowledge and diverse competences, first they are required to show their diplomas.

Here is an apparent contradiction between what education reformers and education consumers – students and their parents – want. Education reformers look at education as a solution to social problems and try to change the system, however consumers seek their individual good in education. With the help of education, consumers solve their own problems and not those of society. Consumers of education do not want to change school, they just want receive education converted in grades, degrees, certificates and to move on (Labaree, 2012, 145, 149). Labaree argues that pupils manoeuvre through school playing the game "how to succeed in school without really learning". He admits that this is not a bad thing, as students learn how to pursue their personal interests in an organized environment, and this is certainly useful in their future life. So, the primary goal of most pupils and their parents in the field of education is to obtain a diploma/degree ("hard currency of education") that opens the door to a good job and hence a comfortable life (Labaree, 2012, 147, 150). (At this point it is appropriate to reread Harder's characterisation of 18th-century students and their parents quoted at the beginning of this article.)

Employers also want to see clearly listed educational achievements, that is a diploma. Of course, with the advent of new technologies in our lives, the importance of diplomas and degrees seems to have diminished. Nonetheless, the lack of a diploma undoubtedly reduces opportunities in the labour market, and only a handful have become millionaires without a collage degree/high school diploma – even the biggest opponents of the

“degree” have scrubbed up only a hundred, which is nothing against such an impressive number of millionaires and billionaires worldwide.

Well-paid posts in the European Union institutions open to EU citizens, including those from Latvia, testify to the importance of a diploma (so far). To apply for a vacancy, the starting point is a master’s degree. No matter where it is obtained, even if it was received in a Soviet university. No need in reassuring that Soviet education is highly valued in Europe – it is not. The employer simply needs proof that the person has been purposeful and patient enough to spend a certain amount of time in an institutionalized educational setting and obtain a diploma/degree as a result. The rest is up to an employer, and in the case of competitions for seats in European institutions, they are tough, and they are won and lost by people with Soviet and Western diplomas. The important thing is that without a diploma no one can even apply for such competitions.

Another reason for the failure of reforms is smouldering nostalgia of the public for the “peaceful” past, which acquires an aura of particular attractiveness in the troubled times of reforms. As reforms move forward, the murmurings that “things were better in the past” are increasingly heard in the public space. It is testified by research carried out among teachers, for example, on the rating of the Soviet school today. Although respondents mention the ideologization of education, they mostly have positive memories that there were order and discipline in the school, pupils obtained thorough knowledge and that was good (Kestere, Lāce, 2004).

Thus, sooner or later, instead of reformers, education starts been led by its consumers (Labaree, 2012, 157). Reformers come and go, but consumers of education with their own needs remain. And school comes back to its comfort zone.

Apart from reforms of content and forms of studies, there are other aspects that unite all of the crisis-reform cases described above and made the reforms real.

The three education reforms of the 20th century were not limited to education. They were part of reorganisation of society as a whole, in which various social groups enthusiastically took part. School can be changed only when the whole society is ready for changes (Labaree, 2012, 154). In the beginning of the 20th century, Latvia saw growing activity of the movement for women’s emancipation and various societies of non-formal learning. The enthusiasm for the formation of the national school also prevailed after the establishment of the Latvian state in 1918. The 1960s were characterised by Khrushchev’s “thaw” that brought revitalisation and flowering of culture and gave the Iron Curtain a little lift. In the 1990s the liberation from the Soviet dictatorship dismantled the whole system of public life. Thus, listening to the ideas of current reformers, it is logical to

ask what other social forces are participating in education reforms? Who else except reformers themselves are interested in reforming education? Who for are the initiated reforms?

Behind all three 20th century education reforms in Latvia there were specific political forces. It is important. Public disposition increases or destroys the career capital of a politician, and, taking responsibility for reforms, the political force is interested and responsible for their success. Behind the reforms of the 1920s-30s reforms, there stood left movements, the Communist Party stood behind Khrushchev's reform, and the People's Front and the political party Latvian Way were behind the reforms of the 1990s. Then the next important question to start a broad education reform is what political force is/will be accountable for it? Who will be responsible for the reform at all?

Finally, the last common feature of the three 20th-century reforms is that all the reforms were carried out quickly because of the crisis and all of the reforms were disliked by the majority of society later on.

Actors of education reforms

Here we come to the last question, namely, who likes education reforms?

First of all, they are liked by reformers themselves. All the while, reformers deserve respect for their courage. They care, they want to improve education and therefore make society better. Even if they are not sure, they at least anticipate scepticism that awaits them and gets down to work notwithstanding. They strongly believe that this time they will succeed and that makes them strong. Reformers seek to institutionalize the ideals and dreams of society. They believe that they will succeed in making education modern, correct and innovative. They gather supporters, they have to be able to speak to different audiences, thus, they need to be strong, charismatic and persuasive. Reforms show who has the mandate to reform education – who is competent of society, who is an expert, who dares to talk about change in education. Reformers often have financial resources in their hands too. The reformer's position undoubtedly is that of a leader, a position of power and therefore attractive (Labaree, 2012, 153, 160, Apple, 2015, 13, Terhart, 2013, 487).

However, an education reform of any scale sooner or later has to be translated into educational practice, and teachers who "feel forced to take part in reform and development process" (Terhart, 2013, 487) are made responsible for this translation.

The research on the emotions of Latvian, Lithuanian, Estonian and Russian teachers when they remember the education reforms of the 1990s demonstrated that only some teachers think of that time with

positive emotions, the majority characterises it as full of worries, fears, dissatisfaction, lack of understanding, stress, confusion and indifference. The emergence of new technologies and the comparison of educational outcomes formed a school elite, instilling the feeling of anxiety and injustice in teachers (Safronov., 2018). When the study was presented at a conference, one of the questions from the audience, largely made up of educational historians, was whether it was possible to cite an example from history where the majority of teachers were satisfied with an education reform. No one knew of such a case. In a sense, this is about the collective memory in the teaching profession, which stores a feeling of uncertainty and insecurity in times of reforms.

Labaree adds that teachers see reforms as an interruption of practice, an intervention in the delicate ecology of the learning process (Labaree, 2012, 159). Ewald Terhart mentions that proposing reforms to teachers can cause resentment – is their professional competence questioned and rated as bad? (Terhart, 2013, 488). David Tyack and Larry Cuban justify the scepticism of teachers, who are usually labelled as major opponents of reforms (Terhart, 2013, 489), saying that “sometimes teachers have been wise to resist reforms that violated their professional judgement” (Tyack, Cuban, 2003, 5). Resistance to reforms cannot be simply measured as “backwardness”, for sometimes it is the voice of common sense. Teachers, who similarly to the major part of society are constantly dissatisfied with the situation in education, often want reforms, but not these reforms (Terhart, 2013, 488).

Definitely, the teacher audience is not homogeneous, unlike the relatively monolithic and relatively predictable group of reformers. Terhart subdivides teachers according to their attitudes towards reforms into the following groups: the rejectors, the disinterested, the ‘wait and see’ fraction, the hanger-on, the pragmatics, the cautious believers, and the ever enthusiastic – “whatever the reform’s intention is” (Terhart, 2013, 491).

Conclusions and discussion

The current school system, as evidenced by “crisis rhetoric”, does not satisfy society. Therefore, action is needed. But there is a paradox – the public does not like school, but in fact do not want to change it. What if the “new” turns out to be worse than the “old”? Errors during reforms are inevitable, as mistakes are part of the “new” (Burbules, 2016). And who will take responsibility for the chaos and mistakes pupils experience during their only time at school, for no one returns to school for the second time? And who is competent and capable of assessing long-term gains and losses of reforms if the introduction of innovations is believed to take at least 50 years? (Tyack, Cuban, 2003, 4). “Data-driven reflection” (Terhart,

2013, 491) in educational space is increasingly criticised (see Waldow and Steiner-Khamsi, 2019, Lindblad, S., Pettersson, D., Popkewitz, 2018, Tröhler, 2014). As a historian of education, I am very keen of Tyack and Cuban's idea that the effectiveness of education reforms can in fact be evaluated only by a professional look at education history (Tyack, Cuban, 2003, 6–7). It is particularly important to emphasize this view at a time of “academic cleansing” (Rikowski, 2017, 4), of history being eradicated from the curriculum of teacher education, and when reformers “consider amnesia as a virtue” (Tyack, Cuban, 2003, 6).

Analysing history of crises, Bernard Hametsberger plays with the idea of what non-crisis education might look like. He argues that non-crisis is order, discipline, stability, regularity, continuity and peace (Hametsberger, 2018, 104). Thus, the ideal crisis-reform scenario could be as follows: defining and legitimizing the crisis – “correct” reforms by “right” actors – peace and order in education, which is a utopia *per se*. Judging by history, however, the real crisis-reform scenario is as follows: a catastrophe in education – rapid reforms – critique of reforms – a gradual (from secret to increasingly visible) return to past practices.

The failure and repetition of reforms are determined by interests of various “players”. Reformers, consumers of education (pupils and their parents), employers and teachers, all have their own personal agendas to realise in field of education. To reconcile their interests is a good but rather utopian project.

However, reforms also have their “silver lining”: any reform activates school practice, broadens teacher collaboration, and forces the public to debate education. The wave of reforms brings education and teachers to the top. All that remains is to agree with Burbules that “education, because it is an intrinsically challenging and imperfect practice, is always looking for ways to improve, and this has led to a constant cycle of reform, optimism, disappointment, and then new reform” (Burbules, 2016, 9).

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RELATIONAL-SELF-OF-VIRTUE: CLASSICAL, MODERN AND CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVES IN MORAL EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The multiple ethical issues arising at school age in the digital era cannot be addressed effectively through a fragmented moral education which focusses successively on different virtues. This paper introduces the concept of relational-self-of-virtue: the personal deep disposition to virtue growth in communities of virtue. Based upon a realist Aristotelian understanding of human beings, the concept builds on the theory of the self-of-virtue: the fundamental disposition to grow in virtue. In this paper, based on Polo's anthropology and on 'inter-processual self' theory and practice, this concept is expanded for embracing classical, modern and Christian perspectives in character education. This expanded concept enlarges the theoretical foundations of an educational model for developing youngsters' relational-self-of-virtue, which would contribute to avoid fragmentary moral education and to enhance its effectiveness and sustainability.

Keywords: inter-processual self, moral education, relational-self-of-virtue, virtue ethics.

Introduction

Moral character education is a topical trend in the educational discourse (Carr, 2018; Kristjánsson, 2016; Peters, 2015; Walker, Roberts & Kristjánsson, 2015). The Jubilee Centre for Character and Virtues (University of Birmingham) defines character as “a set of personal traits or dispositions that produce specific moral emotions, inform motivation and guide conduct. Character education includes all explicit and implicit educational activities that help young people develop positive personal strengths called virtues” (Jubilee Centre, 2017, 2).

The “character education’s profoundest problem” (Kristjánsson, 2015, 60) is the variety of virtues and the multifaceted nature of virtue: “Evaluating character is currently one of the biggest challenges facing researchers working in the field, partly because ‘character’ and ‘virtues’ are such complex constructs” (Harrison, Arthur, n.d., 19). Moreover, the multiplicity and rapidity of the ethical issues that arise at school age in our digital era cannot anymore be addressed effectively through an atomized, fragmented virtue education which would focus on developing different virtues and virtue components successively.

This problem has been addressed from different angles. Some academics and practitioners of character education advocate for focussing on concrete virtues considered to be particularly important, such as gratitude (Emmons, 2009; Morgan, Gulliford, 2017) or resilience (Whitehead, & Whitehead, 2015). A recent example of this approach is the consultation “Character and Resilience: A call for evidence”¹, initiated by the Secretary of State for Education of U.K., who defined character in resilience terms: being able to stick with the task in hand and to bounce back from setbacks. However, reducing moral education to one or some virtues does not seem to be compatible with the unity of virtue and the interconnection of virtues (McCabe, 2016).

Recently, serious efforts for finding deeper alternative approaches to holistic character and virtue education were done in at least two directions. One of them explores the central role of moral identity for understanding moral functioning. This trend is particularly strong in the USA, as illustrated by two recent projects led by University of Oklahoma and Marquette University: “The Self, Motivation & Virtue Project”² (2015–2018), which provided research grants for interdisciplinary research on the moral self and produced an online “Moral Self Archive” and a “Moral Self Network”; and the project “The Self, Virtue & Public Life”³ (2018–2021), which supports new research on topics related to the self, virtue and public life, digging deeper into the factors that contribute to supporting or undermining virtue in public life. These projects have the merit of highlighting the social dimension of character education and of recognizing the importance of moral identity, but they are positioned more or less strongly in an anti-realist philosophical paradigm which is hardly reconcilable with Aristotelian moral objectivism and philosophical realism.

¹ <https://consult.education.gov.uk/character-citizenship-cadets-team/character-and-resilience-a-call-for-evidence/consultation/subpage.2019-05-22.2980308523/>

² <http://smvproject.com/>

³ <https://selfvirtueandpubliclife.com/>

Another novel research direction takes *phronesis* (practical wisdom) as the integrating element (Darnell, Gulliford et al., 2019) that would avoid a fragmented character education. This approach goes beyond single-component solutions (e.g., moral reasoning, moral identity or moral emotions alone), and defines *phronesis* as the combination of four components: constitutive (moral perception), adjudicative (identifying conflicting virtues), emotional (moral emotions), and ‘blueprint’, related to moral ideals and moral identity (Darnell, Gulliford et al., 2019). Certainly, *phronesis* is commonly viewed as “the point of articulation between virtue stability and dynamicity: Thanks to *phronesis*, a virtuous character maintains the ‘unity of virtue’ in new, unforeseen situations” (Fernández González, 2019, 14). However, it could be argued that this model does not address clearly the relative weight of each component and the crucial role of freedom in the configuration of the deep moral disposition of the person.

Recently a new approach to holistic moral education was put forward, which, from a realistic Aristotelian perspective, recognizes both the role of the moral self and human freedom in moral life, and the unity of virtue. It is the theory of the self-of-virtue (Fernández González, 2019), which will be summarized and critically analysed in the next section.

Theoretical background: Re-questioning the self-of-virtue

Within a realist Aristotelian paradigm, the concept of self-of-virtue captures the relevance of the person’s fundamental and freely developed disposition to grow in virtue for moral development (Fernández González, 2019, 11). This disposition “is different from the ‘states of character’ of the different virtues. It is the person’s deep disposition to acquire and develop all these *habitus* or virtues, and it could be called a *meta-disposition*: the fundamental disposition to acquire virtuous dispositions” (p. 15).

This theory, following Polo’s (1999; 2007) anthropology, conceives virtue as an ‘integrative’ reality. This means that the acquisition of virtue is possible, optional, and should be intentionally provoked, and therefore it is not automatic, nor compulsory, nor necessary (it is contingent) (Orón, 2015, 116): virtue growth (the acquisition of moral habits) is a possibility that can be freely actualized by a personal decision, and is attainable through personal effort, more concretely, through *phronesis*-guided action. The theory of self-of-virtue sees also virtue as an ‘open free system’ (Polo, 2007), in which the different virtues are systemically interconnected and can develop organically without restriction.

The concept of self-of virtue represented a conceptual and practical step-forward in the field of character education: conceptually, it integrates, at the level of the deep dispositions of the person, the multiple components

of virtue, namely, rationally grounded moral emotions, a personal free commitment to virtue growth, virtuous behaviour guided by phronesis, and reflective self-knowledge. This concept captures both the dispositional stability of the virtue and the person's 'self' agency and freedom in virtue growth. The concept of self-of-virtue has also relevant practical educational consequences, because, by focussing on the person's deep moral disposition to virtue growth, from where all virtues spring, gives youngsters' a sense of purpose in life (the motivation to become a good person), instead of educating particular character strengths or virtues in a random and fragmentary way (Fernández González, 2019, 25–26).

However, in its current state, the theory of the self-of-virtue presents also some shortfalls. Two main concerns appeared in academic discussions around this concept: an anthropological one and a societal one.

Anthropologically, the self-of-virtue theory does not cover sufficiently the relational dimension of human beings. This critique can be better understood on the basis of Polo's anthropology (Polo & Corazón, 2005). Polo understands human beings as possessing three different complementary dimensions, which are called 'human radicals': the *human nature* (the 'classic' or 'Greek' radical), both biological and psychological, which is the *locus* of virtue, where virtuous habits are enrooted and developed through actions; the *human subjectivity* or interiority (the 'modern' radical), that is the *locus* of self and individual freedom; and *human co-existence* (the 'Christian' or 'personal' radical), which underlines the person's uniqueness, the central role of relations as constitutive of the person, and the person's transcendence to her actions. In this perspective, the virtues (operative habits) perfection the natural radical (Akrivou, & Orón, 2016), enrich the interiority of self (modern radical) and are acquired both in relation with others and for the sake of others. As it can be seen, the model of the self-of-virtue referred to Polo's Greek and modern radical, but, even if it acknowledged the relational dimension of virtue growth, it integrated it only superficially. Therefore, an expansion of this concept, integrating human co-existence and transcendence together with the self and the virtue, would be necessary.

The weaknesses of the theory of the self-of-virtue in its current state appears clearly when confronted with the principles of citizenship education, which is a relevant societal aspect of moral education. There is an ongoing academic discussion about the benefits and shortfalls of both character education and citizenship education. Both fields are "intimately connected" (Arthur, 2003, 2), but relevant differences exist regarding their conception of pluralism and the way they conceive the connection between morality and politics (Kristjánsson, 2004). Critics of citizenship education question its (supposed) downplaying of transcultural moral values, its uncritical inculcation of democratic values, a frequent political bias, and a

lack of attention to cultural diversity (Kristjánsson, 2004, 210–211). In its turn, even if “the ultimate goal of all proper character education is to equip students with the intellectual tools to make wise choices of their own within the framework of a democratic society” (Jubilee Centre, 2017, 2), character education is criticized for being supposedly ‘narrow and instrumental’, emphasising the ‘individual, moral dimension of character’, psychologising problems ‘rather than politicising them’, and educating people for being ‘compliant, not political’ (Suissa, 2015; Kisby 2017). The theory of the self-of-virtue in its current state appears to be too individualistic and does not provide an appropriate answer to these critiques of character education.

Summarizing, it seems that there is a need of expanding the concept of self-of-virtue, in order to acknowledge the relational and societal dimension of human beings and character education. Consequently, this study addresses two research questions: how the concept of self-of-virtue can be expanded so to embrace more deeply the relational dimension of human beings and of virtue growth? What are the pedagogical implications of such conceptual expansion?

Methodology

The theory of the ‘inter-processual self’ (IPS) (Akrivou, & Orón, 2016; Akrivou, Orón, Scalzo, 2018; Orón, 2015; 2016) was chosen as the starting point for expanding the concept of self-of-virtue, because it presents itself as an overarching framework for conceptualizing the self within a personalist virtue ethics epistemology in line with the assumptions of the self-of-virtue theory: Aristotelian moral objectivism and philosophical realism. In addition, this theory stresses the processual and relational aspects of human integrity, which are precisely those missing in the theory of the self-of-virtue.

Other alternative options for expanding this concept were also considered, such as the personalism philosophy (Yepes, & Aranguren, 2003; Altarejo, & Naval, 2000; Marías, 1996; Merleau-Ponty, 1964; Mounier, 1936) and the theory of the ‘logic of gift’ (Baviera, English, 2016; Schrift, 2014). However, for the reasons mentioned above and in order to simplify the argument and saving space, these additional insights were mentioned in the discussion.

In order to answer the research question, the content of the foundational works of IPS theory mentioned above were analysed from the lens of the self-of-virtue, looking for connections between the fundamental disposition to virtue growth and the themes of ‘co-existence’, ‘transcendence’ and ‘relation’. Those themes and connections were classified and synthesized in a new concept: the *relational-self-of-virtue*, whose features are explained in the next section.

The concept of relational-self-of-virtue

An overview of IPS theory may be useful for understanding the features of the relational-self-of-virtue. The IPS theory claims that there are two fundamental understandings of self: “an autonomous self (AS), which is the western ‘modernist’ way literature understands the self and integrity...; and a contrasting inter-processual self (IPS) paradigm, which is a more processual and relational, and also an ongoing, fluid, notion of human integrity” (Akrivou, & Orón, 2016, 223). IPS theory chooses Polo’s Christian (personal) radical as starting point for moral reflection, and it presents itself as a way of integrating all the three radicals. The IPS theory proposes a model on human agency and human development based on the themes of maturation, personal agency and integration (pp. 131–144), and recognizes the role of selfhood and self-recognition (identity) in this process, which are also important components of the theory of the self-of-virtue (Fernández González, 2019, 22–23).

The expansion of the concept of self-of-virtue is based on the assumption that the person’s deep disposition to grow in virtue, which is the corner stone on which a virtuous life is built through time, is intrinsically *relational*. The relational dimension of virtue growth includes three aspects: receiving support from relevant others; seeking virtue growth for the sake of others; and caring actively for others’ moral development. We explain them below more in detail.

Regarding the first aspect, sustainable virtue growth cannot be developed autonomously, but only together with others, in communities of virtue, given the deep relational dimension of human beings. Virtue growth is a relational human act in which relevant, caring others, are engaged. Those communities of virtue have the potentiality of enabling wider systemic virtue growth in society.

The second relational aspect refers to the motivation for virtue growth. Cultivating a relational-self-of-virtue implies a particular kind of motivation: growing in virtue for the sake of others, in order to be able to love them better and to establish more caring relations with them. It is not a self-centred growth born out of a desire for personal excellence, but an effort impelled by a transcendental motivation. Wadell (2009) formulates this idea saying that “the virtues are best understood not as acts of reason, but as strategies of love” (p. 1).

Finally, in this expanded understanding, it is not possible to develop virtue without caring for the virtue growth of those around us. It is precisely in the caring attention to others’ growth than a person can develop all his/her own potential. Virtuous leadership theory (Havard, 2007) captures well this aspect when it states that a virtuous leader is the one who develops his/her own moral virtues by seeking his/her followers’ growth in virtue.

The contribution of the inter-processual self (IPS) theory for expanding the concept of the relational-self-of-virtue has also several pedagogical implications. In the next section we will address briefly the pedagogical proposal of IPS theory as a starting point for addressing the pedagogical aspects of the development of a relational-self-of-virtue.

Developing the relational-self-of-virtue: Pedagogical implications

The pedagogical implications of IPS theory (Akrivou, Orón, Scalzo, 2018, 194–236) are particularly useful for improving the model for the development of a relational-self-of-virtue. In an IPS understanding, the whole teaching and learning process should be motivated by the common development of the learner and the teacher, in a climate of “relaxed alertness” (Caine, Caine, 2005; Salas Silva 2003), which safeguards the quality of the relationships. Youngsters’ education should use largely interpersonal encounters in real life. The educational focus should be on the improvement of personal relationships, not in the mere acquisitions of knowledge or competences. Accordingly, subject-matters at school are conceived as simple ‘platforms’ for holistic personal growth, not as independent or even interconnected domains. The IPS proposal for assessment practices is particularly innovative: assessment should be based not in marks, but on dialogic two-way feedback, in which teacher–educator uses conversational learning and inquiry, seeking to recognize students’ efforts and possibilities of relational self-development, and becomes actively involved in how the student may be able to engage better in his/her own development.

Based on these insights, the existing model for the development of a self-of-virtue (Fernández González, 2019, 19–23) needs to be expanded further for facilitating the development of a relational-self-of-virtue. Describing in detail the whole improved model is out of the scope of this paper, but directions for refining each one of its four components are outlined below.

- (1) the *cognitive and emotional shaping* of an ideal self-of-virtue should be expanded to the shaping of an ideal relational-self-of-virtue. It may include discovering, admiring and desiring the possibility of growing in virtue together with others, being aided (inspired) by relevant (real or imaginary/virtual) others, and desiring to help those around us to grow in virtue.
- (2) the *commitment to virtue growth*, which develops by ‘following a prototype’ and in personal conversations, should include, in this enlarged understanding, the relational motivation: engaging in virtue growth ‘for loving others better’. This transcendental motivation flourishes most naturally in the climate of a community

of virtue, be it the family, the school, the parish, the youth centre or a similar one.

- (3) phronesis-guided *involvement in virtue growth* would be boosted by involvement with societal problems (helping the sick and needed, accompanying the lonely, etc.); and this care for others might not be limited to their material or intellectual needs, but should also include their moral needs: caring actively and friendly, with the due respect of personal freedom, for others' virtue growth would be a privileged way of reinforcing personal virtue growth;
- (4) in this expanded understanding, *virtue identity* is redefined as the deep-down understanding of self as profoundly disposed (emotionally, cognitively and conatively) to *relational* virtue growth in the three senses explained above: growing together with others, for others' sake and through caring for others' growth. It should be noted that, in this realist framework, a 'socially situated' (Taylor, 1997) virtue identity has the persons' actual 'relational self-of virtue' as its cognitive object: virtue identity is the 'self-concept' of a person deeply disposed to grow in virtue relationally.

Discussion

In this work, based on Polo's anthropology and on 'inter-processual self' theory, the concept of the self-of-virtue was expanded into the relational-self-of-virtue. Whereas the self-of-virtue integrated Polo's classical and modern radicals, the 'relational self-of virtue' includes also the Christian personal radical: the co-existential' or relational dimension of human beings. Therefore, the refined concept of relational-self-of-virtue combines the three radicals of human beings: the Greek, the modern and the personal radical. In this discussion the resonance of this enlarged concept with some of the current anthropological theories is addressed, and some pedagogical recommendations are put forward.

The understanding of human moral development proposed by the theory of the relational-self-of-virtue is deeply connected with other philosophical approaches. Without pretending being exhaustive, we will point briefly to some of them. According to Narvaez (2014), current neurobiological studies support the assumption that, given that humans are dynamic systems highly immature at birth, the self is initially shaped through relational experiences with caregivers. This confirms the centrality of the relational dimension of moral development since early childhood. This approach is also consistent with an understanding of humans as relational beings advocated by the personalist philosophy (Mounier, 1936; Marías, 1996), which acknowledges that the roots of person's dignity dwell both in each person's singular being

(uniqueness), which constitutes her intimacy, and in our shared humanity. The concept of a relational-self-of-virtue is also coherent with the theory of the “logic of gift” (Schrift, 2014), which inspires people both to recognize and honour the received gifts of personhood and life, and to freely choose to relate with others in a benevolent and loving way, beyond the logic of duty and obligation (Baviera, English, Guillén, 2016).

The following practical pedagogical recommendations, which include ‘taught’ and ‘caught’ approaches, can be useful for enhancing the development of youngsters’ relational-self-of virtue at school and in the family:

- The ‘taught’ approach (explicit teaching of the emotional and cognitive contents of the relational-self-of-virtue) could be implemented in several ways, for example, explaining with the appropriate words and examples the possibility of growing in virtue together with others; analysing or playing stories of moral exemplars who could open youngsters the horizon of a life of self-giving to the service of others; illustrating with the aid of graphic design the beautifulness of personal effort for growing in virtue for others’ sake; and watching and discussing movies that show characters’ indirect personal improvement when caring for and serving others with a transcendent motivation.
- The personal and social benefits of developing a relational-self-of-virtue can also be ‘caught’ by youngsters when they are surrounded by an atmosphere of care and respect for others. The school and the family might be framed as ‘communities of virtue growth’, in which moral efforts are considered to be more important than results or appropriate behaviour, and in which each person cares for the wellbeing and moral development of others, within a culture of mutual service and care for each person. Parents’, teachers’ and other relevant adults’ example of personal effort and resilience seeking for virtue growth (for example, asking children pardon for an inappropriate attitude, or verbalizing their desire to become better persons) may have a much bigger impact than theoretical explanations to help them understand that virtue growth is a lifelong concern, and that it is normal to have failures and to bounce back.

As a conclusion, this work suggests that focussing on the development of youngsters’ relational-self-of-virtue in the family and in formal education would help to avoid a fragmented virtue education. This approach would be an appropriate lens for effective moral education in the digital era. It would also contribute to harmonize character education and citizenship education.

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MANAGING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION TO FACILITATE THE EMPLOYABILITY OF GRADUATES

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ABSTRACT

Ensuring employability of graduates has become important issue in education considering the rapid changes and increasing uncertainty in the labour market. The aim of this research is, on the basis of the interviews with the managers of vocational education institutions, to find which aspects of vocational education management processes in Latvia are implemented successfully and which – require improvements in order to facilitate employability of graduates. The research methods include literature review and in-depth, semi-structured interviews with the managers (directors or deputy directors) of vocational education institutions in Latvia (n=12). Data obtained were analysed according to consensual qualitative research procedure. The results of the analysis show that the most successful aspects in vocational education management processes with regards to facilitating graduate employability are linked to recent reforms in vocational education. Most important weaknesses which require improvements are linked to the lack of stability and coordination, problems related to education funding model, teachers, students, as well as the lack of labour market partners in providing work placements and work-based learning. The results provide overview of the current challenges in vocational education in Latvia and allow to plan improvements to facilitate employability of graduates.

Keywords: employability, management, processes, vocational education.

Introduction

Ensuring employability of graduates is one of the central questions in vocational education (VE) policy making and management. According to Yorke and Knight (2004), employability is “a set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that make graduates more likely to

gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations” (Yorke & Knight, 2004, 3). Therefore, employability is about both, getting a fulfilling initial job and being successful in the labour market in the long-term, which requires constant adaptability and learning. To support development of employability in students, vocational education institutions (VEIs) can ensure not just the acquisition of professional skills and experience, but also offer the career education, the development of general and emotional competences, as well as understandings and attitudes that are important for individual employability (Pool & Sewell, 2014). For example, most valued individual employability attributes among Latvian employers are attitude to work, ability to work independently, work motivation, ability to take responsibility, problem solving skills, ability to adapt, to work in a team and communication skills (Lice, Sloka, 2019a).

Although the goal of VE is to educate graduates for the labour market, data indicates about weaknesses in how VE ensures employability of graduates both in the short, and in the long term. 20% (or 5.4 of 27.1 thousands) of VE students did not complete their studies in the 2017/2018 study year (Ministry of Education and Science, 2019). Although work-placements organised within VE programmes can provide valuable learning and working experience to students and significantly enhance their employability (Lice, 2018), the quality of work-placements in Latvia varies. One in four students thought that his or her work-placement did not provide useful knowledge and skills for work in occupation. 37% of trainees didn't want to stay to work in the same company where they had work placement, every fifth of them – because they were not interested in their occupation (Klāsons & Spuriņš, 2015), indicating to inefficient linkage between VE, work-placements and prospective career of students. Among those who graduated, 24% continued their work or studies in other field (Ministry of Education and Science, 2018) indicating to low relevance of VE to graduates. According to Lice and Sloka (2019), VEIs in Latvia perform only on a moderate level in developing employability competencies in their graduates.

Although the VE reform has triggered some activity of VEIs in ensuring adult learning opportunities, this area of activity is only developing. Unemployment of adults with vocational qualifications is rather a concern of public employment service which provides retraining opportunities. According to the data of the Employment Agency of Latvia (2018, 2019), the biggest share of the unemployed people is those with vocational qualifications, majority of them – at least 40 years old. Evidence shows that it is not a problem only in Latvia. Hanushek, Schwerdt, Woessmann, and Zhang (2017) compared employment rates across different ages for people with general education and vocational qualifications for 11 countries and

found strong and robust support for a trade-off between better school-to-work transition for VE graduates and better labour market outcomes later in life for general education graduates. The skills generated by VE may facilitate the transition into the labour market but may become obsolete at a faster rate. Although participation in adult learning is important for employability throughout career, people who have completed secondary education level, including VE, are significantly less active adult learners comparing to higher education graduates (Central Statistical Bureau, 2018). Moreover, average adult participation in lifelong learning in Latvia is very low: 7.3% of adults of age 25–64, while in the European Union (EU) – 10.8% (European Commission, 2017).

To facilitate employability of graduates, appropriate management of VE is needed. Therefore, the aim of this research is to find, which processes in the management of VE in Latvia are implemented successfully and which – require improvements, using the exploratory qualitative research methods.

Methodology

Semi-structured, in-depth, 40 to 90 minutes long interviews with the managers of VEIs were conducted in 2018. In total, 12 interviews were conducted with 15 directors or deputy directors from 12 public VEIs (out of 34 public VEIs in Latvia). The VEIs were selected to ensure appropriate representation of all regions of Latvia, different VE fields, levels (secondary and college level) and institutional subordination (Ministry of Education and Science and municipalities). Interviews were structured into five themes: (1) planning and governance; (2) implementing education; (3) transfer from education to the labour market; (4) monitoring quality, ensuring feedback loop and continuous improvement; (5) providing adult learning. The interviewees were invited to comment the successful aspects and the necessary improvements in different VE management processes to ensure better employability of VE graduates. The items for the questionnaire were developed, based on the literature review. They were also asked additional questions on the importance of the goal of facilitating graduate employability to their institutions and the methods to achieve this goal. Data were analysed according to the consensual qualitative research procedure (Spangel, Liu, & Hill, 2012) because of the exploratory and inductive aim of the research. First, the researcher went through the interview transcripts and identified domains of successful aspects and weaknesses in VE management processes. Second, the categories were identified, and data coded accordingly. Third, the frequencies of reasons for the successes and weaknesses (Ni) in VE management processes were calculated and the most recurrent ones were identified.

Results and Discussions

The results of the interviews showed that employability is very important goal for VEIs. The mean evaluation of importance of employability on a scale from 1–10 was 9.5 with a range of only 2 ($n = 15$). The main methods of facilitating employability of graduates were work placements and work-based learning (WBL), as well as extra-curriculum activities.

The analysis of the interviews pointed out to the existence of 18 distinct domains of successful aspects and 25 distinct domains of weaknesses in VE management processes.

Most frequently mentioned domains of successful aspects in VE management that facilitates employability of graduates were: “teacher education” ($N_m = 19$) (mainly because of diverse offer of further education courses ($N_i = 8$) and courses organised by VEIs themselves ($N_i = 3$)), “ensuring relevant adult education opportunities” ($N_m = 18$) (mainly due to developing offer, based on demands of employers ($N_i = 6$) and attempts to maintain the link to graduates (e.g., graduate days, informing about education opportunities, inviting to events) ($N_i = 4$)), “cooperation with labour market partners” ($N_m = 15$) (mainly due to successful cooperation with the Sectorial expert councils and employer organisations ($N_i = 6$)), “ensuring relevant education programmes” ($N_m = 15$) (mainly due to regularly updating education programmes according to labour market needs ($N_i = 8$), involving employers in developing VE programmes ($N_i = 4$) and modernised infrastructure ($N_i = 3$)), “providing work experience” ($N_m = 15$) (mainly due to WBL, based on good cooperation with employers ($N_i = 8$)) and “capacity to ensure adult education” ($N_m = 12$) (mainly due to the project on adult education, co-financed by EU funds ($N_i = 4$)). Other mentioned successful aspects were: considering labour market demands in VE ($N_i = 4$), development of employability competencies in VE ($N_i = 5$), project on career education, co-financed by EU funds ($N_i = 5$) and collecting information about graduate employment ($N_i = 4$).

Many of these aspects are linked to recent reforms in VE, as well as the activities implemented within the projects, co-financed by the EU funds, for example, modernising the infrastructure of VEIs, establishment of the Sectorial expert councils, reviewing and updating occupational standards, developing modular learning programmes, offering career education to students, offering adult learning opportunities, supporting development of WBL.

When it comes to existing weaknesses in the VE management processes, the most significant weaknesses with the number of mentions of at least 10 were the following: the lack of stability, the lack of leadership and

coordination, problems related to VE financing model, problems related to teachers, problems related to students and the lack of labour market partners offering work-placements and WBL. An overview of identified weaknesses and reasons for weaknesses is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Overview of domains and reasons of weaknesses in VE management in Latvia

Domains of weaknesses (Nm*)	Reason of weaknesses (subcategories) (Ni**)
1. Planning and governance (total Nm = 59)	
1.1. Lack of stability (Nm = 14)	Lack of long-term planning, strategy (Ni = 5) Constant process of reforms (Ni = 3) Frequent changes in priorities (Ni = 3) Too high workload (Ni = 2)
1.2. Lack of leadership and coordination (Nm = 10)	Lack of mutual coordination, hasty implementation of EU projects (Ni = 5) Conflicting procedures in EU projects (Ni = 3)
1.3. Problems related to funding system (Nm = 14)	Public financing does not cover real costs (Ni = 3) Promotes competition among educational institutions (Ni = 2) Low teacher salaries (Ni = 2)
1.4. Problems related to regulation (Nm = 2)	
1.5. Low VE prestige (Nm = 6)	Persistent stereotypes about VE (Ni = 3)
1.6. Lack of support (Nm = 6)	Lack of methodological support (Ni = 2) Lack of support by municipalities (Ni = 2)
1.7. Labour market requirements and future skills needs (Nm = 7)	Lack of future skills needs planning in the long term (Ni = 3) Insufficient understanding by/ cooperation with the sectorial expert councils (Ni = 2) Too high requirements by employers (Ni = 2)
2. Implementing education (total Nm = 44)	
2.1. Problems related to teachers (Nm = 18)	Inappropriate qualification requirements (Ni = 5) Lack of teachers, especially of vocational courses, outside of Riga (Ni = 4) Low capacity of teachers to ensure quality teaching (Ni = 3) High average age of teachers (Ni = 2) Inappropriate further teacher education (Ni = 2)
2.2. Problems related to education programme (Nm = 3)	
2.3. Contemporary teaching (Nm = 2)	Lack of modern equipment for learning, especially in small institutions (Ni = 2)

Domains of weaknesses (Nm*)	Reason of weaknesses (subcategories) (Ni**)
2.4. Modular programmes (Nm = 5)	Unclear methodologies (Ni = 3) Doesn't change anything in essence (Ni = 2)
2.5. Problems related to students (Nm = 15)	High drop-out rate (Ni = 4) Low prior education level (Ni = 3) Motivation of students (Ni = 3) Low socioeconomic status (Ni = 2)
3. Transfer from education to the labour market (total Nm = 24)	
3.1. Lack of employment opportunities (Nm = 3)	Lack of jobs for young graduates (Ni = 2)
3.2. Lack of labour market partners (Nm = 14)	Lack of companies providing work-placements or WBL (Ni = 5) Too restrictive WBL regulation (Ni = 4) Lack of support by professional/employers' associations (Ni = 2)
3.3. Quality of practical learning (Nm = 2)	
3.4. Career support (Nm = 3)	
3.5. Recognising prior learning (Nm = 2)	
4. Monitoring quality, ensuring feedback loop and continuous improvement (total Nm = 13)	
4.1. Problems related to qualification evaluation (Nm = 3)	Decentralized examination committees do not guarantee similar requirements, lack of objectivity (Ni = 2)
4.2. Problems related to quality assurance (Nm = 6)	Accreditation does not support development (Ni = 3) Too bureaucratic procedures (Ni = 2)
4.3. Problems related to collecting feedback (Nm = 3)	Lack of information about employment of graduates in the longer term (Ni = 2)
5. Providing adult learning (total Nm = 11)	
5.1. Involvement in EU project on adult learning (Nm = 4)	Unmotivating conditions for institutions and teachers to participate in EU project on adult learning (Ni = 3)
5.2. Lack of demand for adult learning (Nm = 4)	Limited demand, adults and employers not ready to finance adult learning (Ni = 2)
5.3. Capacity of VEIs (Nm = 3)	Teachers are not prepared to work with adults (Ni = 2)

*Ni = number of VEIs evoking the weakness, $\max(Ni) = 12$. Reasons with Ni = 1 are not included in the table

**Nm = number of mentions. Domains with Nm = 1 are not included in the table

Source: Author's analysis, based on the interviews with the managers of VEIs, conducted in 2018 (n = 12)

In the area of planning and governance, most important domains of weaknesses were the problems related to funding system (Nm = 14), lack of stability (Nm = 14) and lack of leadership and coordination (Nm = 10).

Although the managers mostly agreed that the funding system of VE was problematic, the reasons they highlighted were very different. Most frequently mentioned reasons were that public financing did not cover real costs of implementing quality education, that it promoted undesirable competition among educational institutions and that teacher salaries were too low.

Most important reasons for the lack of stability in governance and management of VE were the lack of long-term planning, constant process of reforms and frequent changes in priorities. This was also closely linked to the lack of leadership and coordination due to the lack of mutual coordination and hasty implementation of the EU-funded projects, as well as sometimes conflicting procedures. In this area, the managers also pointed out to other reasons of weaknesses that hindered development of VE: the lack of researching and considering the labour market requirements and future skill needs (Nm = 7), the lack of support from central and regional governments (Nm = 6) and low VE prestige (Nm = 5).

In the area of implementing education, the most important domains of weaknesses were the problems related to teachers (Nm = 18) and students (Nm = 15). They were concerned by the lack of teachers, especially for vocational courses (Ni = 4), mainly due to uncompetitive teacher salaries comparing to other jobs in the labour market. Indeed, according to OECD (2014), the average salaries for secondary education teachers in OECD countries after 15 years of experience are 124–129% of GDP per capita, while in Latvia – just 52% of GDP per capita (OECD, 2014, 34). The managers also believed that the official qualification requirements for teachers (Ni = 5) are inappropriate and limit their ability to attract new teachers. Few of them also mentioned low capacity of teachers to ensure quality teaching, including resistance to improve their competencies (Ni = 3). Regarding problems with students, the managers pointed out to the following reasons: high dropout rate (Ni = 4), low prior education level (Ni = 3), low motivation (Ni = 3) and low socioeconomic status (Ni = 2). Managers were also concerned by the implementation of modular programmes in VE (Nm = 5), mainly due to unclear methodology.

In the area of transfer from education to the labour market, the main domain for concerns was the lack of labour market partners (Nm = 14). The main reasons for that were the lack of companies providing work-placements or WBL (Ni = 5), too restrictive regulations of WBL (Ni = 4) and the lack of support by professional or employers' associations (Ni = 2).

In the area of monitoring quality, ensuring feedback loop and continuous improvement, the managers didn't have any serious concerns. The following negative aspects were mentioned: accreditation procedure did not support development, but rather just monitored the compliance to minimum standards ($N_i = 3$). Managers of two institutions also pointed out to the fact that the decentralised system of professional qualification exams did not provide comparable, objective evaluation of learning outcomes ($N_i = 2$) and to the lack of information about employment of graduates in the longer term, not just immediately after graduation, ($N_i = 2$).

In the area of adult learning, there were no serious concerns either. The following negative aspects were mentioned: unmotivating conditions for institutions and teachers to participate in the EU-funded project on adult learning ($N_i = 3$), limited demand and unwillingness to finance adult learning by adult learners and employers ($N_i = 2$) and that teachers were not prepared to work with adults ($N_i = 2$).

The research results showed that the main improvements are needed in the area of mutual collaboration between the national and institutional level, especially when it comes to bottom-up communication and mutually coordinated implementation of reforms and projects; including the lack of guidance and support to VEIs. Although recent improvements in VE system and especially the opportunities provided by the EU-funded projects were much appreciated, VEIs feel overwhelmed by the uninterrupted, parallelly-taking place and uncoordinated changes. The financing system of VE should be reviewed to support intentions of the reform, including ensuring flexible learning paths and adult learning provision. It should cover real costs of implementing quality education, including more competitive teacher salaries to ensure availability of qualified, good teachers. It should preferably also motivate VEIs to work towards their strategic goals and reward results, as well as motivate to co-operate rather than compete. The diverse learning needs of students should also be considered: supporting students with learning difficulties and students from low socioeconomic background require additional expenses. The processes that have been successfully started within the context of the reform should be further implemented, including co-operation with labour market partners, ensuring relevant education programmes, ensuring career education and adult learning opportunities. Improvements are needed in ensuring the quality of work placements and WBL and reducing drop-out rate, especially by ensuring support to students with learning difficulties and difficult socioeconomic conditions.

Conclusions

The most successful aspects in VE management processes with regards to facilitating graduate employability are linked to recent reforms in VE, especially the EU-funded activities, for example, the modernised infrastructure of VEIs, updating occupational standards and reviewing programmes, implementing modular approach, establishing the Sectorial expert councils, ensuring teacher training opportunities, career education and adult learning opportunities.

Most important weaknesses in VE management processes are the lack of coordination of different processes related to VE reforms and EU-funded projects and the appropriate support to VEIs to successfully implement these activities, problems related to VE financing model, problems related to teachers (especially their availability and competence), problems related to students (especially prior knowledge, socio-economic background and motivation) and lack of labour market partners in providing work placements and WBL.

To improve the performance of VE in ensuring employability of graduates, the policy makers should consider reforming VE funding system to ensure that full costs of implementing quality VE are covered (including competitive teacher salaries) and good results of VEIs in terms of employability of students are rewarded (by implementing performance-based funding element). Targeted support activities for students from low socio-economic background and with learning difficulties should be implemented to reduce dropout and to ensure employability development for all students. Considering large dependence on the EU funds in the development of VE, mechanisms to ensure sustainability of activities currently financed by the EU-funded projects should be ensured, including developing and updating occupational standards, modernising infrastructure, developing and updating modular learning programmes, ensuring career education and adult education, ensuring courses for teachers, supporting employer engagement in ensuring work placements and WBL. In addition, better coordination, information exchange and methodological support to VEIs is needed to successfully implement reforms.

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EXCELLENCE CENTERS OF EDUCATION IN LATVIA

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ABSTRACT

The process of developing competence centres of vocational education and training is going on since 2009; they are planned to become centres of excellence. State gymnasiums can be such centres among schools of general education. The number of students in state gymnasiums compared to the number of students in other general educational establishments is totally different from the number of students in competence centres of vocational education and training compared to the number of students in other Vocational Education and Training (VET) establishments.

The aim of the work is to explain the principles of promoting excellence in Latvia, to give recommendations how to develop balanced excellence on the level of secondary education to ensure a united policy of excellence.

During the research the author:

- Compares the information about state gymnasiums and competence centres of VET,
- Explains the role of the establishments and the numbers' tendencies of students in them,
- Compares the amount of earmarked grants and their validity according to the requirements and the results of work.

Relying on the results of the analyses, the author draws a conclusion that in both – general educational level and in VET excellence is being developed. Though there are several similarities, there are substantial differences that must be taken into account while creating the future educational politics and educating the whole society.

Keywords: Vocational Education and Training, excellence, equity, general secondary education.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE WORK:

GVEE – General Vocational Educational Establishment

SG – State Gymnasium

CCVET – Competence Centre of Vocational Education and Training

EPQ – Exam of Professional Qualification

CM – Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia

NCE – National Centre for Education

CSB – Central Statistical Bureau

MES – Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia

OECD – The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

VET – Vocational Education and Training

Introduction

Essential changes have taken place in the field of Vocational Education and Training of Latvia since 2009. The result is reorganising several educational establishments and the resources have been redirected to the development of the reorganised and capable to work establishments (Kiris, 2014).

The attractiveness of General Vocational Educational Establishment (GVEE) in the eyes of pedagogues was fostered by changes in the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Latvia (CM) regulations regarding salary in GVEE that came into force in the autumn of 2016 (Latvia. Cabinet of Ministers, 2011). The change in the way how the salary is calculated improved the financial state of the pedagogues thus making these positions more attractive for new employees.

At the same time there have been changes in the VET of Latvia. And the managing institutions must take responsibility for them as well as follow how successfully they are implemented. Having reached the quantitative changes– increasing the number of students, it is necessary to turn to indicators of quality. One of them is excellence.

In the research paper problems connected to the excellence in Latvian secondary vocational education and training are being analysed.

The aim of the research is, analysing the situation, develop recommendations promoting excellence in the Latvian vocational education and training.

To reach the aim the author puts forward the following tasks:

- To find out the tendencies of development of educational excellence and educational equity in Latvia and in the world.
- To analyse normative documents for providing demands of excellence.
- To analyse the number of students in the educational establishments and the achievements in the field of excellence.

A thesis has been put forward in the work: State gymnasiums are the centres of excellence among the general educational establishments; they have their defined goals and financial support. The Vocational educational and training centres must constitute similar system of excellence matching the demands and support with State gymnasium system.

Excellence and Equity

There are two opposed systems regarding educational quality. That is a tendency towards excellence and as opposed to it – progressing towards equity.

Excellence cannot be accidental; it must be planned (McMahon et al, 2015). Working towards massive excellence purposefully, the society must understand that excellence has its negative sides; it cannot please mediocrity and create comfort for the society (Rossouw, 2015).

The countries of the world that have pronounced progress towards excellence are Singapore, South Korea; educational excellence in literature must be defined precisely, but in the context of education it has subjective values and context (Brown, 2017).

The model offered by Joo promoting excellence in VET is demonstrating how industry cooperates with college through orders needed skills and technicians. Technical education for employees, regular classes for students, education for jobseekers and internationally – associated education makes a customized agreement that impacts industry and college as VET representing institution (Joo, 2017). There is a constant cooperation going on between the industry (customer) and the educational establishment (performer). As the result of cooperation there is transferring experiences from the employer to the educational establishment, a regular process of self-control and updating. The international education of employees, students, unemployed is a planned process, the accessibility of which improves educational excellence (Gunzelmann, 2009).

The approach suggested by Joo model is being used in Latvia in GVEE, it is stated in regulations issued by CM (Latvia. Cabinet of Ministers, 2013). The input of finances into vocational education, while improving technologies of education and accessibility (MES, 2018), is evidence of progress of educational excellence.

Characteristics of equity: socio-emotional comfort, confidence, education based on competences, the relative growth of a personality (Rossouw, 2015, Gourlay, Stevenson, 2017). Evident conditions of equity respect special needs of each side and put an accent on the relative growth, focusing on being aware of learning and analyses (Oliņa et al, 2018). Many authors object to the complicated multifactor concept “excellence”, pointing out that it only looks accessible to everyone and it limits studies based on competences as well as social political needs of students (Gourlay, Stevenson, 2017)

In the USA, UK and Finland the needs for education of gifted students are not met purposefully, that is characteristics that shows a visible progress towards equity; competition is an essential part of the success of the society (Brown, 2017).

OECD in its model of equity of educations, points out the most significant indicators that influence the socio economical well – being. The model demonstrates that 3 important factors stand out: cognitive achievements, the social emotional well– being and the educational attainment. In the spotlight there is a student and the approach directed by a student (OECD, 2018)

Speaking about GVEE in Latvia the movement towards education based on competences cannot be ignored. If students in the primary level will have acquired knowledge based on competences and practical work, GVEE would have to continue the same type of approach. That is a big step towards equity.

To acquire positive traits from directions of equity and excellence development, a synthesis of approaches is possible. Applying Friedrich Nietzsche's drastic point of view to the vocational education, opens a dimension of excellence to all students, offering "to excel yourself" not "be the best" (Joosten, 2015). It fosters relative excellence. It must be understood that the result of a synthesis like this means changing not only the way of studying but also the way of assessing. Each learner's individual growth must be evaluated, and the attitude must be changed thus improving the wish to develop and surpass oneself.

All level VET participants must develop towards both – excellence and equity: policy makers, vocational educational establishments and employers have to develop modern, timely, prestigious educational environment, the professional competence of the pedagogues must be improved but the students have to take responsibility of their own growth and the development of their career (Baranovska et al., 2015).

Methodology

To get a notion of excellence in the secondary education in Latvia, the author compared state gymnasiums (SG) and Competence Centres of Vocational Education and Training (CCVET) in the following categories: duties, support, the criteria of founding, and the quality indicators. The CM regulations have been analysed to clarify the demands set for founding an educational establishment, requiring or losing a special status of SG or CCVET. To define quantitative and qualitative achievements data of National Centre of Education (NCE) and Central Statistics Bureau (CSB) have been compared.

To compare the proportion of students admitted to schools and those who have dropped – out the relative calculation method has been used: inquiring about those dropouts that started studying respectively 3 years earlier in SG or 4 years earlier in CCVET. Such approach allows avoiding

comparing non-objective data during one school year. Comparing like that can be misleading because the quotient of admitted students and dropouts is connected to demographical indicators.

To compare salary of SG and CCVET teachers, quotient of “normative learners” was considered. Basically one learner has quotient 1. As some conditions may vary (for example, school urbanisation, type of school, learners’ teaching programme, subordination of appropriate ministry etc.) quotient may increase up to 3.49. This quotient is called “normative learner” for one person. Total income for school is calculated by MES according summarized normative learners to one rate of a pedagogue (according to regulation it varies).

Results

Having analysed the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers on SG (Latvia. Cabinet of Ministers, 2001) and CCVET (Latvia. Cabinet of Ministers, 2013), the author draws a conclusion that the status of SG and CCVET is secured on the level of CM under guidance of MES (Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia).

The responsibilities given to both types of establishments do not differ essentially. They include participation in the policy making of educational field, the methodical support in the region, the development and publishing of teaching materials, participations in the excellence events of the corresponding field (educational olympiades, state and international competitions etc). The State grant for salary of pedagogues do not differ essentially. The methods of calculating depend on urbanisation for SG, does not depend on urbanisation for CCVET.

But evaluating the earmarked grant it must be understood that the number of normative learners to one rate of a pedagogue in SG is from 10 to 16, while in CCVET 10.8 and the quotient 1.4 is used for each student in SG whilst in CCVET the quotient is 1.0 (Latvia. Cabinet of Ministers, 2011, 2016). The amount earmarked grant for status is not different. All pedagogues of SG and CCVET get 10% higher salary (quotient 1.1).

More essential differences are observed in the quantitative indicators. Having analysed the demands of the number of students at schools, a conclusion can be drawn that quality of learning programmes is more important in SG (comparatively lower demands for the minimal number of students). At the same time the demands in CCVET are very high; paying the most attention to uniting schools and their branches. In an establishment like this– with branches– all programmes are excellent (financially supported) and higher quotients for the status acquired are used for all students.

Evaluating the results of the quality it has been noted that in SG there are 17.5% of students from the whole number of secondary students and during the course of years they have qualified to reach a certain level in Mandatory Centralised Exams and have shown stable results. At the same time the students at CCVET comprise 82,7% (Table 1) of the total number of students studying at general vocational educational establishments. Observing the distributional disbalance of students a conclusion can be made that the main criteria in the case of CCVET are the results of exams of professional qualification (EPQ). The demands of passing them (EPQ) are too low to qualify at CCVET. Analysing the results of EPQ (Figure 1) it can be seen that the results of the exam correspond to Normal distribution, but the graph is tending towards high achievements, that is an evidence of criteria that can be reached too easily to get good results in EPQ.

Taking grades “7” and higher, it can be calculated that in school year 2017/18 grades over “7” were given to 75% of students the majority of which are from CCVET.

Table 1. The Proportion of Students in SG and CCVET Compared to Other Educational Establishments (Latvia. Central Statistical Bureau, 2019)

Parameter	Number of students	Proportion (%)
school year 2017/18 GVEE	24947	
school year 2017/18 CCVET (included in GVEE)	20632	82.7
school year 2017/18 General education secondary schools	37179	
school year 2017/18 SG (included in the secondary schools)	6500	17.5

The results differ as regards the admitted students and those who have dropped out. The minimum dropout rate for 2020 set by EU is not less than 10% (European Commission, 2010). The same criteria are applied to SG and CCVET. In the country on the whole secondary schools stay within the boundaries of 10% (Latvia. National Centre for Education, 2018). The Figure 2 demonstrates a situation where the potential number of students in GVEE would be maintained even adding the European Union stated 10% in 2020 but the number of students in last years' decreases directly proportionally to the growing number of dropouts. Which means that instead of trying to stay within the boundaries of 10% in a certain year – schools must not try to increase the number of admitted students.

They must take supportive measures so that the right choice is made for choosing the profession thus preventing dropping out.

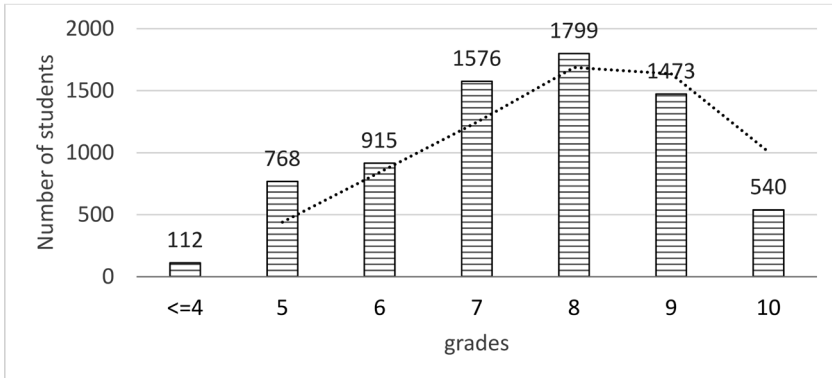


Figure 1. EPQ Results in the General Vocational Education Establishments in School Year 2017/18 (Latvia. National Centre for Education, 2019)

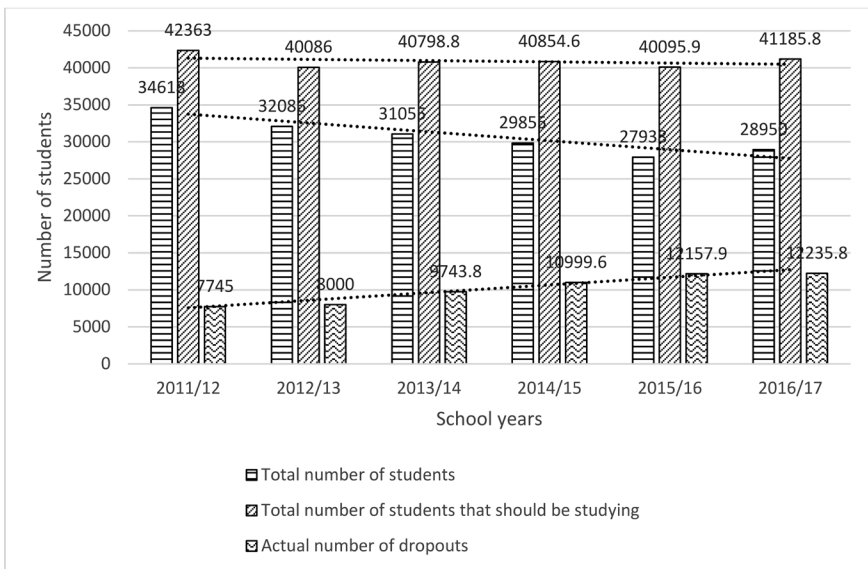


Figure 2. The Number of GVEE Dropouts (Latvia. Central Statistical Bureau, 2019)

Conclusions

A clear policy of developing excellence and equity dominates in the vocational education and training in the world. A synthesis of excellence and equity can be spotted in Latvia, a process of finding the most optimal proportion is going on. Excellence on the level of general education is granted to state gymnasiums. Excellence on the level of vocational training and education is given to Competence centres of vocational education and training. There are common tendencies but there is no united methodology to develop excellence in both directions.

17% of general educational secondary school students study at state gymnasiums that are stable values and bases for the development of excellence at schools of general education.

83% of students, study at CCVET; an overproduction of CCVET is observed; there is no competition among establishments that is a real driving force in the development of excellence.

There is a great number of dropouts in GVEE; the high results of admitting students are directly proportional to the number of students dropping out; at schools of general education, including SG, the number of dropouts is within the boundaries of the criteria set by EU for 2020.

Discussion

The results demonstrate that on the whole Latvia wants to develop the dimension of excellence, but changes and corrections are necessary in the field of vocational education so stagnation does not set in. Regulations for founding CCVET must be renewed and corrected to decrease the number of students at CCVET to the 17% of students at state gymnasiums. In further researches the best way how to reach a quotient like that should be found.

It was found out that EPQ must be more complicated but doing it would not solve the problem of quality and excellence at CCVET. Perhaps the stress must be put on the indicator of excellence in the whole establishment. If the establishment provides programmes of various fields, it does not mean that it is excellent in all fields. Perhaps the number of CCVETs should be equalled to the number of industries, stating that the school can be a centre of excellence only in the field where excellence is gained, and it is one of a kind in the whole country.

To foster the indicators of excellence and improve the quality the criteria of decreasing the number of dropouts must be included in the model of forming salary in schools of Latvia. The assessment system in general must be changed, putting more accents on relative achievements of each student and evaluating student's and school's involvement in the

achievements. A parallel work with families and students must be done increasing the understanding that each student must take responsibility about his/her own personal growth and ambitions. They must be aware of the investment of public resources in their education.

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INCIDENT REPORTING IN THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR IN LATVIA

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ABSTRACT

From the risk management perspective educational sector is exposed to a number of different risks which may result in serious incidents: student safety, research labs (e.g. chemical), food provision, new educational program introduction, change of methodology in teaching, budget allocation, selecting of co-operation partners, recruitment of teachers, accreditation process, power failure in educational institution, personal data leaks, and other. The cost of claims to education institution, not only financial, but also from a public image standpoint—can be significant. Educational institutions need to protect students, teachers, faculty, administration, support workers, contracted workers, community and their institution's reputation and budget. If educational institution's reputation is affected, a serious threat to future admissions, endowments, and financial strength is posed. Identifying and forecasting these risks via the incident reporting process is a common approach used by the risk managers in the corporate sector. Although the educational sector may face lower losses rather than the industrial sectors, effective incident management would help to insure avoiding losses and be prepared for any upcoming challenges. In the education institutions of Latvia this practice is not widespread: according to empirical research results only 1/3 of all respondents confirmed that their educational institution use incident reporting as a tool for effective risk management. The aim of this study is to analyse the practice of incident reporting in other sectors, where it is successfully used, and establish applicability of these methods to the sector of education. Recommendations on how to effectively apply incident reporting to the daily routine in education management are provided as well.

Keywords: incident reporting, risk management, management of education, quality assurance, safety.

Introduction

The concept of incident management was established, and in some cases even is regulated by law, in such industries like banking, healthcare, aviation, construction, rail, energy, manufacturing, maritime, etc. (Margaryan, Littlejohn, 2016; Canham, Jun, 2018; Staender, 2011). Incident management is needed in order to improve organisation's performance and internal control environment; it is important to know what particular incidents occur in the organisation to be able to identify weakness points and possible breaches (Chapelle, 2019). Incident management practices in different industries were researched in the course of this study by analysing published scientific articles of other researchers in order to draw lessons how incident management could be applied in the sector of education. In parallel, an empirical research was performed to establish current usage of incident reporting in the educational institutions in Latvia by way of online questionnaire to the leaders of educational institutions. This study looks into how incident management could be applied to the sector of education, where currently this practice is not well known according to the results of performed empirical research. The conclusion is drawn taking into account the findings of desktop and empirical research results. In this study authors define incident as an event that is different from regularly followed routine due to failure in process or IT system, human factor errors or external environment caused situation.

Methodology

The study was conducted in two parts. First part consisted of systematic literature review research method. The search was performed in the Web of Science scientific database, entering the following key words in the search engine: "incident reporting", "incident management" and "incident management and reporting in education". Results of the search were analysed on the validity for research purpose and the most relevant articles for the last five years were selected for profound analysis and development of recommendations. In addition, relevant academic books published within the last year available to authors were reviewed for additional information related to the research. This research provided with comprehensive information about international practice of incident reporting and management, its pros and cons and the conditions required for successful implementation of incident reporting in different types of organisations, studied in more details in the following sections.

Second part of the research consisted of empirical research. Online questionnaire developed as part of wider research about risks management

in the educational sector of Latvia, was partially used for this research, where respondents, apart from other risk management questions, were asked to answer whether the education institution to which they belong, performs collection and registration of incidents. The question was structured as multiple choice with the following options:

1. Yes, incidents are registered in the risk database;
2. No, incidents are not registered;
3. I do not know;
4. Please specify if neither of the options applies (space was provided for the comment).

Questionnaire was placed into online platform SurveyMonkey.com generating online link and allowing participants to stay anonymous. Link to the survey was distributed via social networks, e-mail to the Association of Education Leaders in Latvia and e-mailed to 739 e-mail addresses of various educational institutions of Latvia (secondary schools, colleges, universities, pre-school institutions). In addition, 10 printed questionnaires were distributed to students of Pedagogy and Psychology Faculty at the premises of the University of Latvia.

Following qualitative review of returned questionnaires, it was established that a total of 127 stakeholders fully completed and returned the questionnaire in good quality; all of them have direct relation to educational sector from different parts of Latvia – majority were managers and leaders of educational institutions, most of the responses were received from secondary schools. For this paper, only one question relating to incident reporting was used.

Results

Occurrence of incidents is unavoidable and even a minor incident can provide valuable feedback for improvement of safety, quality and management in the organisation (Westhuizen, Stanz, 2017; Staender, 2011). Staender (2011), Margaryan, Littlejohn, (2016) and Stemn, Bofinger, (2018) discuss the concept of “learning from incidents”, which means that the organisation can learn from unexpected safety events to prevent similar such events that may happen in the future. This may be applicable not only to safety events, but any incidents, that cause any kind of losses. Nowadays the concept is applied in variety of industries, such as manufacturing, aviation, healthcare, transport, banking and finance, etc. (Margaryan, Littlejohn, 2016; Staender, 2011). Incident reporting provides the opportunity to reveal the weaknesses that allowed incident to happen and to act upon it to make required improvements (Staender, 2011; Chapelle, 2019).

The effective process contains important steps, which include reporting of incident, thorough investigation to identify and analyse the root causes of the incident and then drawing out recommendations and “learning points”, that are used for implementation of required changes in order to prevent the same incident from re-occurring (Staender, 2011; Margaryan, Littlejohn, 2016; Stemn, Bofinger, 2018). Staender (2011) compares incident reporting to the storytelling and states that these reports can be collected by an organisation as documented experience used for applying necessary improvements.

Another important step in incident management is to communicate the required changes in human behaviour or processes to relevant responsible stakeholders, as without good communication implementation of changes (or mitigation actions) will not be effective and may not take place at all, if not addressed to the key responsible people in the organisation. The communication channels can be reports, internal regulations and manuals for employees, notice boards, notification e-mails, team discussions (Margaryan, Littlejohn, 2016). Stemn, Bofinger (2018) noted that learning from incidents is the key for achieving high levels of safety in organisations. Moreover, incident reporting is useful for scenario planning and analysis, which should be used for critical incident planning and management. Incident database can serve as a great input for risk modelling and scenario planning (Mazaheri, Montewka, 2015; Chapelle, 2019).

Figure 3 reflects the results provided by the empirical research question related to incident reporting in educational institutions of Latvia. As it can be seen, only 32% of respondents provided confident answer that incidents are recorded in their educational institution. Another 9% specified that not all, but several cases that meet certain criteria (e.g. serious trauma caused to student at school that result in calling an ambulance, school closure due to emergency situation, etc.) are recorded in internal register. 27% of respondents confirmed that in their educational institutions there is no incident reporting routine and 32% responded that they do not know whether incidents are recorded, what means that incident reporting awareness is not practiced in their institutions and therefore it is assumed that incidents are not recorded in their institutions, as the key prerogative for incident reporting and management is awareness of employees about such requirement. In addition, ten respondents, provided following comments below the question:

- “We have incident register, but nothing is registered in it”
- “Never heard about incident reporting”
- “Did not have any need for incident reporting”
- “We create an act about what has happened”
- “Never had any incidents”

- “Incidents are registered according to status (students, teachers, etc.)”
- “Incident are partially registered”
- “Incidents are registered if needed”
- “Acts are made about work related incidents”
- “Protocols and acts are made for incidents”

Hence, empirical research results demonstrated quite low awareness of respondents about incident reporting and low usage of this management tool in the educational institutions of Latvia. It is sometimes replaced with formal protocols and acts, as provided by some comments.

Does the educational institution to which you belong perform collection and registration of realised incidents in the internal incident or risk database?

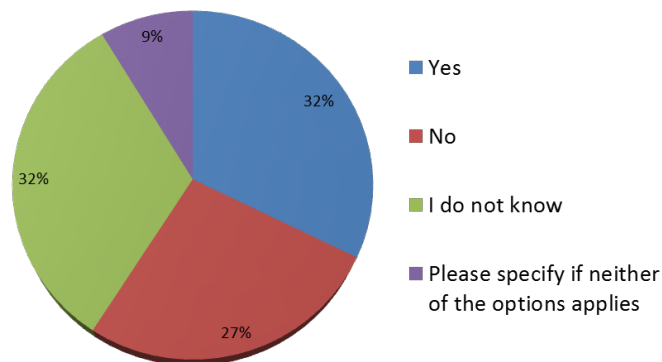


Figure 1. Distribution of answers on incident reporting routine question

Discussion

Studies of Margaryan, Littlejohn (2016) and Westhuizen, Stanz (2017) identified that there are problems with behaviour of reporting, i.e. incidents often are not reported because employees are reluctant to report due to the burden of completing incident report and consequent liability to get involved in the investigation or root causes. Lack of understanding of the incident causes or the importance of the incidents is additional reasons for avoiding reporting incidents. Also often organisational ethics act as the key driver for reporting or not reporting the incidents (Westhuizen, Stanz, 2017).

Filtness, Goode (2015) performed a research about usage of incident reporting system in hot air ballooning industry and came to conclusion that majority of respondents did not report incidents mainly due to lack of understanding of incident reporting process, when to report and how, as well as not seeing the significance of incidents to be reported. Another important aspect raised by majority of researchers is ease of incident reporting process: the simpler is the routine the more successful it becomes. Westhuizen, Stanz (2017) highlighted the perceived burden of incident reporting, which served as predicament for active reporting of incidents in air navigation industry. Hence, user-friendly simple system is an important factor in successful implementation if incident reporting in any organisation.

Staender (2011) in addition mentions the fear for reporting, as it may affect reporter's further career. Filtness, Goode (2015) mention incident database as an important tool for holistic incident management for implementation of improvements and follow-up. In addition, aspects of privacy and usefulness are important, as often the reporters do not want to be recognised and there should be value in spending time into the reporting of incidents, what means that it is expected that the incident will be investigated, followed up and conclusions for improvements will be drawn.

There are a number of different methodologies how incidents can be analysed, lessons learned applied and discovered risk effectively managed. Stemn, Bofinger (2018) highlight bowtie analysis (BTA) as the most effective tool for learning from incidents, where the focus is on threats, consequences and required mitigation controls to prevent the threats from realising and to minimise the consequences. By focusing on the threats, it is possible to develop mitigation action plans that will control threats and prevent the incident, whereas by focusing on consequences, mitigation actions will minimise the impact of realised threats.

Canham, Jun (2018) in turn discuss the usability of Systems-Theoretic Accident Model and Processes (STAMP) concept, which consists of 8 key steps:

1. identification of threats related to incident
2. identification of safety-related impediments related to the incident
3. documentation of safety controls in place ought to control the threats
4. determining possible events that lead to the incident and analysing frontline controls
5. analysing higher-level controls and reasons why they allowed threats to realise and how
6. studying overall communication and management problems that could have led to the incident

7. looking for any recent changes that could have contributed to weakening of controls and contributed to the incident
8. development of recommendations and mitigation action plans to strengthen controls and prevent incident from re-occurring in the future.

This approach is very comprehensive and being applied would provide very comprehensive risk picture to the organisation, however its disadvantage is in the amount of required time and effort, what most of the organisations would not be able to contribute in order to fulfil the entire process.

Staender (2011) in his study discussed so-called “plan-do-check-act” (PDCA) cycles, concerned with the incidents that call for initiating of improvement process. This is simpler and less time-consuming approach, where it is possible to act upon the incident by planning concrete mitigation actions, implementing them and then performing follow-up on the effectiveness of controls. This is the most popular approach applied by the organisations due to its simplicity and effective use of resources. In combination with BTA approach discussed above, it would be possible to focus planned actions on threats or on consequences and thus mitigate the most painful problems that organisation is facing.

Stemn, Bofinger (2018) researched the consequences of not using incident reporting as a tool for learning and improving organisational performance and came to the following conclusion, that not paying attention to incident recording and learning from incidents leads to:

- regular repetition of similar incidents that wastes time and resources on frequent resolution of the same problem
- transformation of insignificant incidents into significant and even crisis
- incidents start to be accepted as normal course in daily routine, thus affecting long-term quality of provided services.

Stemn, Bofinger (2018) highlight that the key prerequisite for successful implementation of learning from incidents is internal culture focused on learning and self-improvement. In addition, organisations need to ensure qualitative collection of incidents and root causes, thorough investigation and developing efficient and well communicated improvement plan. According to Staender (2011), prerequisites for successful implementation of incident reporting are the following important factors: comprehensive training of what should be reported and how, continuing trainings on the importance and purpose of incident reporting, criteria for reporting, list of incident examples, user-friendly reporting form, clarity on how to report, dedicated person allocated for reported incident management, regular feedback on reported incidents, etc. In addition, Staender (2011) states, that an important aspect is ensuring confidentiality of the person reporting

an incident and making sure that the information will not be used against them.

The following type of register can be used by the educational institutions to record all incidents that happen, including low impact incidents. This type of register would be easy to use and the questions would guide the reporter on what needs to be recorded, what will subsequently assist in more comprehensive analysis if needed:

Table 1. Incident reporting form example

Incident nr.	<i>It is important to allocate specific number for each separate incident</i>
What happened?	<i>Short description of incident</i>
When and How was it discovered?	<i>Short description how the incident was discovered to reveal transparency or any breaches</i>
What are the root causes?	<i>Most important part to analyse why the incident happened and what caused it</i>
What are the consequences/losses?	<i>Description of financial and non-financial losses and consequences</i>
When and how did it start?	<i>Important to note to better understand root causes and possible additional breaches</i>
What mitigation actions are planned/executed?	<i>Here the focus can be on mitigating the root cause or the consequences</i>
Status	<i>Status of the mitigations actions and the incident itself, e.g. “closed, mitigation actions no needed”, or “open, mitigation actions in process”, or “closed, mitigation actions in process”, etc.</i>

Threshold for reporting should not be set in order not to miss small but frequent events that impact the quality of education and general risk profile. Incidents can be recorded in a journal one by one or placed in Excel database with the same columns made vertical for recording many incidents on one sheet in order to have holistic summary for analysis and reporting.

Conclusion

Incident reporting is an important tool for learning from own failures and for effective management. In the sector of education, where the main stakeholders are children, incident reporting is crucial, as it helps to strengthen security and safety, improves the quality of education and provides holistic risk picture for each individual institution and for groups

of institutions, addressing their current problems. Having an incident register in every educational institution, which is filled in from completed incident reporting templates, as provided in Table 1, would assist managers and officials to address correct problems faced by concrete institutions and to analyse regional problems and correlation of incidents with other factors that would help to realise required developments. Incident register provides managers with holistic overview of the risk picture and thus adds value to more informed decision making and budget planning.

Nevertheless, it is needed to better understand how to motivate educational institutions to adapt the practice of incident reporting and how to make this tool more popular and useful. Hence additional research is needed in way of interviewing stakeholders in the educational sector in order to better understand struggles and predicaments faced by educational sector managers and employees in regards to incident reporting tools and incident management.

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WAYS TO IMPROVE THE COMPETITIVENESS OF HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

The article describes the main trends in the development of higher education in the world. The aim of this work, as defined by the authors, is to develop the main directions for increasing the competitiveness of educational programs of higher education taking into account modern trends. An analysis of the possibilities for increasing the competitiveness of higher education programs implemented by universities is presented. The proposed ways to improve the competitiveness of educational programs include increased involvement in the processes of international cooperation in the field of education, the internationalization of the educational process, the creation of modern training programs aimed at obtaining several professions in related fields of knowledge, wider involvement of professionals from specialized organizations in the teaching process. Particular attention is given to the factors and measures in the framework of internationalization that directly affect the competitiveness of educational programs.

Keywords: competitiveness, competitiveness of educational programs, educational programs, higher education, internationalization of education, professional standards.

Introduction

Over the past several years, higher education institutions have been faced with global changes. Bologna reforms have led to a significant modernization of the education system in European universities. In addition, the changing

conditions of political and economic, social and cultural systems require modern universities to apply proactive strategies aimed at modernizing educational programs and developing their infrastructure capabilities.

Further large-scale changes in education are inevitable in the coming years. Education becomes continuous, universal, person-oriented, represented by a variety of different forms.

The transformation of education is seen as a new opportunity for business and economic growth, an instrument of influence in the global market (Schleicher, 2017). The state and society can support or block these opportunities.

Results & Discussion

The main modern trends in the development of higher education can be identified as follows (Neubauer, 2012):

- improving the quality of education and creativity of universities (Gogoleva, Balgimbaeva, 2012);
- adjusting educational programs to the needs of society, universities and business;
- taking into account technological, financial and environmental standards;
- designing the educational process in the context of accelerating changes in industry, economy and society, due to the development of technology and the growing complexity of global markets and management systems;
- developing and strengthening labor market orientation of bachelor's programs;
- developing an effective system of quality assurance in universities, fostering the development of an institutional culture of quality;
- modern approaches to the design of accreditation systems, independent certification systems;
- lifelong education to support human development throughout life;
- obsolescence of many traditional professions in connection with the introduction of artificial intelligence, robotics, automated control systems, the emergence of new professions;
- the impact of global rankings on research in the field of higher education and the production of knowledge;
- creation of global educational platforms, the emergence of "universities for a billion";
- personalization of learning paths;
- the aging of the population, the growth of the middle class and the growth of the quality of health care lead to the emergence of a mass and

growing class of socially, physically and mentally active people over 60 and, as a consequence, the emergence of Universities of the Third Age;

- development of cognitive technologies, etc.

At the same time, in a significant number of educational institutions, the main factor of their existence in the market is a high level of competitiveness. Universities face daily competition for new talented students.

The educational institution becomes a more significant element of the market system, forming public consciousness, imparting knowledge and skills, while being a seller of educational services and a buyer of highly skilled labor.

Given the increasing requirements to the quality of education and the need to introduce new learning technologies, as well as dynamic changes in the conditions of functioning and increased competition in the market of educational services, universities not only need to have a highly qualified teaching staff, modern equipment and infrastructure, to use innovative teaching methods, but also must offer competitive individual educational programs. Much attention should be also paid to the reputation of the University and its place in various international rankings. At the same time, the educational institution should take into account the needs of the labor market and shape its educational programs depending on the changing requirements of potential employers.

Improving the competitiveness of universities and their educational programs can be achieved by a wider participation in the processes of international cooperation in the field of education. Internationalization of educational programs is a fundamental factor in the preparation of highly qualified specialists who are able to work in a multinational environment and meet the requirements of the international labor market.

Internationalization of education will make it possible to achieve the universality of acquired knowledge and skills (Grinevich, Kemaev, Kemaeva, 2011), to focus on international trends and requirements of the labor market, to increase innovation in higher education, to promote the development of science through joint research (Smith, 2012, Fokina, 2014).

By establishing joint laboratories and conducting joint research, more opportunities will be provided to expand grant support for research, to increase publication activity in international publications and to hold joint international conferences.

Another modern approach to attracting students is to create modern training programs aimed at obtaining several professions in related fields of knowledge by introducing a modular principle of training.

The development of educational programs can be based on the method of functional analysis, involving the “inventory” of professional standards and their labor functions in the relevant field of professional activity.

By clarifying with employers the understanding of the content of work types and work functions that are necessary to ensure their effectiveness, it will be possible to determine the content of training modules. Each module may include the training in several disciplines, and the acquired knowledge and skills will be further consolidated during students' internships. Thus, in the course of their training, students will have the opportunity to gain skills in several professions. This will improve the adaptability and ensure graduates' success in the labor market.

The development of educational programs in foreign languages in various areas of training will improve the academic mobility of students, the recognition of the University, and will contribute to the development of exchange education programs and double degree programs; it will also help to increase the number of partner universities. Increased mobility will improve the visibility of the University and its educational programs in other countries, it will also expand the general cultural and professional competence of teachers and students, will help to strengthen the position of the University in the international market of educational services and create its favorable image (Gorylev, Avralev, Kamynina, 2017). Professional development of teaching staff members at foreign universities, the involvement of specialists from foreign educational institutions and companies will provide an opportunity to introduce relevant knowledge and skills in the educational process. Exchange of faculty members who teach their courses in a foreign language will contribute to enhancing the exchange of knowledge and experience, it will also raise the prestige of the educational program as a whole (Tsvigun, 2015).

Conclusion

We describe the results of this research the main trends in the development of higher education in the world, which show directions for increasing the competitiveness of educational programs of higher education.

We believe that it is possible to carry out joint research, international activities, establishing joint laboratories, the creation of modern training programs aimed at obtaining several professions in related fields of knowledge, network programs, etc., that will be a productive form of interaction between universities, which ultimately give a synergistic effect. In order to improve the organization of training and provide the economy with competitive personnel, it is necessary to involve in the training process not only regular faculty members, but also practitioners with considerable experience in respective professional fields. This approach will contribute to the convergence of theoretical knowledge and practical activities of students. These are important findings in the understanding of the an

analysis of the possibilities for increasing the competitiveness of higher education programs implemented by universities.

These basic findings are consistent with research showing that education becomes continuous, universal, person-oriented and the transformation of education is an instrument of influence in the global market, business and economic growth.

Increasing the attractiveness of the University for students requires an integrated approach to the study and development of appropriate recruitment strategies. Heads of higher education institutions should know and understand the determinants that influence the decisions on student enrollment. Future research should further develop and confirm these initial findings and should conduct to identify the motivation of students in choosing a higher education institution.

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INVESTIGATION OF LATVIAN LANGUAGE PROGRAM MANAGEMENT MODELS IN MAJOR WORLDWIDE UNIVERSITIES

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ABSTRACT

Compared with some European countries and America, Latvian language teaching is relatively new practice in China. Since the launch of the first Latvian language program at Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) in 2010, three management models have been implemented and evaluated. For almost 10 years, approximately 130 students have been involved in Latvian language learning, either in elective courses or in bachelor degree programs. Positive results have been observed, but problems still exist. Lack of experience, limited staff and materials lead to unsystematic teaching practice and make it difficult to fulfil the aims. To look for solutions, one effective way is to learn from others' experience. This investigation took "Latvian language program management model in tertiary level" as subject, used the methods of document analysis, semi-structured interview and observation to conclude and compare the program management models in the main universities which teach Latvian language. During the period of March, 2018 to January, 2019, 4 teachers and 3 students from 5 universities were interviewed. Besides, although Latvian language teaching in Japan is not organized in tertiary level, considering the similarity of learning style, the teaching practice in Japan was also included in the investigation. Data analysis compared the key factors in the 6 cases and presented mainly three management models, which offered good examples for teaching practice in China. The case in America especially showed an effective solution to the problem in the Discipline-directional module at BFSU. Furthermore, it was also observed that the program management in different universities is quite enclosed, and the programs seldom have multilateral cooperation. It also recommended to promote cooperation among the programs in different countries, in order to maximize the effectiveness of teaching resources.

Keywords: Latvian as foreign language, program management model, tertiary level.

Introduction

1. Management of the Latvian Language Programs in China

The development of cooperation between China and EU promotes the EU official languages studies in China, including Latvian language. In 2010, Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU) initiated the first Latvian language program. But due to lack of local teachers and teaching materials specific for Chinese learners, the Latvian Language Teaching-research Office at BFSU currently manages this program in form of elective course, which is instructed by teachers from Latvia and accessible to all students in bachelor's studies. In this phase, BFSU also trains local teachers and develops teaching materials in cooperation with the University of Latvia and the Latvian Language Agency. According to the plan, the first group of 4-year bachelor students will be enrolled in 2020. The bachelor program consists of 8 semesters, among which, in the previous 4 semesters main attention is paid to language skills and proficiency. During the last 4 semesters students are led to improve language proficiency, to intensively get general knowledge about Latvia and Europe, as well as to start study in a specific discipline with Latvian language. Within the 8 semesters, students spend 2 semesters in Latvia as an exchange student.

After the initiation of "China-CEEC" Cooperation, more universities in China have interest to start Latvian language program. In 2015, Beijing International Studies University (BISU) began to enrol students in two management models: one is "3+4" Model, which includes 3-year high school and 4-year bachelor's studies; the other one is regular 4-year bachelor's program. Programs are administrated by local staff and all lectures are instructed by teachers from Latvia.

Until now, approximately 130 students in the two universities have been involved in Latvian language learning. Positive results have been observed in three management models, but problems also exist. The aims of Latvian language program management are to recruit a well-structured group of teachers with professional skills and distinct research interests, to guarantee students opportunity to fulfil Latvian language proficiency and necessary competence, to support students do basic studies in one discipline with Latvian language, furthermore to prepare them for labour market or further study which is related to Latvia. However, lack of experience, limited staff and materials lead to unsystematic teaching practice and make it difficult to fulfil all the aims.

The aim of this research is to investigate and analyse the management models of the Latvian language program in other universities worldwide, to find solutions to the existing problems in the practice in China, and to get prepared for the first bachelor students' enrolment at BFSU.

2. The Overview of Teaching Latvian as Foreign Language Worldwide

Latvian is one of the two living languages with official status, which belong to the Baltic branch of the Indo-European language family. It retains many archaic features of the Proto-Indo-European language; therefore, it has high linguistic value and attracts linguists' research interest. In Europe, some universities, such as University of Stockholm and University of Vilnius, started to teach Latvian in 1970s or even earlier (Šalme, Žigūre, 2008, 9). However, due to the historical situation in Latvia, Latvian language learning and research were just limited in the academia of some specialists.

In 1990s, after Latvian restoration of independence, a booming period of Latvian language teaching was observed in Europe. Since then, more than 20 universities have managed Latvian language teaching mainly in three models: specific academic program, interdisciplinary course in some certain programs and elective course (Šalme, Žigūre, 2008, 5). Moreover, teaching practice started in another continent. In 1993, University of Washington organized the Baltic Studies Summer Institute and began to teach Latvian at multiple levels in autumn in 1994.

At the beginning of the 21st century, especially since Latvia became the EU member, situation has greatly changed. On one hand, the status of Latvian is strengthened as one official language in EU; on the other hand, the mobility in higher education in EU also promoted the language learning. Summer school, distance teaching and self-learning materials are in request as supplement to traditional classroom teaching. In this phase, Teaching Latvian as a Foreign Language (TLFL) became a subject in educational science, which is parallel with Teaching Latvian as the Mother Tongue and Teaching Latvian as a Second Language (Šalme, Žigūre, 2008, 5).

Since the new sub-discipline was defined, academia has paid more attention to this field. A number of researches have been done to present TLFL theory and practice (Šalme, 2008, 2011; Horiguchi, 2010; Šalme, Auziņa, 2016; Lapinska, 2016; Laizāne, 2016, 2017, 2018; Lauze, Laivenice, 2018; Grīnberga, 2018), and more teaching materials for foreigners, even specific for learners in some certain countries have been published with the support of the Latvian Language Agency. However, the focus of these achievements is mainly on language teaching and acquisition; the management of the Latvian language program in the institutions is seldom discussed.

In the last ten years, it is observed that some Latvian language programs in Europe are in shrink: the number of the enrolled students decreases, and some programs even temporarily are suspended. In contrast, a new tendency appears in East Asia. Besides the situation mentioned above in China, practice of Latvian language teaching in Japan is also worthy to be

discussed, although it is not organized as regular program in university. In 2007, Tokyo Foreign Studies University started to arrange Latvian language courses in summer school. Besides, from 2007 and 2009 respectively, learners who are interested in the language have the opportunity to learn it in the Latvia Embassy in Tokyo and Consulate Section in Osaka (Horiguchi, 2010).

Methodology and Materials

The investigation was mainly implemented by semi-structured interview. Interviews were conducted during the period from March, 2018 to January, 2019. The participants include 5 teachers and 3 students. Details are as follows: 3 master students from the University of Warsaw (UW-PL), 1 teacher from the Stockholm University (SU), 1 teacher from the Vilnius University (VU), 1 teacher from the University of Tartu (UT) and 1 teacher from the Rīga Stradiņš University. Among which, the teacher from the Rīga Stradiņš University in 2014 conducted a semi-structured interview with her colleague, who was working at the University of Washington (UW-USA), and she reported the results, which were required in this investigation. Although the Latvian language courses in Japan are not organized in tertiary level, taking into consideration the similarity of learning style between Chinese and Japanese, one Japanese teacher, who is promoting Latvian language study, was also invited to the interview. The questions were about the key components in the program management process, and its details are presented in the next section.

Besides, document analysis and observation were employed as complementary methods. The analysed documents included program information on the homepage, syllabi, textbooks and teaching materials, reports of the Latvian Language Agency, etc. Observation on the general environment was made in the University of Stockholm, University of Vilnius and University of Tartu.

Results and Discussions

The main results, which were generated in the investigation, are listed in Table 1.

In all the 5 universities, Latvian language programs are subprograms under Baltic-related programs, among which, the 4 programs in Europe are more focus on philology, while the program in the University of Washington is related to regional studies. According to the type of courses offered by the Latvian language subprograms, the management models in the 5 universities can be divided into 3 categories. In the first model, the

Table 1. The key components of program management in the investigated institutions

	UW-PL	SU	VU	UT	UW-USA	Japan
Faculty	Department of General Linguistics, East Asian Comparative Linguistics and Baltic Studies	Department of Slavic and Baltic Studies, Finnish, Dutch and German	Faculty of Philology	Faculty of Arts and Humanities	Scandinavian Department	(Embassy in Tokyo)
General program	Baltic Philology	Baltic Languages	Lithuanian Philology and Latvian Language	Languages of the Baltic Region	Baltic Studies	--
Year of initiate	1995	1972	1999	1997	1994	2007
Needs analysis	research and professional needs	research and personal interest	research and professional needs	research, professional needs and personal interest	research and personal interest	Personal interest
Circle	BA, MA	BA, MA, PhD	BA, MA, PhD	BA, MA, PhD	BA, MA, PhD	--
Type of course	compulsory	elective	directional	elective	directional	--
Hours of language course in the 1 st semester (per week)	5	4	4 (old) 10 (new)	4	5	2
Number of semesters	4	2-4	2-4 (old) 7 (new)	1	4	--
Number of staff	3 (2 local)	3	3 (local)	1	2 (1 local)	1(local)
Localized textbook	no	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
Exchange study	0.5-1 year	--	0.5 year	0.5-1 year	--	--
Language practice	compulsory	--	--	--	--	--
Required language proficiency	B2 (BA) C1 (MA)	--	B1-B2 (BA)	A1-A2	--	--

Latvian language subprogram organizes elective language courses, which are accessible to students in all three circles at university level. The main aim of the courses is to offer basic Latvian language knowledge and to support students to fulfil their interest or competence in research, work or personal life. The University of Stockholm and the University of Tartu employ this model in practice. It is similar to the present model at BFSU. In the second model, the Latvian language subprogram is in the same direction with the general program. Students can choose the subprogram as their programme of study, finish the relevant courses and get diploma in this field. Examples are the University of Vilnius and the University of Washington. The program of Lithuanian Philology in VU offers two directions: Latvian language and Polish language. VU now is updating the curriculum and the new one notably increases the hours for Latvian language and culture knowledge. The Baltic Studies Program in the University of Washington is managed in Scandinavian Department and offers three course lines, that is Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian. The curriculum includes language courses, Baltic core courses and courses with Baltic content. In the third model, the Latvian language courses are compulsory to all students in the program. This is the management model of the program of Baltic Philology in the University of Warsaw. This model has the highest requirement to students' language proficiency; it clearly defines the language proficiency level, which should be achieved in bachelor and master studies, as well as requires students to do certain amount of language practice.

The above-mentioned results and analysis show that in these universities, the main role of Latvian language courses is somewhat a complement for students to do their studies in the general program: the requirement to language proficiency is not quite strict and explicit, except in the University of Warsaw; the study hours for Latvian language are not many, usually 4–5 hours, except the new curriculum in Vilnius University; and other courses in the general program are instructed in mother tongue or English. However, the idea of the language program management in China significantly varies. This can be observed in Table 2.

Table 2. The distribution of study hours in the curriculum at BFSU (per week)

	Language proficiency	Related knowledge	Discipline-direction
	Compulsory module		Elective module
the 1 st year	24	4	--
the 2 nd year	24	4	--
the 3 rd year	12	8	6

the 4 th year	6	10	6
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Probably due to the degree of difference between the target and native languages, as well as distinct language teaching philosophy and tradition, the Latvian language program in China is managed as a general program and language proficiency is the foundation in the curriculum. The study in lower grades is to prepare students with intermediate language skills and related knowledge; in upper grades is to enhance the competence for language use and to lead students to do elementary research in a specific direction, as well as to encourage them to write thesis in Latvian. After the bachelor's studies, students can use Latvian language to work or to do further study.

This model guarantees students with good foreign language competence, and is proved in practice in such as English, German, Russian language programs, which own professional teams of staff and are relatively mature both in theory and practice. However, the Less Commonly Taught Languages programs, among which one is the Latvian language program, at present are very difficult to achieve the same results. Firstly, the whole curriculum is heavy workload for the limited number of teaching staff, especially the courses in Discipline-direction module are quite hard for novice teachers to instruct in Latvian. Secondly, compared with English, German, etc., Latvian language is relatively "small", if the Latvian language program just emphasizes the target language and country, it also restricts students' opportunities to do studies in a broader context. The model adopted in the University of Washington offers an effective example to solve the problems. BFSU has all the language programs in the Baltic Sea Region and Scandinavia, and all the programs are more or less facing the problems mentioned above. Thus, these programs can consider to make a joint program and to integrate resources in the general program with separate subprograms.

The practice in Japan pointed out the role of exotic culture in motivating learners and cultural events in promoting language learning. Latvian Embassy in Japan regularly organizes speech contests with reward of trip to Latvia, offers opportunities for learners to learn Latvian culture in a deeper level. The local teacher also organizes a choir to teach the Latvian language in singing. Some successful cases already emerged, who are now rather active in Latvian folklore area.

It was also observed the importance of localization in the language program management, especially the local teaching staff. The local teachers are more familiar with local situation and culture. They can manage the program more suitable to the needs of learners and society, seek and combine more resources, develop local learning materials and make the

program more stable and long-term. The practice in the University of Warsaw and the University of Vilnius proves this point. The best examples yet are in Japan and the USA. Although the geographic distance is very far, with the efforts of local managers and teachers, the programs are constantly in development.

Besides, it worths mentioning that the program management in different universities is quite enclosed. Except the students' conference "*Bridges in the Baltics*" and teachers' training in the Latvian Language Agency, all the programs seldom have multilateral communication or cooperation. Latvian language program is relatively "small" in foreign language teaching worldwide. This situation calls for more mobility and integration, such as international seminars or joint research projects, in order to improve the sub-discipline TLFL in a sound way.

Conclusions

Although ideas and models in the Latvian language program management vary in different universities worldwide, the practice in other countries still provide good examples to solve the problems existing in China.

The model, which combines several language subprograms in the University of Washington, shows a most possible way to solve the problem in Discipline-directional Module at BFSU. It not only breaks the barriers among the language programs, integrates the existing teaching resources to maximise the utility, but also provides students more comprehensive background to do their studies.

Cultural events in Japan show the role of exotic culture in motivating learners to learn a "small" language, which has also been proved in the previous teaching practice in China. Thus, emphasis on culture should be continued in further management, in order to transfer students' short-term enthusiasm into long-term interest.

Localisation is another emphasis in program management, especially training local teachers, who have qualified language proficiency and knowledge, eagerness to pursue this career, as well as competence to do team work with colleagues from Latvia.

Besides, the development of TLFL can not be achieved in one program or one country. Since the scale of each program is small, in the context of globalisation, the enclosure should be broken, and cooperative model should be formed to discuss common topics on TLFL, which involves both teachers from Latvia and local teachers.

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THE CHARACTER OF THE FAIRY TALE DEVIL IN THE GRAPHICS OF LATVIAN BOOKS: THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

The works of Latvian artists analysed in the article – illustrations for folklore stocks or individual fairy tales – represent the stylistic diversity of the books of the first half of the 20th century, the gradual emergence of the national art features and the development of the iconography of the frequently appearing character of the mythical devil. Most of the illustrations of the folklore material during this period are characterized by the adherence to the traditions of realistic representation, linking the text to be illustrated with the environment and attributes of Latvian peasant life. The researcher has used the key principles of the contextual method and the iconological method.

For the analysis of the study, the illustrations by Latvian artists and popular book illustrators Rihards Zariņš, Janis Rozentāls, Eduards Brencēns, Jānis Saukums, Alberts Kronenbergs, Indriķis Zeberīņš and Ernests Brastiņš were selected in order to look for the iconographic origins in Ādams Alksnis's works.

Keywords: devil, folklore, illustrations, Latvian art.

Introduction

The illustrations of Latvian folklore publications in the first half of the 20th century reveal a common trend – they are based on the studies of ethnographic artefacts and traditional lifestyle, and their elements are interpreted and stylized according to the aesthetic values of the time (Treiņa, 2015). In addition, the characters in the illustrations of folklore texts are created by trying to find a universal, but at the same individual system of symbols specific to each author, representing a particular topic. When the human and animal figures, attributes, environmental elements

and ethnographic motives are semantically combined in the illustration, they become inclusive symbols.

The less concrete descriptions there are in the pre-text (verbal text), the greater the plurality of interpretations is provided to the illustrator. The most frequently illustrated folklore genre – fairy tales and legends – is characterised by descriptions of events and actions, but relatively little attention is paid to the appearance of characters and to the definition of environment. It allows the artist to freely create the iconography of characters based on the studies of nature and past experience, but in some cases it also determines the inclusion of borrowed clichéd forms in the solutions of plot and characters.

The research methods of visual text and the sources used in the study

In the field of Humanities, contemporary research methods are used to interpret the text at three levels: 1) as a written message, 2) as a result of the language use (oral or written) and 3) as a sociocultural product that can also exist in visual, audible or event form (Bula, 2011, 230, 231). If we look at the illustrations of folk fairy tales created by artists as a visual text, a crucial role in the interpretation of this text is played by the contextual connection with the source of inspiration – the verbal text. The article emphasises the transfer of verbal text to another context – visual art, thus the verbal text is understood as a decontextualized folklore text. In the early 20th century in the territory of Latvia, the folklore text had gradually obtained a certain fixed form in writing established by the collector of folklore in an authoritarian manner (see Abrahams, 1993, 8–13). By studying the samples of visual art (book illustrations) as textual units in the broadest sense, it is possible to discuss the recontextualisation of the folklore text – inclusion into the construction of the new context. Such a perspective is characteristic to the contextual method in folklore studies, which was introduced in the 1960s. The illustrations of the folk fairy tale compilations or individual fairy tales, if looked upon as a visual text, demonstrate an unmistakable connection to the context of folklore – even in the event, if the illustrations are removed from the book context. Thus, the focus of the study is the recontextualisation of the folklore text (with mythological notions included in it) and the semantic links, which were retained by the folklore text from the original context.

The presence of the folklore context is essential in the iconological interpretation of the illustrations, based on the method proposed by art historian Erwin Panofsky. There are three strata of the interpretation of the artwork – the primary or natural subject matter, the secondary or

conventional subject matter (iconography) and the tertiary or intrinsic meaning (iconology) (Panofsky, 1957, 26–40). The third stratum of the Panofsky method helps to define how each artwork fits into (whether the author is aware of it or not) and functions in a particular culture. The artwork is viewed as one of the “symptoms” of the views shared by the nation and the time period, religious and philosophical beliefs, and reveals the symbolic values of its time and society (Panofsky, 1972, 6–8).

The author has selected the illustrations created by Latvian artists in the defined period of time, where it is possible to identify one of the most frequently visualised characters of Latvian mythology – the devil. Although only the first half of the 20th century has been selected for the study, the devil is the only mythological image that appears in the graphic art of books after World War II as well, when the Soviet ideology in the Latvian SSR did not allow the representation of Latvian mythology in art (1945–1990). The contextual and iconological aspects of the character of the devil in the art of books should be explored further, covering the entire 20th century and applying the comparative analysis.

The iconographic features of the character of the devil in the works of Latvian artists

Latvian publicist and cultural event reviewer Ilmārs Erlachs in his overview on the iconography of fairy tale devils in Latvian painting states that the devil characters portrayed by Latvian artists have little diversity in terms of form and little imagination, if compared to the art of other nations. However, he does not regard the refrain from hyperbolised fiction as a shortage. Rather, he sees it as an organic symbiosis with the theme of the fairy tale, because the devils in fairy tales often act in the environment that is common to peasants (Erlachs, 1944).

The “peasant” devil’s characteristic to the late 19th century have been created by Latvian artist Ādams Alksnis. His heritage consisting of many drawings and variants with the motives of folk tales seems to be close and understandable to Latvians. The fairy tale devils drawn by Alksnis are very human: they have horns, fur and two legs of a beast, yet their silly facial features and behaviours are more relatable to the particulars of human lives. It should be noted that an accurate description of the devil is not often provided in Latvian fairy tales, but one can get a certain idea in relation to situations in which the devil competes with a man and always turns out to be the loser. The devil may appear looking like an animal, a man or natural phenomenon; however, the prevalent appearance is the anthropomorphic image with or without special features (for instance, one leg as a beast’s leg), which would indicate towards the status of

the devil (see Straubergs, 1941, 506–513). Folklore researcher Elza Kokare argues that there are no authentic, archaic creatures in Latvian mythology that would embody the essence of evil forces. There are only such situations or personification of circumstances, which characterize the lack of good (the Evil One, the black or the Devil (*Jods*)) (Kokare, 1999, 193). Leons Taivāns also notes that in Latvian mythology, the binary opposition of God and Devil appears to be without any ethically qualitative differences. “The mythological Devil of the Balts [...] is the inversion of the wise God; the stupid face of the God. The fairy tale Devil is a fool. His animal attributes (tail, claws, ears) show his genetic connection with animal symbols, which in the religions of the Stone Age referred to the power of God – life, fertility” (Taivāns, 1992, 26).

Having observed further development of Latvian art, it can be concluded that the iconography of the character of the devil created by Alksnis has also influenced the works of other Latvian authors. The most typical features are the devil’s human body and facial features, fur, horns and action in natural or domestic environment of a peasant illustrated in a more or less detailed way.

In the early 20th century Latvian graphic artist Rihards Zariņš had an idea to illustrate the fairy tale about Kurbads (see Pujāte, Putniņa-Niedra, 1997, 318) – a mythical Latvian superhero, who fights with various fairy tale monsters, including three devils. The idea to provide illustrations to the folk tale about the heroic deeds of Kurbads can be paralleled with Akseli Gallen-Kallela’s intention to create the Finnish “Big Kalevala” – the “Book of Nation”. The intentions of both authors share a number of common traits: the desire to highlight and visually represent the national myth, to build on the studies of nature and ethnography of their land and to leave both morally and artistically valuable legacy to their people (see Wahlroos, 2009, 31). Unfortunately, both of these projects are also united by the fact that they were not completed. Judging from the drafts of the book layout, the book illustrated by Zariņš would have been sophisticated and elaborated in a scrupulous manner; however, the illustrations and ornamental decorations had become the author’s main goal, burdening the readability of the text. Although Zariņš’s works undoubtedly manifest professionalism, there are a few national features in his fairy tale illustrations, except for certain costume elements and ethnographic ornaments.

One can draw conclusions about the potential iconographic solution of the character of the devil in the planned book by examining Zariņš’s graphic artwork *Kurbads un deviņgalvainais velns* (Kurbads and the Nine-Headed Devil) from the cycle of etchings *Ko Latvijas meži šalc* (What the Forests of Latvia Rustle; 1906–1914). The image of the devil (monster), with several heads and the body parts combined of various animals, has

emerged from the mythological notions of Ancient Persia and Egypt. In Medieval Western art it has transformed into more “human” appearance; however, it has maintained many features of animals (horns, tail, claws, fur) (Holl, 1999, 494). Zariņš has more favoured the anthropomorphic character, emphasising the animal nature of the devil by adding a hairy body and predator’s teeth. The nine-headed devil in Latvian fairy tales indicates to the end of the initiation process of the hero by beating his most powerful opponent (the devils beaten before were three and six-headed).

One of the founders of Latvian national art school Janis Rozentāls also chose a plot solution similar to Zariņš’s etchings in his illustration *Lāčplēša cīņa ar deviņgalvaino Jodu* (The Bearslayer’s Fight with the Nine-Headed Devil; 1908). Both examples of the early 20th century can be included in the context of the quest for Latvian ethnic identity and building of national self-awareness. The fairy tale devil has obtained the symbolic role of the nation’s enemy – by beating the enemy, namely, by passing the ritual of initiation, the people has the hope to become a nation and gain independence.

In parallel to the many-headed devil as the embodiment of a nation’s unfavourable forces in the beginning of the century, the iconography of the stupid devil’s character also continued to develop, as initiated by Alksnis. An expressive example of this is the Devil drawn by Eduards Brencēns (see Fig. 1), which appears in the illustrations of the book *Mūsu tautas teikas un pasakas* (The Legends and Fairy Tales of Our Nation; 1909–1911). In the overall iconography of Latvian devils and other comparatively evil creatures, Brencēns’s Devil differs with a long, black beard, a huge body and glowing eyes; yet, due to the silly facial expression he looks like an easy target. Brencēns’s Devil is similar to the devil created by Kārlis Krauze in the illustration book *Tautas pasaka par gudro kalpu un velnu* (Folk Fairy Tale About the Wise Servant and the Devil; 1927). Being twice as tall as a man, with muscles and claws, the devil does not instil fear, but rather makes one smile due to his simple-mindedness (see Fig. 2).

The popularity of the devil’s image in the fairy tale illustrations in the publications of the research period is also attested by a typical example – *Tautas teikas un pasakas. Dievs, Pērkons un Velns* (Folk Legends and Fairy Tales. God, Thunder and Devil; 1925) edited by Jānis Stiprais, where in the 48 page book Jānis Saukums has included the devil in 20 drawings (see Fig. 3). Besides, it seems that the artist has given himself a task to provide each devil with individual features. For comparison, God appears in a couple of illustrations, but Thunder (*Pērkons*) – only in one.

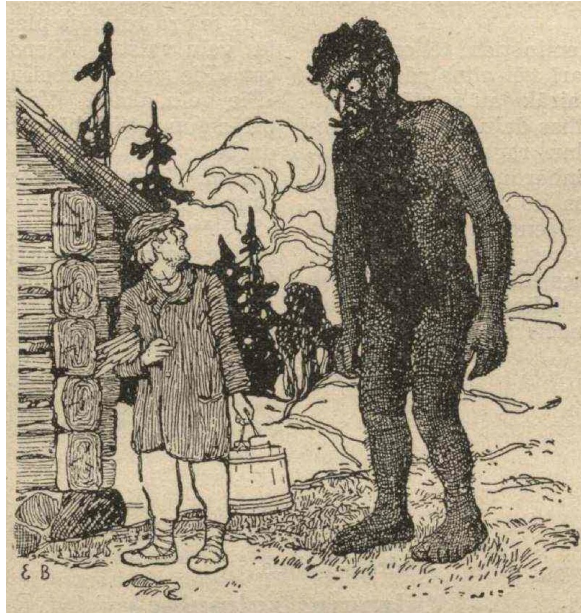


Figure 1. Eduards Brencēns. *Velns* (Devil). The early 20th century¹



Figure 2. Kārlis Krauze. Illustration for *Tautas pasaka par gudro kalpu un velnu* (Folk Fairy Tale About the Wise Servant and the Devil). 1927²

¹ Brencēns, 1938.

² *Tautas pasaka...*, 1927.

The drawings of Latvian children's book illustrator Alberts Kronenbergs are characterised by good-natured humour and simplicity. The stupid and credulous Kronenbergs's devil appeared in 1922 for the first time, in the illustration of the fairy tale *Zelta bārda* (Golden Beard). The artist drew devils both bearded and beardless, dressed in simple, sometimes well-worn and patched peasant clothes, engaging them in various situations of fairy tales. In the book *Mazais ganiņš un viņa brīnišķais ceļojums* (The Little Shepherd and His Wonderful Journey; 1931) with Kronenbergs's text and illustrations, where the elements of folklore and Christianity of various nations were merged, the devil with his whole family appeared. Finnish journalist and scholar Jukka Rislakki notes that Kronenbergs's devil is more civilized than Alksnis's naked and hairy forest creatures (Rislakki, 2017, 145); however, with the exception of human clothes, there is much in common in the characters of devils created by Alksnis and Kronenbergs.

The devils drawn by the painter and cartoonist Indriķis Zeberīņš also belong to the iconography of "peasant" devils. In his book illustrations, he creates multi-figure compositions with elaborated actions, where the characters are often slightly caricaturized (Rožkalne, 2004, 343) and optimism is present. Sometimes he is accused of overly direct and inappropriate realism for the illustrations of fairy tales (Peņģerots, 1925, 53). In the interpretation of the devil's character, Zeberīņš has maintained previously developed and established clichés of form – the devil dressed in human clothes and only the long ears underneath a hat and goat toenails indicate his devil's features.

Whereas artist and art theoretician Ernests Brašiņš in his work *Rīta ausmā* (In Morning Dawn; c. 1936), which has been created as a magazine illustration (see Fig. 4), has departed from the usual iconography and has created the devil as a fine gentleman in a black tailcoat. Such an image of the devil emerged into Latvian mythological notions along with Christianity (Straubergs, 1934–1935, 21750). Perhaps the artist, by deviating from the understanding of Latvian mythology of the devil as a simple-minded assistant to God or the opposite, wanted to emphasise his negative attitude towards German culture (caused by counter-reaction to the long lasting German domination in the Latvian populated area). In the first phase of the independence of the state of Latvia (1918–1940), Brašiņš was a relentless fighter for Latvian art and tried to look for justifications based on the grounds of Latvianness, when choosing the means of expression. In the plot solutions of the illustration, he has used a rather frequently noticeable motif of fairy tales – the devil, who is sent away by a singing rooster in the early hours of the morning. According to folk beliefs, the rooster is able to see and expel all the evil forces (see Straubergs, 1944, 147).



Figure 3. Jānis Saukums. Illustration for *Tautas teikas un pasakas. Dievs, Pērkons un Velns* (Folk Legends and Fairy Tales. God, Thunder and Devil). 1925³



Figure 4. Ernests Brastiņš. *Rīta ausmā* (In Morning Dawn). C. 1936⁴

The works mentioned in the article herein are the most outstanding examples. In the period of research there are other artists, too, who have worked on the iconographic character of the devil but these episodic works are not further analyzed as they more or less fit into common iconography of the image.

³ Stiprais, 1925.

⁴ Brastiņš, 1936.

Conclusion

The art context provides visual reference and additional symbolical value to the content of the recontextualised folklore text. During the period, when the development and establishment of the national culture and building of Latvian self-awareness took place, the artists often found inspiration in the sources of folklore, expressing the processes in society in a symbolic form. The analysed illustrations of fairy tales represent the stylistic diversity of the first half of the 20th century in the art of Latvian books, the efforts of the authors to stick to the traditions of realistic representation by linking the text to be illustrated – the folklore material – to the life environment and attributes of Latvian peasants.

The laconic verbal description of the character of the devil in folk fairy tales opens an extensive field of visual interpretations for the illustrator; therefore, conventional principles not dictated by the sources of folklore, often appear in the tradition of the character construction. The iconography of the character of the devil in Latvian fairy tales is dominated by the physically strong, but silly and simple-minded devil, whose origins can be sought in the most ancient layers of mythological notions.

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THE VARIETY OF VISUAL MEANS OF EXPRESSION IN CREATIVE WORK OF STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

This article is part of a more comprehensive study of the use of artistic (visual) means of expression in nowadays' visual communication. The author has sought an answer to the question if the strategies developed in the course of centuries for how to embody spatial constructions in a two-dimensional reflection are present not only in professional artists' but also in highschool students' creative work. Every student can analyse the performance of an artist as an information bearer and a skilful arranger of the means of artistic expression, and consequently every student can discover new for themselves means of visual expression, their arrangement principles in an artwork, and they can also recognize cultural contexts such as signs, symbols, archetypes, narratives etc.

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the situation, the author has analysed the legislative basis regulating the cultural education in Latvia. The study focuses on the quantitative analysis of the means of artistic and visual expression the students have observed and listed as present in certain works of art. The ability to use the acquired knowledge in their own creative assignments has also been analysed. The focus group of the study are students at the General Secondary Education Distance Learning Program of the Riga Distance Education Secondary School. The obtained data provide a quantitative overview also on the mentions of the means of artistic expression in the study books in order to compare traditional and innovative appliance of the means of artistic expression.

Keywords: educational system of Latvia, art education, visual literacy of students, means of expression in visual arts, general secondary education, teaching aids.

Introduction

Continuous and rapid change is taking place in today's world. As a result, there is a growing need for self-determination and identity awareness. In

this context, 'cultural awareness and expression' in the European Union's (EU) education guidelines is rightly called competence. Cultural awareness involves understanding of the local, national and European cultural heritage and its place in the world. It includes basic knowledge of the most outstanding cultural creations, including those representing popular contemporary culture and contemporary art. Competence of cultural awareness and self-expression is not possible without the individual's visual literacy, which is a specific competence that implies that a person (student) is able to react individually to creative expressions or to act creatively (creativity) that he / she can present (exhibit) his / her creative work and is able to collaborate with others – the skill that is called social competence, that he / she is able to choose the type and techniques that would help to create one's artwork – this skill is called methodological competence. The paper would name the most important normative documents in force in Latvia that define culture and art education in formal education, as well as the process of change in education or reform (see – I. Regulatory Framework for Cultural and Art Education in General Secondary Education).

The aim of the study is to answer the question if a student can acquire visual literacy skills at a general secondary school up to such a level to be able to successfully communicate by acquiring and applying visual means of expression?

In the Riga Distance Education Secondary School, the study work is organized in such a way that despite the students are not present at the educational institution (pupils studying outside of Latvia because of work or other family circumstances), they can nevertheless acquire new knowledge and skills at the time and in the way they want. The unique electronic website of the school provides specially designed methodical teaching aids, such as a thematic outline of the curriculum with theoretical explanations in the subject, self-test tasks for each subject taught, comparative, analytical and creative tasks to be performed following strict or partial requirements, such as experimenting or freely choosing the artistic technique (from drawing and painting techniques on paper to computer graphics) and materials. Full-time webinars are recorded so that students can repeatedly listen to the topics that are presented and might be interesting to them. In order to successfully pass the tests of various contents and difficulty, students must develop self-directed learning skills by selecting and using the learning literature themselves (see – Study literature 2), – the ability to motivate themselves for learning, – the ability to prepare their own work environment and provide the tools they need, to communicate with classmates and educators for clarifying the unclear matters, and to develop collaborative skills. The article analyzes the awareness of the Visual Arts students regarding the means of expression of visual art, their ability to

recognize, compare and describe them by studying distinguished cultural patterns – paintings and graphics (this time posters will be discussed, see: III.). The next task is to analyze quantitatively how the students named and listed means of expression as well as how they applied them in their own creative work. The ability of students to choose and creatively “arrange” the means of visual art expression in their own creative work will not only be the starting point for successful visual communication, but also enables an implementation of a quality learning process. A deeper analysis of the students’ creative work or their “visual messages” however will not be provided in the article.

If we go along with the theory provided by the academician and art theorist William J. T. Mitchell stating that nowadays the model of the world is designed by visual images, as the visual (visible, viewable) world dominated the verbally expressed, spoken text (the word), then it is necessary to develop a complex learning process with interdisciplinary application of skills in order to provide a visual communication experience to the students (Mitchell, 1980). That is why the research question needs to be repeatedly asked in order to find out whether students’ understanding of the use of the means of visual art expression in an artwork is revealed in the ability to apply them to their own creative works.

1. Normative acts regulating culture and arts education as part of general secondary education

There are a few normative acts of the Republic of Latvia regulating topics related to cultural education and expression. The first to be mentioned is the Sustainable Development Strategy for Latvia ‘Latvija 2030’ (Ministry of Environmental Protection, 2010) stressing the requirement for qualitative education that would be available throughout the lifetime and oriented towards creativity in order to react to the challenges of the global competition and demographic tendencies. The National Plan for Development (NPD 2014 – 2020) defines that it is necessary for a person to develop a variety of competencies, while the Basic Statements for Cultural Policy 2014 – 2020 ‘The Creative Latvia’ (‘Radošā Latvija’) is a medium term policy planning document aiming to confirm the value of culture and to define policies for diverse and sustainable development of culture that could support the growth and the potential for competitiveness of the state as well as ensure higher quality of life for everyone by preserving and developing the cultural capital and the creativity of the inhabitants of Latvia (Latvijas vēstnesis, 2017).

Latvia hosts a wide variety of multifaceted cultural events in educational institutions such as kindergartens, schools (including art schools with a

professional focus) and universities as well as in cultural institutions such as museums, libraries, cinemas and theatres, cultural and educational centres, community houses and art studios, furthermore, in cultural events like the Song and Dance Festival, art festivals and symposia. Each of cultural events helps an individual (including students) to discover and acquire important knowledge and skills as well as to learn more about the means of artistic expression. In the context of this study the week of creative activity “Radošās darbības nedēļa radi! 2016” (*Creative Week – Create! 2016*) should be mentioned as it allowed to view the actualization of the necessity to develop visual literacy from a new, slightly different angle.

The week of creative activity “Radošās darbības nedēļa radi!2016” (*Creative Week – Create! 2016*) took place in Latvia in May 2016 (the event repeats on annual basis since 2012, and it could equally be named also the week of visual literacy or the week of UNESCO Art education. This week allowed demonstrating the success in preserving traditions and developing interest education in Latvia. The event hosted the conference “Cultural and Arts education: Create Yourself in a School!” having invited Prof. Ernst Wagner – expert of art and media education, Chair of the Cultural Council of the National UNESCO Commission of Germany, co-author of the European Framework of Reference in Visual Literacy. Conference participants representing the National Centre for Education (NCE) of Latvia, National UNESCO Commission of Latvia, Latvian Academy of Culture, University of Latvia, Jāzeps Vītols Academy of Music of Latvia, other higher education institutions as well as teachers and art education experts discussed the importance of the development of visual literacy for individual as a today’s creative process actor in order to ensure a successful visual communication not only in the local but also in European context.

It shall be mentioned that UNESCO scope of art and culture education comprises two inseparable and simultaneously implementable approaches: learning about arts and culture and learning via arts and culture. It implies that every individual has rights to participate in artistic and cultural processes both as a consumer and a creator, bearing in mind that arts and culture develop not only the inherent creative potential of an individual, but also serves as a tool for the development of the personality, talents, intellectual and physical abilities (UNESCO in Latvia, 2016). In 2016 the National Centre for Education (NCE) of Latvia, supported by a policy initiative launched by the Ministry of Education of Latvia and European Structural Funds, started implementing an education project No 8.3.1.1./16/1/002 “Educational Curriculum and Learning Approach” (hereinafter the project *Skola 2030*). The project suggests that “the understanding of the knowledge and skills that will be needed in the society in the future is changing not only in Latvia, but also elsewhere in the world. Overall, pupils in Latvia are

good in tasks requiring to remember or act in known situations, however, they lack skills and experience to get deeper, process various data, work as a team, offer solutions for non-standard situations. Therefore, schools should attempt to offer children and youths such learning experience, which would result in pupil's expertise or competence: the ability to use knowledge, skills and express attitudes in a complex way, solving problems in various real-life situations" (Project *Skola 2030*, 2017).

The purpose of general secondary education has been defined as the following in the project description: "The purpose of general secondary education is to allow each student to become a goal-oriented and skilled collaborator at shaping their professional future, one that cooperates and is a patriot of Latvia, that has enriched their knowledge, skills and approaches required by a knowledge-based society according to her goals, and that innovatively and productively participates at growth of economics, welfare and sustainability in her homeland and the world (Project *Skola 2030*, 2017). The curriculum has been addressed to pupils from 1.5 years of age to the age 18 when they complete secondary education. Henceforth the curriculum has been divided into three stages, pre-school, elementary school and secondary school education. For each grade the curriculum has been divided into fields as the following for elementary school education: Languages, Social and Civic, Cultural Understanding and Self-Expression in Arts, Natural Sciences, Mathematics, Technologies, Health and Physical Activity. The field Cultural Understanding and Self-Expression in Arts (hereinafter Self-Expression in Arts) as part of elementary school education provides pupils with an opportunity to discover and develop their creative talents, knowledge, skills and techniques in four artistic practices (teachers often qualify them as learning subjects): music, drama, visual arts and literature. Self-expression in arts is divided into sub-elements:

- forms of art
- creation of ideas
- practical assignments
- assessment and interpretation
- ethical and aesthetical experience
- Cultural contexts.

Discussing the subject requires developing an understanding of visual means of expression which proposes how the general ideas are suggested by the Forms of Art sub-faculty: "Each form of art has its particular characteristic means of artistic expression" (Project *Skola 2030*, 2018) and, for instance, after finishing grade 3 (at age 9) a pupil must be able to distinct the simplest means of artistic expression such as lines, plains, forms and colours and apply them for experiments and gaining experience; after grade 6 (at age 12) a pupil must be able to distinct several means of

visual artistic expression such as line, plain, volume, colour, light, texture, and basic principles of composition such as balance, contrast, rhythm, proportions and perspective as well as to be able to gain experience by applying them; finally, after grade 9 (at age 15) a pupil shall be able to characterize the means of artistic expression of different fields of art, including cinematography, design and architecture and to assess their combinations oriented towards diverse purposes and meanings.

In the scope of the newly developed normative regulations for primary and general secondary education it can clearly be seen that in the future it will continue to be necessary to ensure that students master visual literacy involving also the awareness of the visual means of expression.

2. Literature used for the subject “Visual Art”

An up-to-date (complex and interdisciplinary) cultural and arts education can be implemented gradually by supporting the whole education system (here referring to educational institutions of all levels and directions) by a good methodical reference system that provides contemporary textbooks as the primary sources of knowledge.

Art education of then claims for the usage of additional sources, for instance, art history books, autobiographies of artists, periodicals etc., however these materials cannot replace curriculum textbooks that ensure methodical knowledge building and a multiplicity of assignments in accordance with the age group of the students. Following the first step in the Foucauldian strategy, namely, to reflect upon the practice¹, the attention will be paid to those textbooks applied as part of the curriculum in a longer run; respectively, the textbooks published in the end of the 20th century and are not applied anymore (examples 1–3), as well as the textbooks published in the 21st century and are still in appliance (examples 4–6).

As the first example the methodical tool for teachers ‘Visual Art for Grades 1–6. Means of Expression and Techniques’ published in 1985 by Valentina Hibnere, Lilija Grasmane and Valdis Villerušs (Hibnere, Grasmane, Villerušs, 1985) should be mentioned. The textbook systematizes the basic statements referring to the artistic creativity of the schoolkids, describing the two-dimensional means of artistic expression and the techniques. The mentioned means of artistic expression that graphics, painting and collage have in common are the following: ground, silhouette, shape, spaciousness, colour, colour spot, texture. As typical means of artistic expression for graphics are mentioned dots, lines, dashes, hatching.

¹ According to Michel Foucault, this strategy refers to knowledge building systematized in local practices or predetermined problems.

As another example can be mentioned the methodical tool for teachers 'The ABC of the visual arts language' by Vaiva Zirdziņa, published in 1995. The book contains the list of sources mentioning worldwide known art and art education theorists such as Betty Edwards, Rob Barnes, Mona Brookes, Charles D. Gaitskell, Ernst A. Weber, Winfried Nerdinger a.o. The author describes visual means of expression as follows: "The perception of visual art begins with the perception of the outer, visible level of the artwork. The basic elements of the visible level structure are visual elements. (...) Each kind of art – sound, word, movement, visual arts – has its own specific language. Visual arts language is the 'footprint' of usage of materials and tools, and each line, colour spot, or curved shape drawn by an artist; an architect or a designer has its sense and meaning. The author describes the most important visual elements: colour and shape, movement, line, texture, dark-light (chiaroscuros). The author also mentions the principles of composition or means of creating an unified artwork – harmony (rhythm), diversity or difference (contrast), balance (symmetry, asymmetry), proportion, movement (dynamics), center of attention (domination), simplicity (economy) principle, space a.o. (Zirdziņa, 1995).

As the third example the pilot-project methodical tool "How painting, engraving, sculpture are made" (1998) by Daina Blūma and Edvarda Šmite should be mentioned. The title of the book refers to the variety of artworks representing painting, graphics and sculpture and to the descriptions of techniques that help to understand the differences and the most essential features for each kind of art. The authors do not focus on visual means of expression because that would not be the main aim of the book, however, they refer to visual means of expression in a descriptive way. Visual means of expression are mentioned with a reference to painting: colour, colour spot, line, chiaroscuros, shape and space, plane with a characteristic height and width. The authors note that the linear, air and colour perspective are distinguished, as well as the inverted or reverse perspective. Subordinating individual elements of a painting to a common purpose serves to create the composition of a painting. Separately, visual means of expression in graphics are mentioned – line, chiaroscuros, tones and halftones, dark and light areas (Blūma, Šmite, 1998).

The fourth reviewed textbook "Visual Art for High School. Part 1" (2009) and "Visual Arts for High School. Part 2" (2010) is a collaborative work by Ilze Briška, Ilze Kadiķe, Daiga Kalēja-Gasparoviča and Maija Rudovska. "The reality of life that we are looking for in a painting is, on the one hand, life events, facts, persons, objects. On the other hand, a more or less realistic or less realistic visual form that the author assigns to the artwork is the perception of reality as a point of reference for the author's analysis of the painting. In the chapter "Art as a World Observation", the book deals

with the perception of vision, by which visual means of expression are understood: outline, background, tint, colour, and the relationship among these visual elements. “Points are grouped in lines and squares. Then all the information about each point of the visual field – its shade, colour and position – is transmitted to the human brain, where the visible world is composed as a puzzle; the picture is flat, the entire surface of the image is reflected in the same way as a computer display.” In the other chapters of the book, means of expression are mentioned: shape, proportion, direction (vertical, horizontal, dynamic) or motion, contrast, and various “dynamic forces” or characteristic values and characteristics such as rhythm, pace, character, energy, strength, tension (Briška, Kadiķe, Kalēja-Gasparoviča, Rudovska (2010)).

The fifth and the newest source referred to in this review, the methodical tool “Interface Art. Computers. Graphics. Design” (Kūlis, 2015) by Matīss Kūlis, the researcher of the Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science at the University of Latvia, should be mentioned. The methodical source not only describes new aspects of the field of information and communication technology, but also talks about creativity, artistry and about “making one’s work with the computer more delightful”. “More than ever, we are surrounded by different screens ...” (Kūlis, 2015) suggests Kūlis while talking about the impact of computer technology on our lives. The author points out that casually the area of visual art occupied with content design is called graphic design. The book emphasizes the aesthetic function of interfaces, thus the list of the means of artistic expression mentioned in the methodical source can be used for art education studies. In the book, the author argues that in the development of the user graphical interface, the artistic aspects – composition, form, spaciousness (volume), space, colour, warm and cool colour relationship, line, rhythm, texture, decorativeness, expression, etc. are taken into account as much as possible. “Professionally balanced, all these means of artistic expression in user graphical interface design determine artistic quality,” the author adds.

The last (6th) quantitative data column summarizes the means of visual art expression in the primary education curriculum (Republic of Latvia Cabinet. 2018). Table 1 provides an overview of the visual means of expression referred to in the reviewed sources. It also serves as an easy tool that allows to compare the means of visual expression listed in the methodical sources with those named by the students as well as allow a transparent comparison with the means of expression named by the students (error tolerance is allowed).

Table 1. The most commonly used visual means of expression named in the textbooks and curriculum published in Latvia at the turn of the century (n – 6).

Groups	No.	Means of visual expression	Source 1*	Source 2*	Source 3*	Source 4*	Source 5*	Source 6*
1) LINE	1	Point						
	2	Line						
	3	Stripe						
	4	Outline						
	5	Contouring line						
	6	Hatching						
2) SURFACE	7	Texture						
	8	Finish						
	9	Surface properties						
3) SHAPE	10	Field						
	11	Background						
	12	Silhouette						
	13	Form						
	14	Colour spot						
	15	Colour field						
4) TONE	16	Light						
	17	Shade						
	18	Chiaroscuro						
	19	Tone						
	20	Tint						
	21	Colouring						
5) SPACE	22	Volume						
	23	Figure						
	24	Spatiousness / space						
6) COLOR	25	Colour						
	26	Achromatic colours						
	27	Chromatic colours						
	28	Primary colours						
	29	Secondary colours						
	30	Analogous colours						
	31	Additional / complementary colour						
	32	Complementary colours						

Groups	No.	Means of visual expression	Source 1*	Source 2*	Source 3*	Source 4*	Source 5*	Source 6*
6) COLOR	33	Cold colours						
	34	Warm colours						
	35	Local colour						
	36	Total colour						
	37	Hue						
7) TEXT	38	Text / letter						
	39	Sign						
	40	Symbol						
	41	Latvian ornamental sign						
	42	Latvian ethnographic ornament						
	43	Decorativity						
8) COMPOSITION	44	Composition						
	45	Rhythm						
	46	Contrast						
	47	Balance						
	48	Proportion						
	49	Domination						
	50	Economy / simplicity						
	51	Perspective						
9) MOVEMENT	52	Movement / pace						
	53	Expressiveness						
	54	Energy						
	55	Dynamic forces						
	56	Scale						
	57	Direction						

Source 1 is the methodical tool for teachers ‘Visual Art for Grades 1–6. Means of Expression and techniques’ by Valentīna Hibnere, Lilija Grasmane and Valdis Villerušs (1985);

Source 2 is the methodical tool for teachers ‘The ABC of the visual arts language’ by Vaiva Zirdziņa (1995);

Source 3 is the pilot-project methodical tool “How painting, engraving, sculpture are made” by Daina Blūma and Edvarda Šmite (1998);

Source 4 is the textbook “Visual Art for High School. Part 1” (2009) and “Visual Art for High School. Part 2” (2010) by Ilze Briška, Ilze Kadiķe, Daiga Kalēja-Gasparoviča and Maija Rudovska;

Source 5 is the methodical tool “Interface Art. Computers. Graphic. Design” by Matiss Kūlis (2015);

Source 6 is the primary education curriculum.

The analysis of the aforementioned methodical tools allows to list the most popular means of visual expression used for visual communication in the time period of 30 years: line, form, spaciousness or space, colour and composition. It is worth mentioning that different authors may use different conceptual approaches towards these means of artistic expression. For instance, instead of being treated as means of artistic expression, composition is often enlisted separately as a method of arranging elements – or perspective is described as a mathematical system transferring a 3D spatial object onto a flat surface.

In order to review the most significant means of artistic expression, they have been numbered and grouped according to similar traits:

- 1) line (point, line, stripe, outline, contouring line, hatching);
- 2) texture (texture, finish, surface properties) ;
- 3) shape (field, background, silhouette, shape, tonal field, colour spot, colour field);
- 4) tone (light, shade, chiaroscuro, tone, tint);
- 5) space (volume, figure, spaciousness / space);
- 6) colour (colour, achromatic colours, chromatic colours, primary colours, secondary colours, additional colours, complementary colours, cold colours, warm colours, local colour, total colour, hue, colouring);
- 7) text (text, letter, sign, symbol, Latvian ornamental sign, Latvian ethnographic ornament, rune, petroglyph, decorativity);
- 8) composition (rhythm, contrast, balance, proportion, dominant, economy, simplicity, scale, perspective);
- 9) Movement (movement, pace, expressiveness, energy, dynamic forces, scale, direction).

American professor Arthur Berger in his work *Seeing is believing: An introduction to visual communication* (Berger, 1989) explains such elements of visual communication as balance, composition, direction, lighting, perspective, proportion, colour, colour properties (tonality, intensity, brightness, warm and cold hues, colour harmony). The author suggests that such aspects as line, shape, volume, size, lighting, location, colour and perspective are able to transfer a message or symbolic information that affects the process of perception of visual images. Josiah Kahane, a design professor from Israel, in his article *How Your Brain Understands Visual Language* (Kahane, 2015), describes visual language and suggests that the concept of 'visual language' refers to visual perception, understanding and creating. Just like people can verbalize their thinking patterns, they can visualise them. A diagram, a map or a painting are all examples of the visual language. Its structural units include line, shape, colour, movement, texture, model, direction, orientation, scale, angle, distance and proportion

(Kahane, 2015). The elements of a picture present concepts in space instead of presenting them in time like when speaking or reading. Spoken and visual communication is parallel and often interdependent means that help people to share information. If we refer to some other distinguished theories of visual communication then we can come to a conclusion that the range of the means of visual expression are unlimited, as often their properties are beyond those visually perceptible. In this study however the reference will be made to the visual means of expression listed in the most recent textbooks and methodical tools published in Latvia, with a scope on their usage as a set of criteria for evaluating creative works of the students.

3. Students' perception of the means of visual expression

The contents of the Arts Course as part of general secondary education in Latvia comprises three subjects: first, Literature which is mandatory, second, Visual Arts and third, Music. Both second and third faculties are optional which means that a student can choose one of them. The frequency of visual arts lessons is 40 minutes once per week in two years' time, while for distance learning this intensity is even more reduced, therefore self-tuition matters a lot. The visual arts course consists of online webinars, face to face classes and home assignments, both of theoretical and practical nature. Students also have to get acquainted with theoretical course materials on their own.

At Riga Distance Education Secondary School the pupils get acquainted with artworks representing the modernism and post-modernism in Latvia and worldwide, process the acquired theoretical knowledge, learn new means of artistic expression and master their application depending on individual skills, needs and requirements of the curriculum. The application of the means of artistic expression depends also on the objective to be reached, for example, if the objective is to perform an analysis of an artwork representing particular style or direction, the students have to result in a new visual composition, for instance, a drawing, a sketch, a painting or a photograph that should reveal how the principles of the relevant means of artistic expression or their composition are observed or, just the opposite, neglected. Assignments are purposefully orientated towards building an understanding of most important artistic trends predominating in certain chronological periods.

In order to trace similarities or regularities in the use of means of expression, an analysis of theoretical knowledge and practical appliance of the means of artistic expression as presented by the pupils of the subject "Visual art" will be provided. To identify students' ability to recognize and apply means of artistic expression, an example from grade 10 visual arts

course addressed to students starting from 16 years of age has been selected. This is a test assignment of the difficulty level two. In the exercise, students have to analyze 20th century artworks – posters representing different artistic trends. The first one represents the tradition of modernism and dates back to the beginning of the century. The second one refers to the end of the 20th century and can be linked to postmodernism. One poster is a work of a world-renowned artist, and the other one has been created by a contemporary Latvian artist. The student first must choose one art work from two, then analysis of the work has to be carried out according to the following requirements: description of the label, the dominant, the type of the composition, the most prominent (at least three) means of expression, the type of the poster sorted by its meaning. It should be noted that every year the tests are changed, hence the images are changed too. That is the reason why the study involves only 50 students in each sampling (100 in total), and the assignment has two versions. Both of these versions will be analyzed.

The study group involves Riga Distance Education Secondary School students (n – 100, 25 students each group) in the study year 2017/2018 (The article adheres to the Personal Data Protection Act. The research is coordinated with the educational institution). In the first version, the students have to analyze the posters “Who are you going to vote for?” (Figure 1) by the Latvian artist Juris Dimiters and the poster “I want you for U.S. Army” by James Montgomery Flagg. In the second version, the students have to analyze the posters “TV violence” created by the Latvian artist Egils Vitols and the poster “Help!” by Dmitry Moor. One of these works must be chosen and analyzed in detail. The students are allowed to choose their favorite image or the one that is easier for them to analyze. This principle also promotes the strategy of self-directed learning that encourages making their choices according to their abilities.

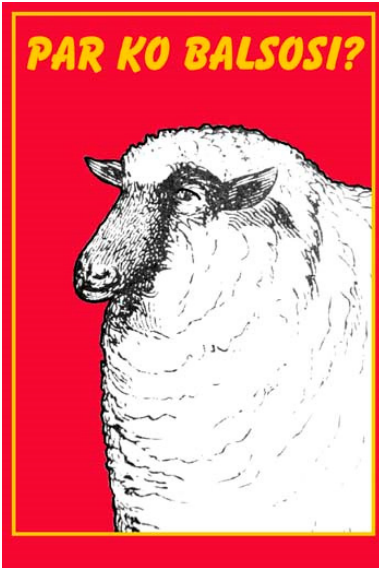


Figure 1. Juris Dimitevs. Who are you going to vote for? Digital print. 100 × 70 cm. 2003. Artist's property



Figure 2. James Montgomery Flagg. I want you for U.S. Army. 1917. Paper lithograph. Smithsonian American Art Museum

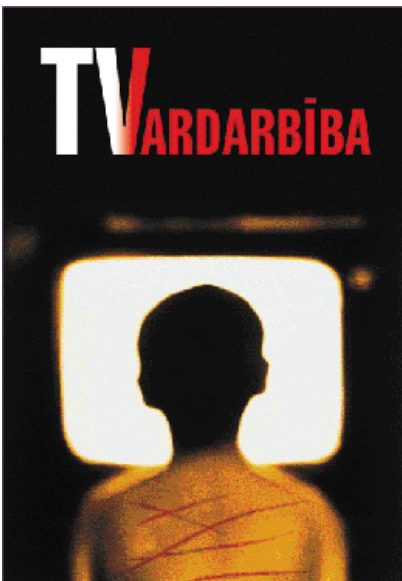


Figure 3. Egils Vitols. TV violence. 2005. Digital print. Private collection

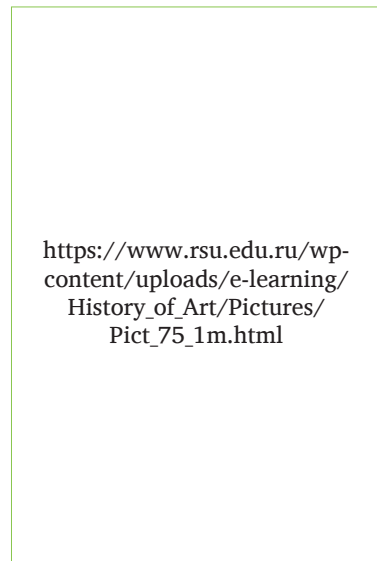


Figure 4. Dmitry Moor. Help! 1921

All the analyzed images are socio-political posters. Nevertheless, $\frac{1}{4}$ of the students considered posters 1 and 3 to belong to the social advertisement poster type. That could be influenced by the fact that the students have had a previous experience with media advertisement culture, such as advertisement promoting household appliances or political parties. Regarding posters 2 and 4, $\frac{1}{7}$ of the students consider them to be propaganda posters. That can refer to Flagg's poster, but not to the one by Moor. Regarding naming at least three of the most visible (most prominent) means of artistic expression in the posters, the students used this opportunity and almost all responded by listing three options. Only $\frac{1}{8}$ of the students listed more means of artistic expression than required in the assignment, and 16% of the respondents did not name any means of artistic expression. Without careful consideration of all the answers, it can be concluded that the students do not know these means of expression. This statement is not justified though because all the students (including those who had not named any means of artistic expression) apply them nevertheless (see Figures 5 to 24). There are also cases (16 % of all the students) when none of the means of artistic expression are neither named nor used lacking creative work submissions. Nevertheless, even in this case no hasty decisions can be made, because there are several students with disabilities at the school who are not able to do practical creative work.

Analyzing these four posters, the students have mostly noted the "color" as a means of artistic expression – 32–88% (Tables 2 and 3); In two cases, the color selection was compared with the colors of the flag, and the red color (16–24 %) was highlighted separately in both versions. If you add an achromatic or black and white color (40%), the rate becomes even higher.

As the next most popular means of expression text / letters is named by 16 – 65% of all the tested students. The importance of letters perceived as signs has increased in nowadays' visual communication, since letters and text perceived as signs bear not only informative or phonetic information but also a visual and often – symbolic meaning. The meaning of a letter as a sign and symbol in today's visual communication has increased, as letters and text serve not only an informative (phonetic) function, but also bear a symbolic meaning. An example of this is the book-reading culture of the late 1980s–90s, which could be well observed even in the public transport, as people read periodicals and books with enthusiasm. In the USA during the 30s of the 20th century the development of a comic culture emerged later turning into a role-model of mass culture (Berger, 1989). In contrast, graphical communication of modern smart device (computer) users is based on a visual information perception model consisting of textual and graphical elements (Kūlis, 2015). It is also necessary to remember the unique Latvian

characters, each of which has a semiotic meaning alike to Scandinavian runes. Valdis Celms, Latvian ornament researcher and designer, has stated: “An ornament must be firstfully perceived as a structure [..]. In its origin, ornament, just alike the spoken language is both a natural occurrence and a cultural product” (Celms, 2007).

The next means of expression is line, with 12–64 % of the students referring to it. In print art line is the most distinctive means of expression, so a higher number of mentions were expected. In a distance learning school the most part of learning is self-directed, so it is very important to motivate the students to take on initiative. To make it work, it is important to start with baby steps, that is, if you want a student not to be afraid of doing creative work, in the beginning they shall be allowed to draw a sketch freely with the materials they like or have easily available. It must be noted that there were higher demands regarding creative work earlier, so a decision was made to reduce the requirements, for example, in one of the tests painting has been replaced by drawing or even sketching. This has brought results because there is an increasing number of students who choose to do creative work. For this test, there are 16% of students who do not perform creative work within the framework of this test, then beforehand the number was much higher, about one third of the students.

One means of expression that is often referred to in the second version of the test is contrast (32%). Such test results provide a direct feedback on the students' understanding of the issue and their ability to detect the most important or essential. It should be noted that these skills are trained already in the 7th grade of primary school as the means of artistic expression and the principles of the composition of the basic elements of an image are discussed. In his book “Interface Art. Computers. Graphic. Design” (Kūlis, 2015) Matiss Kūlis suggests that already in the beginning of the 20th century painters were looking for the most important elements of the visual perception of people, and as such they named color, brightness and line. If we replace the term “brightness” with “contrast” (which is basically not wrong because the contrast enhances the perception of color), we can conclude that the students repeat the statements made at the beginning of the 20th century in this task. On the other hand, it is only natural since the assignment actually deals with the works of the beginning of the 20th century – even they do not represent the Mecca of arts: France (the methodic tool used in the curriculum presents also works by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec, Henry van de Velde, Alfons Mucha and others).

The rest of the means of artistic expressions mentioned by the students are listed in tables 2 and 3 (on the sides of the tables there are data according to the test versions but the total result can be seen in the middle

of the table, in the green column). Thematically the means of artistic expression are enlisted under the respective numbers (see Table 1). The expressions have left unchanged based on the answers of the students.

Table 2. Means of artistic expression (MAE) named by year 10 students (test version 1, school year 2017/2018; n – 50)

	No.	Rate of MAE (% , n – 25)	MAE in the poster “Who are you going to vote for?”	MAE in the poster “I want you for U.S. Army”	Rate of MAE (% , n – 25)
1	1	8	Point	–	–
	2	64	Line/stripe	Line/stripe	40
	5	–		Countour line	4
2	7	–	Texture	Texture/finish	32
	8	–	–		
3	10	16	Field	Field	8
	11	8	Background	–	–
	12	16	Silhouette	Silhouette	32
	13	8	Shape	shape	24
	x	4	Frame	–	–
4	16	16	Chiaroscuro	–	–
	21	–	–	Colouring	8
5	24	–	–	Space structure	8
6	25	72	Colour	Colour	88
	32	8	Opposite colour	Opposite colour	–
	28	8	Red colour	Red colour	24
	28	8	Yellow colour	Yellow colour	8
	28	–	–	Blue colour	8
	x	–	–	Flag colours	8
	x	–	–	Bright colours	8
	x	–	–	Contrasting colours	8
	4		White colour	White colour	4
7	38	16	Text/letters	Text/letters	56
	X	8	Headline	Headline	–
	40	24	Symbol	Symbol	8
8	44		–	Composition	32
	46	–	–	Contrast	8

	No.	Rate of MAE (% n – 25)	MAE in the poster “Who are you going to vote for?”	MAE in the poster “I want you for U.S. Army”	Rate of MAE (%, n – 25)
9	x	8	Personification	–	–
	x	–	–	Phonetic MVE	4
10	x	–	–	Man Uncle Sam Man showing	16 8 4
	x	12	Sheep	–	–
11	x.	4	Graphics	–	

Table 3. Means of artistic expression (MAE) named by year 10 students (test version 2, school year 2017/2018; n – 50)

	No.	Rate of MAE (% n – 25)	MAE in the poster “Who are you going to vote for?”	MAE in the poster “I want you for U.S. Army”	Rate of MAE (%, n – 25)
1	1	8	Point	–	–
	2	12	Line / stripe	Line / stripe	40
	5	–	–	Contouring line	8
	6	8	Hatching	–	–
2	7 8	16	Texture	Texture	32
	3	10	16	Field(s)	–
11		–	–	Background	40
12		16	Silhouette	Silhouette	16
13		16	Shape	–	–
X		4	Frame	–	–
4	16	–	–	Tones	16
	21	–	–	–	–
5	24	8	Spatiousness	–	–
6	25	80	Colour	Colour	32
	32	8	Opposite colour	Opposite colour	8
	28	16	Red colour	Red colour	–
	26	8	Black and white colour	Black and white colour	40
	7	38	48	Text / letters	Text/letters
X		24	Headline	Caption	8
40		16	Symbol	Symbol	16

	No.	Rate of MAE (%, n – 25)	MAE in the poster “Who are you going to vote for?”	MAE in the poster “I want you for U.S. Army”	Rate of MAE (%, n – 25)
8	44	24	Composition	Composition	32
	46	32	Contrast	Contrast	16
9	X	8	Metaphor	–	–
	X	8	Plot	Hunger	4
10	X	44	Human figure / a man / the main [character]	Human figure / a man	44
	X	–	–	Hands, feet	4 4
	X	16	Scars	–	–
	X	–	–	Rye blade	8
	X	40	TV	–	–
11	X	4	Graphics	–	–

If the results presented in both tables are compared, it can be concluded that, firstly, students have mentioned MAE representing almost all of the criteria groups (Table 1), missing only movement; secondly, the most popular MAE named by the pupils are similar to the criteria: the MAE referring to line (group 1) are named according to the rate 52% in the test version 1 and 26% in the test version 2. MAE referring to form (group 3) are named according to the rate 16% in the test version 1 and 8% in the test version 2. MAE referring to colour (group 6) are named according to the rate 80% in the test version 1 and 56% in the test version 2. MAE referring to space have been named just according to the rate 4% because only in two posters space is perceptible, while the rate of naming MAE referring to composition is so low (respectively 16% in the test version 1 and 28% in the test version), because the assignment includes a separate question regarding the type and balancing of the composition. However, it should be concluded that the students who had taken the test version 1 have named MAE more successfully, for example, the detailed references to the applied colours (contrasting colors, flag colors, etc.), the usage of “headline” instead of the awkward “caption”, and no black color has been mentioned. Here the question arises whether the emotional message or the information that the work bears can also affect the quality of the students’ assessment. Indeed, in the second version, the posters represent a darker color gamut and the socio-political issues that the works present cannot be easily perceived (delivering messages of despair, distress, helplessness

(“Help!”). To comprehend the visual information expressed in the works, the students would need additional information and knowledge. Finally, the students have also named MAE that are not enlisted in the review of the means of visual expression and as such are characteristic to other art forms: metaphor, personification, etc. – no. 10; artistic images (man, pointer, sheep, etc. – see no. 11); types of art (graphics, photography, etc. – see no. 12). These points reveal a lack of comprehension regarding MAE.

In recent years, a new phenomenon has been observed that did not previously appear in the test results at the subject “Visual Art” – students apply interdisciplinary knowledge and skills for dealing with their practical assignments, as proved by the study group of students of Riga Distance Education Secondary School in the study year 2017/2018 academic year. The students increasingly use literary means of expression, such as “personification” and “metaphor” for analyzing a work of visual or plastic arts. In particular, this phenomenon can often be observed in the analysis of multimedia works. This means that the students are increasingly using the knowledge and skills they have acquired elsewhere in different subjects or in new non-standard situations. That means that the students are able to select the necessary knowledge and apply it while working with another teacher or mastering different classes.

One of the creative tasks of the students is the creation of a graphic design sketch for a brand or logo. There are several conditions that must be met when designing a brand. In the study year 2017 / 2018 the conditions of the task for the pupils are as follows:

- 1) to create their own brand sketch on cultural events in Latvia and on the second version of the task – on tourism in Latvia;
- 2) one Latvian ornament pattern and other graphic means of expression (line, area, contrast, texture) must be incorporated into the brand image as in a balanced asymmetric or symmetrical composition;
- 3) work must be completed in at least two colors; text characters (letters and / or numbers) must be used;
- 4) work can be done in graphic pencil, color pencils, felt pens, ink pen, gel pen, the students can also use computer graphics tools if the work is done in computer graphics;
- 5) the sketch has to be signed before it is added to the test, the file must be named: Name, Family Name, Class, Number of the Test, Number of The Versio, Date.

In all the samples (Figure 5–10; it should be noted that, due to the General *Data Protection Regulation*, students’ names and family names are not displayed), the means of artistic expression required by the terms of the assignment are used: line, field, contrast, texture. Two and more colors

have been used in the works, and the pupils have successfully coped with the balance of the composition.

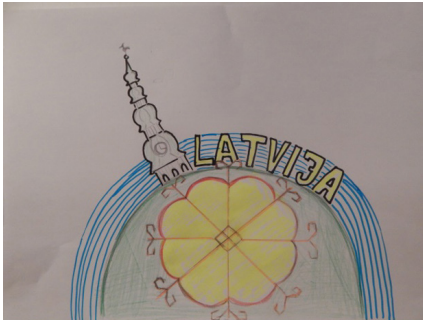


Figure 5. Year 10 student. *Latvia*. 2017. Paper, colour pencils, ink pen



Figure 6. Year 10 student. *Books For Everyone*. 2017. Computer graphics

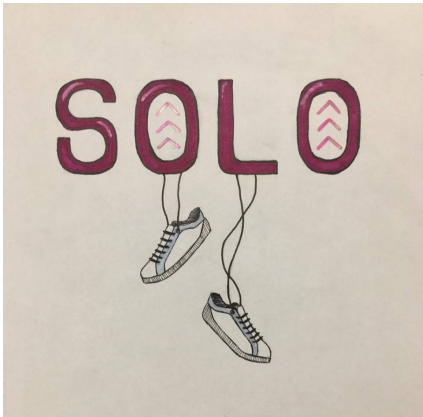


Figure 7. Year 10 student. *Solo*. 2017. Paper, colour pencils, ink pen



Figure 8. Year 10 student. *Horse tour`s*. 2017. Paper, ink



Figure 9. Year 10 student. Visit Latvia! 2016. Mixed technique

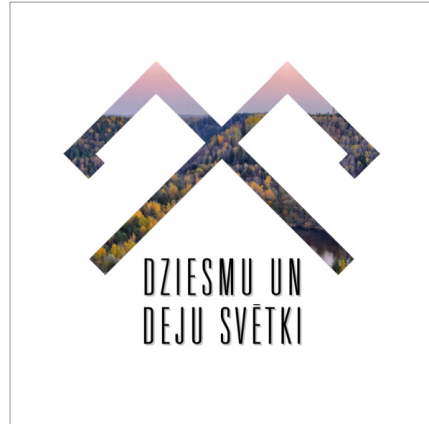


Figure 10. Year 10 student. Song And Dance Festival. 2017. Computer graphics

However, there is a need to talk about phenomena that have arisen through electronic visual communication that require the utmost attention from the educator, as students sometimes present works by other authors. There was only one case of plagiarism (copyright infringement) in the study year 2017/2018. The teacher always responds and discusses the ethical and legal aspects of the student's action. The second most important problem in distance learning is the usage of computer graphic tools. In high school, the age of students ranges from 16 to undefined age (in the context of lifelong learning), and skills are developed at various stages of development. Performance skills, feelings, attitudes and other subjective and objective factors – all of which create new challenges or surprises for students and teachers in visual communication.

Let's also consider other pupils 'self-made creative tasks to further understand students' skills in visual communication. Admittedly, students create new means of visual expression (without realizing it) thanks to a phenomenon that is rapidly entering our professional and pedagogical work, namely information and communication technologies (hereinafter – ICT). In traditional pedagogical practice, students begin, finish and exhibit their work in interaction with and under the guidance of a teacher. Together with the teacher they discuss success and see improvement opportunities for the works to come. The specificities of distance learning are that the students are watching video or face-to-face lectures or webinars, then they independently do their creative work, then they take a picture (camera, smartphone, etc.), process the picture and send it electronically to the school's online system so that the teacher receives, views and grades it electronically. New distance learning opportunities allow one to exchange

information electronically, which explains why new challenges and visual effects are created. This is a new possibility that can be ignored, however, when it comes to visual communication which “observes all the traditional media requirements” (Bergstrom, 2008), then nothing can be neglected or ignored. If the student communicates with the teacher using ICT, then the visualization of the creative work, or the image received by the teacher from the student, should be perceived as an original work of art, but bearing in mind that the final result of the student’s production may look different from the initial idea. It can therefore be stated that the ‘deviation’ of a visual image resulting from a non-professional use of various digital devices creates new artistic means of visual expression.

Let’s pay a closer look to these new visual means of expression or special effects that have been identified in a number of cases and tend to recur, such as a blurry image or blurred contoured image (Figure 11 and 15), too dark or too light image (Figures 11 and 12), intentionally lightened images or appliance of special color filters (Figures 16 and 21), appliance of additional shadow silhouettes appearing as new characters (intentionally or unintentionally) (Figures 14 and 18). As new characters also tools, setting supplies, hands, faces and even legs may appear (Figures 13, 15, 20, and 23). Often (about 50% of the cases) non-perpendicular images are presented (Figures 13 and 18), which create an illusion of an additional perspective. The picture is sometimes framed with additional fields that create the illusion of a, often adding a different coloring to the work (Figures 12, 18 and 22). It should be noted that the students often decide to comment on their work with an additional description, although it is not required in the task description (Figures 18, 19 and 22). Since the students are quite free to choose the technique of their creative works, combined techniques may contribute to creating new visual effects such as glare (Figure 18).

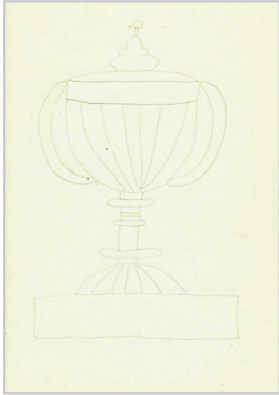


Figure 11. Year 11 student. *Victory Cup*. 2016. Paper, pencil.



Figure 12. Year 11 student. *Resting. Fishing*. 2017. Paper, colour pencils, paper collage.



Figure 13. Year 11 student. *Connection mania*. 2016. Paper, colour pencils.

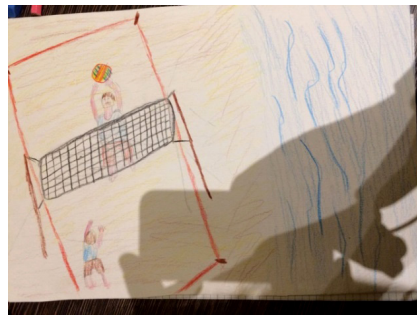


Figure 14. Year 11 student. *Rest*. 2017. Paper, colour pencils



Figure 15. Year 9 student. *MUSE*. CD cover. 2015. Paper, colour pencils, felt pens.



Figure 16. Year 11 student. *Food for Thought*. 2017. Paper, colour pencils, digital filter.



Figure 17. Year 12 students. *Still Life*. 2015. Pencil, golden gel pen.

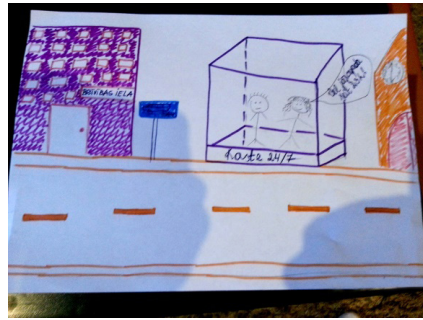


Figure 18. Year 11 student. *The Box*. 2017. Felt pen.

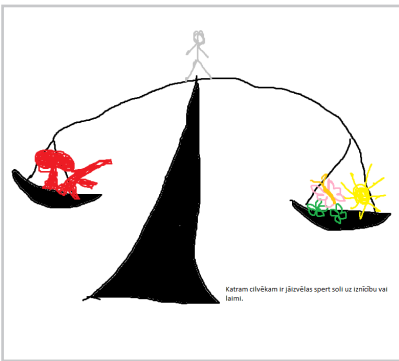


Figure 19. Year 11 student. *Everyone must decide if they want to take a step towards destruction or happiness*. 2015. Computer graphics.

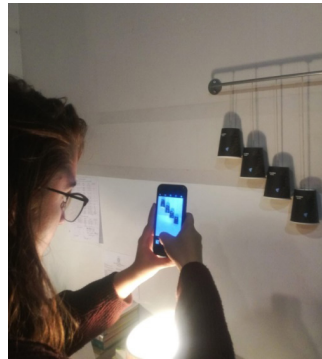


Figure 20. Year 10 student. *Installation*. 2018. Paper cups, stick, thread.

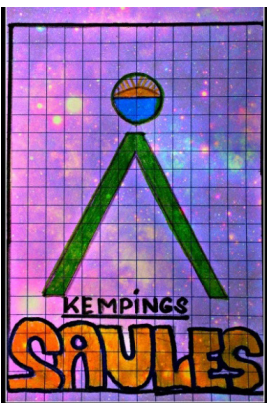


Figure 21. Year 11 student. *Camping Sunshine*. 2015. Felt pen, digital filter.

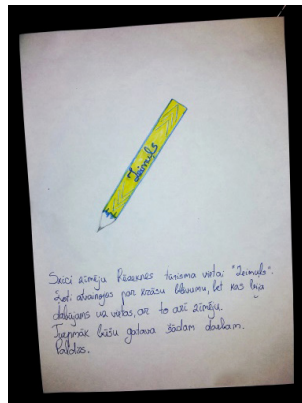


Figure 22. Year 11 student. *Zeiņmuļš (The pencil)*. 2017. Paper, colour pencils.



Figure 23. Year 11 student. Rest. 2017. Paper, colour pencils.



Figure 24. Year 11 student. To Sleep and To Dream. 2015. Computer graphics.

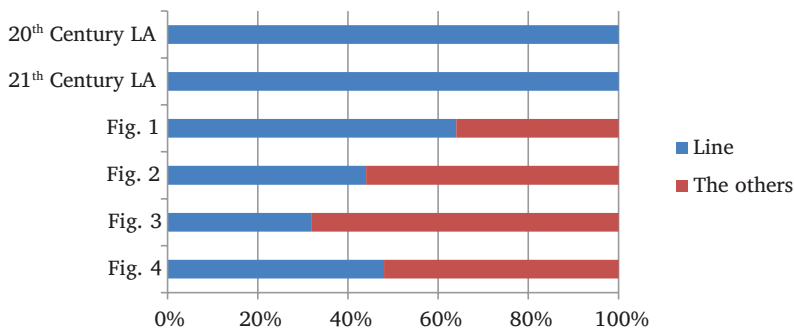
All the selected samples are noteworthy because they reveal the students' different perceptions of the world and their ability to visualize their experience, as well as they suggest the methodological tools that help to set the direction for improvements. It must be admitted that almost all the works are matching the set task requirements mentioned in the curriculum of the subject "Visual Arts", which is specially designed for distance learning. Very often the students have decided to visualise active recreation (Figures 11, 12, 14, 23 and 24), or local cultural and socio-political events (Figures 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, and 22); there are also works that reveal the feelings of the students; their actual emotional mood, or a desire to communicate with the teacher, such as "Abstract Self Portrait", "Human Figure Studies" or "Art Work Analysis" (due to personal contents of the works I have decided not to share them for public access). Rarely, however, there are presented very daring works with visualization of political events (sketches, posters, comics, animations, etc.), popular bands or cartoons. Sometimes it seems that the students want to express something more than the actual image referring to themselves, to their work process, to their environment, or telling about the success or failures they meet when performing the assignment.

Results of survey

To answer the research question whether students can acquire visual literacy skills at a general secondary school (in distance learning conditions) at a level that enables them to apply the means of visual communication effectively by mastering and using visual means of expression, we can admit that the answer is affirmative. The variable regarding this issue is the visual means of expression themselves – the elements, either those traditional for the visual language, or the new ones that emerge from the

usage of multimedia devices and will be developed more and more in visual communication. As Joseph Deken explains in his work “Computer Images: State of the Art”, computer scripts lead to “an absolutely new type of visual communication that allows each viewer to individually tailor their intercommunicative activities” (Deken, 1983). The power and efficiency of computer generated images is achieved by the ability of the computer to memorize and process pixels or individual image elements. Computer generated image is a set of pixels arranged in rows and columns, similar to a mosaic. The computer remembers the location and colour characteristics of each pixel, and then processes them in different ways. Of course, this requires appropriate software (Berger, 1989). It is clear that the use of computer tools is inevitable in contemporary art education, so work with these tools also must be mastered parallelly and responsibly.

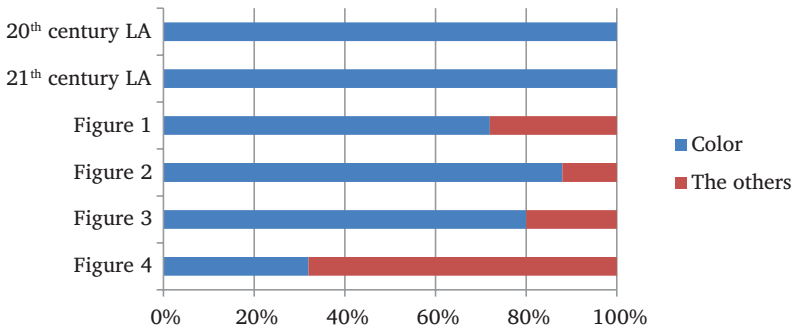
Students confidently name the most popular or traditional means of visual expression, as in the case with the reviewed textbooks. Comparing the results of Tables 1, 2 and 3, we have found a significant amount of similarities between the used teaching aids (TA) and the most important means of artistic expression (MAE). Graph 1 shows the percentage of MAE ‘line’ in TA and in students’ responses. MAE ‘line’ has been rated by counting together MAE ‘stripe’, ‘hatching’ and ‘outline’ because of similar meanings. The least amount of having named the MAE ‘line’ (32%) has been provided by the analysis of the poster *TV-violence* analysis, as some students referred to ‘scars’ (16%) as a separate MAE, confirming the importance of emotional experience (pain) in the analysis, which would generally yield an equivalent outcome compared to other options.



Graph 1. MAE ‘line’ in TA and students’ works

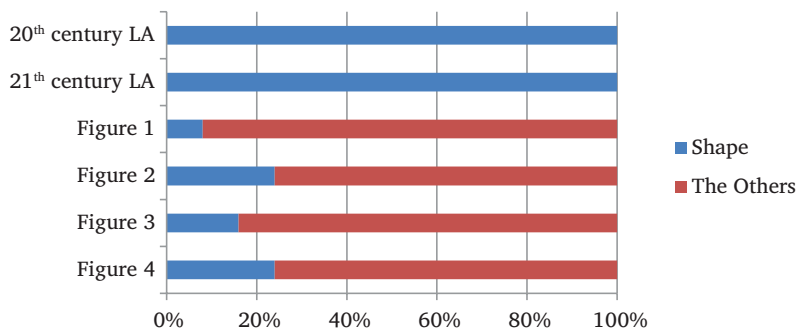
Graph 2 shows the percentage of MAE ‘colour’ in TA and students’ tests. MAE ‘colour’ is the most commonly mentioned MAE in students’ work,

especially if we count together all the MAE referring to colour such as opposite colour, red, yellow, blue colours, achromatic colours, etc. – in that case the percentage would exceed 100%, especially in the images of the test version 1. It can be stated that all the students recognize colour (except for those who do not mention MAE at all).



Graph 2. MAE 'colour' in TA and students' works

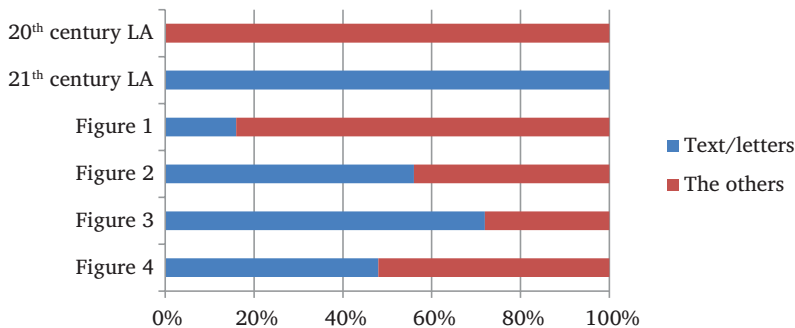
Graph 3 shows the percentage of MAE 'shape', mentioned in all the TA but rarely or not at all in the students' works. That could be explained with two reasons: either the students refer to MAE with similar meanings such as 'square', 'background', 'silhouette', 'frame' or 'screen', which together form as much as 68% (test version 1); or the concept of 'form' is very unclear, requiring additional explanation, which might be the reason why students avoid it.



Graph 3. MAE 'shape' in TA and students' work

Nonetheless, the MAE 'letter' or 'text' presented by the students has been mentioned only in the most recent teaching aids of the 21st century.

It is described in more detail in Matīss Kūlis book, Chapter 4 – “Artistic Expression Tools for Communication Development” where the author discuss letters, fonts and the aesthetic importance of text in the subchapters “Text and Image” and “Graphic Design of Fonts”. We have to agree with Matīss Kūlis, who argues that there have never been so many character styles in the history of mankind as in the 21st century” (Kūlis, 2015).



Graph 4. MAE ‘text/letters’ in TA and students’ works

Conclusions

Teachers obviously have to adapt to the requirements of their time and help students in their creative quest. However, we have to bear in mind that if the assignment had been based on drawing/painting evaluation assessment exclusively, letters/text would play no role at all.

Besides traditional visual means of expression, such as line, field, contrast, color, light, space, texture, the students also use the “new” means of expression or visual effects in their creative works (intentionally or unintentionally), which clearly draw the attention of the teacher claiming for a further development of pedagogical practice. Let’s name the identified new visual means or special effects:

- blurry images or images with blurred contours – ‘fog effect’ (Blood, 2015);
- too dark or too light images;
- special colour effects (reflections, luminescent colors) applied in images;
- appliance of additional shadow silhouettes appearing as new characters (intentionally or unintentionally);
- As new characters also tools, setting supplies, hands, faces and even legs may appear;
- Non-perpendicular images (as opposed to frontal – inclined);

- images with framed additional fields (frame, extra background);
- An image with a comment or an additional description on the image.

The teacher faces several challenges when they encounter these new means of artistic expression: firstly, whether to evaluate the whole picture, or only the part that the student has created on paper or another material, or the final photo, which has been submitted electronically; secondly, the teacher needs to reflect on ways how to deliver a feedback so that the pronounced (written) conclusion or suggestion does not hurt the student, but motivates him/her for a new creative learning process; third, the teacher needs to assess the performance of the students attentively, to group them by qualitative and quantitative similarities, and to build their own portfolio to develop new tests and creative assignments successfully.

The teacher's task is to improve his/her professional skills constantly to be able to view these cases as something new and unprecedented, to be able to marvel at them and still to be able to comment on them professionally, seeing the student's creativity and potential for growth, so that the student would be encouraged to meet new challenges. In this way, successful reciprocated communication between the student and the teacher would be developed (Bergstrom, 2008).

The only subquestion that remains unanswered is whether a hand-drawn line (created by an unprofessional and untrained hand) can compete with the precision of a computer. Michael Noll (in the catalogue of SIGGRAPH) admits: "Computer technologies are completely conquering those fields of visual art where the artistic potential has not been fully developed. Computers (ICT) are used to create new visual images, but several viewers are left with the feeling that something is missing. Computer images sometimes look as if parodying other means of expression. Many of them are cold and sterile, often having lost the expression of being alive" (Noll, 1982). The expressive emotional drawing made by a student him/herself will always be more attractive than a graphic developed by a computer software, as the former allows not only to observe the dynamics of the development in a student's drawing, but also the development of their creative abilities.

The study allows us to conclude that by analyzing the artworks and means of artistic expression in them students can discover both traditional and new means of visual expression and the principles of their organization in an artwork as well as recognize the factors and cultural contexts (signs) that influence the perception of a work of art, such as symbols, archetypes, messages, etc. They can discover new means of expression in works of art and in their own creative works without losing ethical and aesthetic qualities, while developing creative and critical thinking that helps them to overstep the limitations of the task requirements.

Distance learning students gain interdisciplinary knowledge and skills that stretch over different subjects. The development of art education today is influenced by several paradigms: postmodernism, multiculturalism, feminism, social values, semiotics, deconstruction, and other factors, as stated by art education theorists Michael Day and Al Hurwitz in the methodical material “Children and Their Art” (Day, Hurwitz, 2012). Despite the difficult conditions in which pupils in Riga Distance Learning Secondary School acquire art education (remotely and in self-directed studies), they are able to communicate, to observe, to perceive, to develop ideas, to analyze, to describe, to consider, to project, to sketch, to anticipate, to experiment, to enjoy, to interpret, to present and to appreciate – in other words, their skills prove that they possess visual literacy that consists of the ability to create and react, just as it is stated in the European Union’s basic principles of lifelong learning.

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THE QUALITY OF HOME ECONOMICS AND TECHNOLOGIES. OPINIONS OF HOME ECONOMICS AND TECHNOLOGIES TEACHERS

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ABSTRACT

Realising the competence based education reform in Latvia in which Home Economics and Technologies is being transformed into Design and Technology, it is essential to ascertain the subsequent opinions of Home Economics and Technologies teachers. The goal of this study is to explore the opinions of Latvian Home Economics and Technologies teachers on learning and teaching different material working technologies in general education schools, finding out what teachers understand as a high quality learning and teaching process and compare it to public opinion. This study features the questionnaire method (N = 155). Results are analysed both qualitatively and quantitatively. Results show that, while Home Economics and Technologies teachers share similar opinions with the public, recognising the competency of teachers and the quality and supply of materials and technologies in workshops as crucial in first-rate teaching and learning of Home Economics and Technologies, teachers put greater value on the subject content, skills and interest of students. Few respondents view success in competitions and carefully considered teaching methods as criteria for quality. Both teachers and society share the opinion that practical skills that can be used in everyday life are the most important contribution to the education of students. Few respondents noted career education and learning about traditional culture as important. In contrast to public opinion, most respondents do not think all optional student chosen topics should be mandatory for all pupils to the same degree.

Keywords: education quality, home economics and technology, home economics and technology teacher.

Introduction

Currently Latvia is going through a reform in general education and the education of teachers, which affects the teaching and learning of material working technologies in basic education schools and teacher's education in universities. Finland (2014) and Sweden (2018) have also signed new basic education regulating documents that have changed the approach to craft education in basic education schools and in the higher education of teachers (Vahtivuori-Hanninen, Halinen, 2014; Läroplan för..., 2011).

While researching possibilities of improvement in Home Economics and Technologies as a school subject, Kūla-Braže (2015) provides three approach scenarios: The developmental Home Economics and Technologies scenario, Home Economics and business scenario and the Home Economics and applied arts scenario, involving the study of traditional cultural heritage.

Nowadays in Finland craft education in schools is seen as a way to help people understand sustainable consumerism and individual satisfaction, meanwhile developing skills and creating something by their own hands. A great emphasis is put on students developing skills in projecting and creating sustainable, meaningful, useful, aesthetically pleasing products of good quality, thus striving towards a holistic craftmaking process (Porko-Hudd, Pöllänen, 2018).

Much like in Latvia (Regulations on..., 2018), in Finland it is a challenge developing technological competency and entrepreneur education connected to design and material working. (Porko-Hudd, Pöllänen, 2018).

In their research Räisänen and Kokko (2019) raise awareness of the possibilities of learning traditional culture related to Finland's craft education. While researching the development of craft education in Sweden, Borg (2018) states that in the beginning the most important was the product or piece created by pupils, which is determined by the teacher according to O. Salomon's approach. From 1969 to 1994 the learning of crafting techniques was the most important, and from 1994 the new curriculum determined the process itself as the most important. Since 2018 the essential part of craft education is acquiring knowledge, with the curriculum divided in 4 main topics: The material, tools and techniques of Sloyd, The working processes in Sloyd, The cultural and aesthetic forms of expression in Sloyd, Sloyd in the society (Läroplan för..., 2011). Borg (2018) emphasises the uniqueness of the subject: "while the young people work, they train their problem solving, their endurance, their brain, eyes and hands in a very special combination which can never be learned by reading a book." Uniqueness of this subject is also stressed by Johansson and Andersson (2017, 107) "*School sloyd lessons offer a kind of learning that*

differs from many school subjects in that parts of the knowledge are practised and made visible through making a physical sloyd object”.

Research done by Root-Bernstein, Van Dyke, Peruski and Root-Bernstein (2019) concludes that integrating art, craft and design into the Science, Technology, Engineering, Math, & Medicine (STEMM) curriculum can be an effective way to improve study results in STEMM subjects. The goal of this study is to explore the opinions of Latvian Home Economics and Technologies teachers on learning and teaching different material working technologies in general education schools, finding out what teachers understand as a first-rate learning and teaching process and compare it to public opinion.

Methodology and Materials

This study is based on a previous study exploring the Latvian public opinion on the quality of Home Economics and Technologies education. (Urdziņa-Deruma, Kokina-Lilo, 2019). This study uses the questionnaire method. The questionnaire consists of open-ended and closed-ended questions. The results are analysed quantitatively and qualitatively, and compared to the results of the previous study. Answers to closed-ended questions are analysed quantitatively. Answers to open-ended questions are summarised in tables and grouped according to categories, and later analysed quantitatively. (Kroplijs, Raščevska, 2010). 155 respondents questioned were Home Economics and Technologies teachers representing the whole country of Latvia: 40% live in the countryside, 39% in small cities, 6% in Riga and 15% in other large cities. Respondents make up 3,3% of all Latvian Home Economics and Technologies teachers. 85% of the respondents are female, 15% male. Respondents were coded, giving each respondent a number from R1 to R155.

Results and Discussions

Responding to the question, if all Home Economics and Technologies topics should be covered by all pupils without the option to choose, most teachers (74%) state that not all topics should be mandatory for all pupils and they should be given an option to choose topics. 18% agree that all Home Economics and Technologies topics should be studied by all pupils without option to choose, and 8% of respondents give different answers, see Fig. 1. Compared to Latvian public opinion, it can be concluded that percentually there is a large difference, as only 48% of the public think pupils should be allowed to choose what topics to study in Home Economics and Technologies, whereas 41% of respondents think all topics should be

covered without options. 11% of respondents from the public give different answers (Urdziņa-Deruma, Kokina-Lilo, 2019).

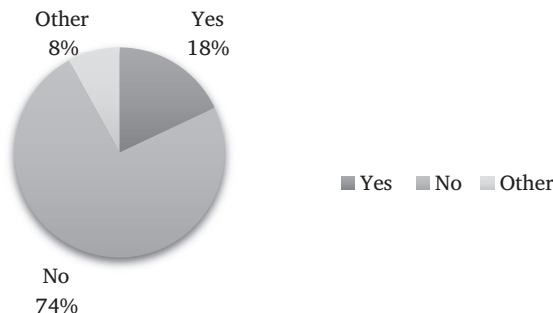


Figure 1. Answers to the question whether all Home Economics and Technologies topics should be covered by all pupils without option to choose

Answers to the question concerning categories that represent quality acquisition of Home Economics and Technologies subject, the most popular category mentioned is material and technological supply (29%). For example, respondent R148 mentions “*Materials and supplies of all kinds*”, respondent R94 answers: “*Good materials and supplies, well planned and arranged workshops*”. Following are categories of the teacher (25%), skills acquired by pupils (25%), subject curriculum (19%) and interested pupils (14%). For example, respondent R1 answers: “*A professional teacher, a motivated student, and quality material supply*”.

As mentioned in the research done by Page and Thorsteinsson (2018, 42): “*There are endless reasons why one should craft, but there can be no crafting without a willingness to learn; a desire to be and a passion for using one’s hands; a love of being sociable and a longing to be connected to the world we live in*”.

Much like studying the opinion of the public, there are comparatively few answers mentioning categories such as success in competitions, exhibitions, new technologies, product creation, teaching methods, see Fig. 2.

Researching what Home Economics and Technologies teachers consider a masterful study subject teacher, percentually the most popular answer is a professional and competent teacher (27% of 37 respondents that mention the teacher as impactful on the quality of the subject). The next percentually most popular answer is “a teacher that can raise interest” (22%). 14% of respondents mention qualities of creativity and engagement in a teacher, see Fig. 3.

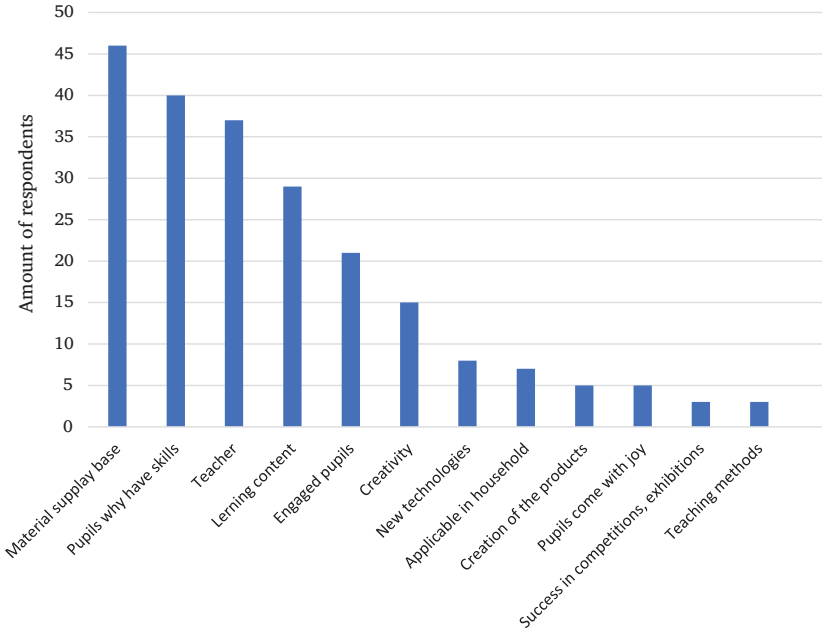


Figure 2. Respondents’ views concerning categories that represent qualitative acquisition of Home Economics and Technologies subject

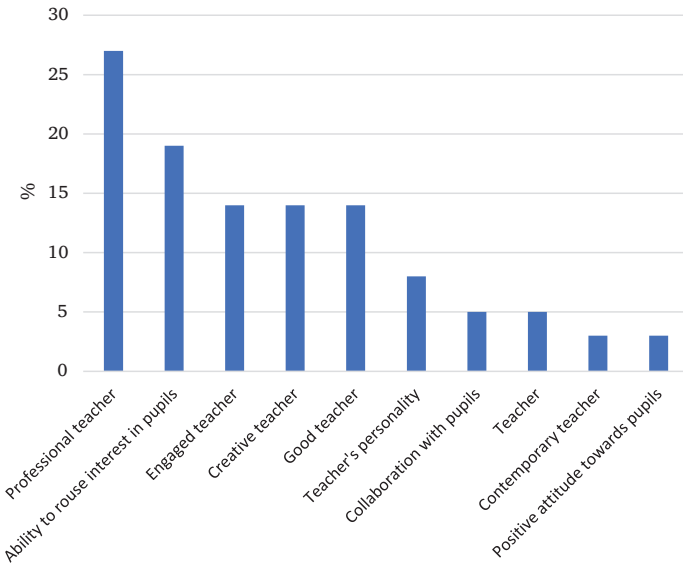


Figure 3. Respondents’ views concerning the teacher— provider of quality Home Economics and Technologies subject

Comparing the opinion of teachers to opinions of the public, it can be concluded that teachers put greater value on the skills acquired by students, along with the material supply and the teacher, whereas the public is mostly oriented towards the importance of the teacher (32%) and the material supply basis (24%). Calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient, $r_{apr} = 0,711 > r_{kr} = 0,532$ (Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)), it can be concluded that there is no statistically significant difference between the opinions of teachers and the public considering quality of the subject. The greatest difference percentually between teachers' and society's opinion is on the importance of subject curriculum see Fig. 4.

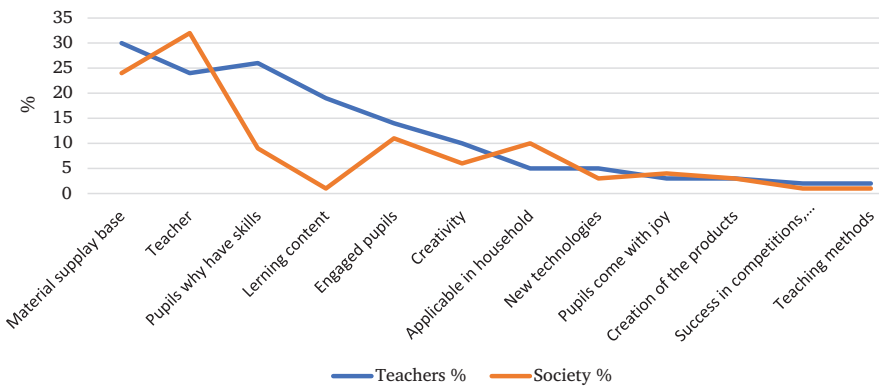


Figure 4. Respondents' (society and teachers') views concerning categories that represent qualitative acquisition of Home Economics and Technologies subject

Responses to the question “What is the greatest benefit pupils gain by studying the curriculum of the Home Economics and Technologies subject?” are similar in both groups of respondents. Most respondents (71%) consider practical skills acquired as the most important as 37% of respondents view practical skills and 34% of respondents view useful skills for everyday life as the greatest benefit. For example, respondent R65 writes: “*Practical life skills – make a meal for yourself and others, knit mittens like no one else has, create gift packaging etc.*” Another respondent R134 writes that “*This is the most unique school subject in which a pupil is prepared for real life theoretically and practically. He is competent in being self-sustainable, sustaining a home, he or she has acquired table manners and the knowledge and skills to prepare meals (...). This subject provides the opportunity for pupils to experiment and do research in almost every lesson, to justify their results; Home Economics practically extends all other school subjects: Math, Art and spatial thinking,*

Physics, Chemistry, languages, Geography and Economics, the list goes on. Learning Home Economics and Technologies a pupil acquires comprehensive development and positive emotions from their results.”

15% of respondents mention the greatest benefit is the comprehension of the life cycle of things from an idea to the result. Creativity is mentioned by 14%, fine finger motor skill development is noted by 13%, planning by 9% and mind and brain activity is mentioned by 8%. Taste in style is noted as the most beneficial by 7% of respondents, developing patience – 6%. Only 5% of respondents consider the study of traditional cultural heritage as the most beneficial and only 3% of respondents mention future career awareness, see Fig. 5.

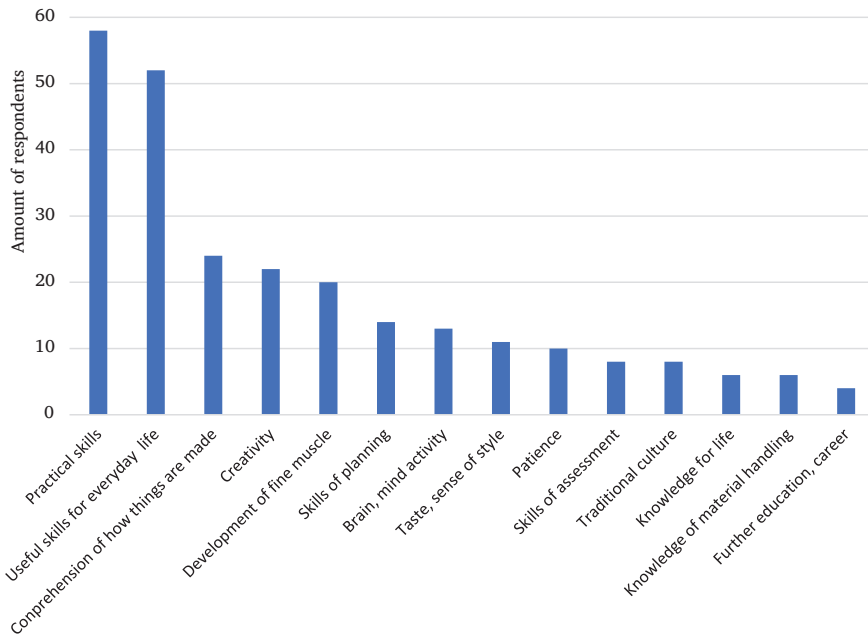


Figure 5. Respondents' views on the main benefits pupils gain by learning the content of the Home Economics and Technologies subject

Comparing society's opinion with the opinion of teachers it can be concluded that both groups share their views on the main benefits of studying Home Economics and Technologies. Public opinion is mostly dominated by practical skills and everyday life skills. The greatest percentual difference is in the category of comprehension of how things are made, as 15% of teachers consider it to be the greatest benefit for pupils, whereas only 5% of society share this opinion. Percentually teachers value more the impact of Home Economics and Technologies on fine finger motor skills, brain

development, creativity and developing patience (see Fig. 6). Altogether there is no statistically significant difference as the Pearson correlation coefficient is $r_{apr} = 0,954 > r_{kr} = 0,532$ (Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)).

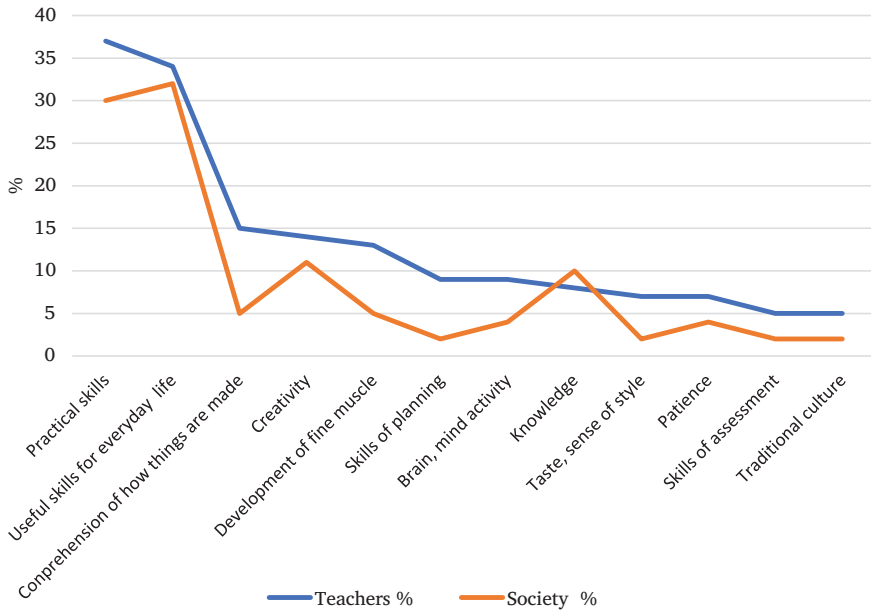


Figure 6. Respondents' views on the main benefits pupils gain by learning the content of the Home Economics and Technologies subject

When answering what should be changed in the subject, the most popular answer category is subject content and curriculum mentioned by 61 respondent, summing up to 40% of answers. Respondents point out that Home Economics and Technologies curriculum should be adjusted to fit real life needs, for example, learning simple yet practical textile working skills (since nowadays many pupils struggle with handicrafts), accenting healthy nutrition, interior design basics, how to maintain a well-kept house and attire, how to work with various electric appliances, how to calculate material costs, how to turn a defect in to an effect etc. Multiple respondents advise paying more attention to creative works, increasing the variety of crafting techniques learnt. Some mention the need for studying basics of business and entrepreneurship as studying Home Economics and Technologies could encourage deeper comprehension of these subjects. This category of subject content is also the most popular answer among the respondents from general society. Calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient $r_{apr} = 0,475 < r_{kr} = 0,576$ (Correlation is significant at

the 0.05 level (2-tailed)), it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant difference between the opinions of teachers and general society. Comparing teachers' opinion to public opinion, teachers greatly emphasise the need to increase the number of lessons (17%) and improvement of material supply (14%). 12% of the public think teaching methods should be improved, whereas only 1% of teachers share this opinion. 11 respondents – teachers (7%) and 12% of society would not change anything. Compared to public opinion (6%), fewer teachers (1%) consider division by gender unnecessary. To the question considering workload, both groups share similar answers, where 6% of the public and 4% of teachers think it should be decreased, see Fig. 7.

In comparison with the study on the opinion of students who studied Home Economics and Technologies in exchange programs abroad (Urdziņa-Deruma, Šelvaha, 2018), it can be concluded that students see the curriculum and subject content as the greatest area of potential development (19 content classifiers from 49). However, unlike teachers and the general public, students place methodology second (10 content classifiers from 49), followed by improving the availability of materials and supplies (9 content classifiers from 49). Results of the study show that after returning from studies abroad and working in school, students improved teaching methods the most (8 content classifiers from 19).

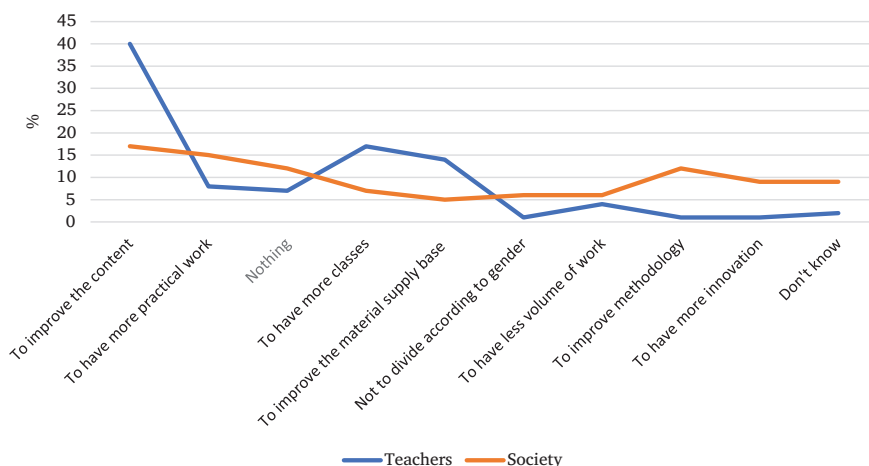


Figure 7. Respondents' views on the development of Home Economics and Technologies subject

Almost half of the respondents mention nutrition and textile technologies as essential to the subject curriculum. Adding the respondents who answered all topics in current curriculum should be covered by all

students without option, then altogether 2/3 of the respondents consider nutrition and textile technologies as essential (Fig. 8).

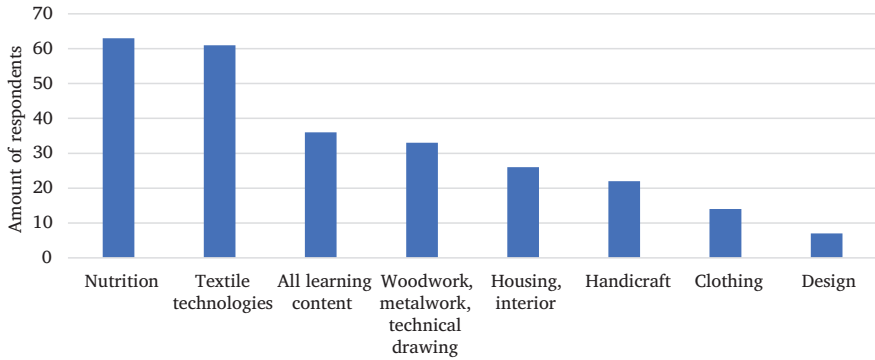


Figure 8. Respondents' views concerning learning topics that should definitely be included in the content of Home Economics and Technologies subject

As for topics that respondents would have liked to study, but did not have the availability during their school years, the most popular techniques are weaving, felting, batik and silk painting, beading and different woodworking techniques, see Fig. 9.

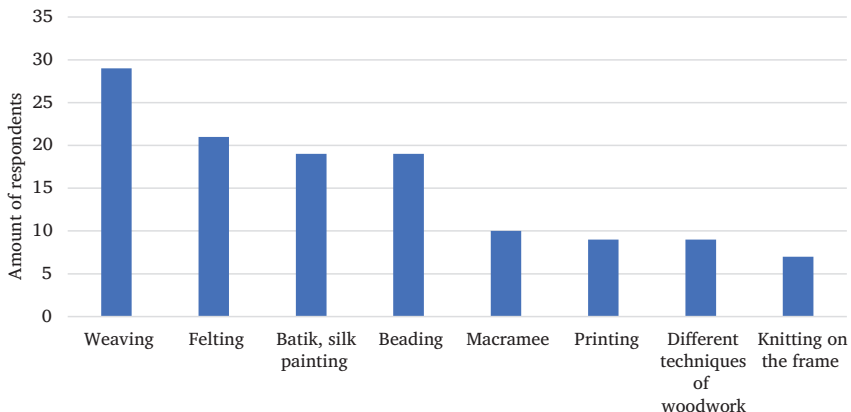


Figure 9. Home Economics topics that respondents would have liked to study during their school years, if it were available

Conclusions

Results show that Home Economics and Technology teachers see materially and technologically supplied workshops, acquired skills by the pupils, teacher's competency, subject content and curriculum, as well as the interest of students as the most important elements contributing to high quality learning of Home Economics and Technologies. Few respondents mention success in competitions and thoroughly considered teaching methods as a criteria for quality. Both society and teachers share the opinion that the greatest investment in pupils' education is practical skills and everyday life skills. Few respondents see career education possibilities and learning traditional cultural heritage as important. Only 15% of respondents consider the understanding of how things are made as the greatest investment in pupils' education. The understanding of how things are made is greatly stressed in the current educational reform in relation to the transformation of the subject Home Economics and Technologies.

Much like the general public, teachers of Home Economics and Technologies consider nutrition as the pivotal topic in the subject, however, textile working is also mentioned. It should be noted that most respondents are female. Men and a significant number of women mention woodworking, metalworking and technical drafting as important. As for topics that respondents would have wanted to study in school but had no possibility to, most responses are weaving, felting, batik, silk painting, beading and different woodworking techniques. Most respondents – teachers (74%) in contrast to respondents from general society (48%) do not consider all traditionally optional topics as mandatory for all students.

Results show that, corresponding to the theory about pedagogical models of handicraft education (Pöllänen, 2009), the opinion of Home Economics and Technologies teachers (as well as the opinion of general society) relates to the model "Craft as skill and knowledge building".

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ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEXTBOOKS IN TERMS OF TRANSVERSAL SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

In Europe in the second half of the 20th century, events such as radical economic and social change, globalisation and its expression in culture, politics, the economy and the environment, and progress in scientific and information technology had an impact on education. At school, today's students must be taught such knowledge and skills so that they can survive and be successful in the changing 21st century.

Preparing students for life and work is in the spotlight in 21st century education. The aim of the study is to explore and analyse the development of transversal skills in English language textbooks and to explore the possibilities in order to evaluate English language textbooks in terms of transversal skills.

In this research, five English textbooks for 1st-3rd grade were analysed. Qualitative research, descriptive research and content analysis were used in this research.

The author reveals that in the latest English textbooks, issued in 2017 and 2018, there are significantly more tasks, thus creating transversal skills for students. In turn, older English textbooks, issued in 2013, lack tasks based on a transversal skills approach. The result of this study shows which English textbooks of the five the author of this study recommends using at school in terms of their transversal skills.

From this study, the author has created a recommended checklist for teachers in order to analyse foreign language textbooks in terms of communicative skills, collaborative skills, critical thinking and creativity skills.

Keywords: checklist, foreign language textbook, transversal skills.

Introduction

The skills that a student needs in the 21st century are defined by documents published by international agencies such as the European Commission, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

(OECD) project *The Future of Education and Skills Education 2030*, Partnership for the 21st Century, the World Economic Forum, Centre for Curriculum Redesign, and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). These organisations are discussing the skills that students will require in the future, and which should now be included in the learning content (Centre for Curriculum Redesign & OECD, 2012; European Commission, 2018; OECD, 2018; Scott, 2015).

After graduating from school, today's students must be able to take responsibility for themselves and personal lifelong learning. Students should be determined, informed and creative. They should be active citizens and participate actively in society (Moore, 2013; Redecker et al., 2011).

The primary goal of education is to prepare students for their future lives (Care & Luo, 2016). For that reason, textbooks in English lessons can be used as a tool for improving students' life skills. Informational textbooks with plentiful sociocultural structures are needed to promote students' life skills. Textbooks are significant because they serve as a key tool in promoting student life skills (Gavela & Dolores, 2015; Khosravani, Khosravani, & Khorashadyzadeh, 2014).

According to the results of the OECD and The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), the knowledge and skills of 15-year-olds were found to have higher results in those countries where high-quality textbooks were used. In South Korea textbooks are used about 99% of the time at schools, and in Taiwan that number is 88% (Barnaby, 2015; Wiggins, 2015). A good textbook is the key to success for any nation (Mikk, 2000).

Considering the digital advantages in the learning process at school, teachers face a dilemma when they have to decide whether to use digital tools such as interactive blackboards, laptops, smartphones or iPads in the learning process. Teachers still rely heavily on their paper textbooks (Sikorova, Horsley, Garcia, & Rodriguez, 2013). For students, the textbook can be the main source of language learning and independent study (Richards, 2001). High-quality textbooks help students achieve higher results (Oates, 2014; Richards, 2006; Reints & Wilkens, 2009).

The textbook is an important tool for learning foreign languages at school (AbdelWahab, 2013; Pingel, 2010; Reints, 2013). According to Sawyer's (2008) opinion, foreign language textbooks should be designed in such a way that students are not only educated but also prepared for life by learning different skills.

The aim of this study is to explore and analyse the development of transversal skills in English textbooks and to explore the possibilities in order to evaluate English textbooks in terms of transversal skills.

Five English textbooks meant for 1st-3rd grade were analysed in this study. These textbooks are used for teaching English as a second language at schools in Latvia. The following English class books were analysed:

- Bright Ideas, class book I, by C. Palin, issued in 2018, publisher Oxford University Press;
- Family and Friends, class book III, by T. Thompson & N. Simmons, issued in 2018, publisher Oxford University Press;
- Poptropica, pupil's book 1. English Islands, by S. Malpas, issued in 2017, publisher Pearson Education.
- Incredible English, class book 1. Second Edition, by S. Phillips, issued in 2015, publisher Oxford University Press;
- Happy Street, class book 1, by S. Maidment & L. Roberts, issued in 2013, publisher Oxford University Press.

In Latvia, the usage of textbooks at schools is determined by the national general education standards that are approved by the Ministry of Education and Science (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija, 2018).

These selected English textbooks for analysis are approved by the Ministry of Education and Science and correspond to the national general education standards in Latvia.

To analyse the textbooks qualitative research, descriptive research and content analysis were used.

After evaluating five English second language textbooks in terms of transversal skills, the author has established a recommended checklist for teachers in order to analyse foreign language textbooks in terms of communicative skills, collaborative skills, critical thinking and creativity skills.

Methodology and Materials

Based on the classification of educational studies, the type of this study is a descriptive one. A descriptive study provides a scientifically accurate description of the current situation, relationships and educational developments (Geske & Grīnfelds, 2006).

The author studied and compared transversal skills in five different foreign language textbooks. Content analysis was used to perform a descriptive qualitative study. Content analysis is one of the ways of obtaining data, but in the previous literature, it is also considered as a separate study method. Content analysis is a procedure for compressing and categorising textual, audio or video information to be classified systematically, in a tabular presentation. Content analysis is a quantitative method that allows an individual to process a large amount of information. Content analysis has two levels. At the first level, descriptive analysis of the

content of the document is performed without analysing the meaning of the content. The second level is the interpretative or latent level, when the meaning of the content and the resulting conclusions are revealed. Content analysis is widely used in textbook analysis (Geske & Grinfelds, 2006).

Criterion for selecting these specific textbooks was the fact that they are currently used in primary schools in Latvia to teach English as a second language. In each book the tasks were analysed from units one to five. Four transversal skills (communicative, collaborative, critical thinking and creativity) were analysed in the tasks of the five books.

The analysis of collaborative skills was based on the findings of Purēns (2017) and Hajimohammadi, Mukundan, and Nimehchisalem (2011). They claim that cooperation is promoted in pair work or group work and that a foreign language textbook can be evaluated according the tasks that develop speaking skills. Criteria for collaborative skills were developed. Criteria correspond to the type and name or instruction of the task in order to analyse the types of tasks in the textbooks to see how the tasks develop collaborative skills in students (see table 1).

The analysis of communicative skills was based on the findings of authors Purēns (2017), Richards (2006), and Gomez-Rodriguez (2010). The authors claim that communicative skills develop through speaking, writing, listening and reading skills. The analysis of communicative skills in tasks was based mainly on speaking skills activities. The author of the study has supplemented and developed communicative skills criteria by naming tasks (see table 1).

The analysis of critical thinking was based on Bloom's taxonomy, according to thinking levels and names of tasks (Purēns, 2017).

The names of the tasks have been selected to correspond to the tasks studied in foreign language textbooks (see table 1).

The analysis of creativity was based on Fadel (2017) and his adaption of Nilsson's use of thinking levels such as imitation, variation, combination and transformation.

Criteria for creativity skills has been supplemented and developed by naming tasks (see table 1).

Results and Discussions

Methods for evaluating a foreign language textbook were developed. These methods allow teachers to evaluate tasks when using a foreign language textbook at school. Using these methods (see table 1), collaborative skills, communicative skills, critical thinking skills and creativity skills were analysed in five foreign language textbook tasks. When studying in practice the tasks of textbooks according to the criteria in table 2 (see table 2),

the criteria can be used successfully in the evaluation of textbooks in terms of transversal skills. Therefore, as part of good practice, the author recommends a checklist for teachers in order to analyse collaborative skills, communicative skills, critical thinking skills and creativity skills in foreign language textbooks (see table 1).

Table 1. A Recommended Checklist for Teachers in Order to Analyse Foreign Language Textbooks

Transversal skills (by tasks)	Totally disagree	Don't agree	Agree	Totally agree
A-Communicative skills				
1 Mechanical practice				
Listening skills: Listen, point and repeat Listen and repeat Listen and read the text Listen and sing a song Listen and chant the text Listen and say the tongue twister				
Speaking skills: Say the given dialogue Sing a song				
Grammar: Read and say the given grammar pattern				
2 Meaningful practice				
Speaking skills Ask and answer using the given picture or a phrase Look at the picture and answer the teacher's given questions Look at the picture and describe it Play a board game				
Listening skills Watch the video and answer the questions Listen to a recording and offer answers using the given pictures				
Reading skills: Read the text and answer the questions Read the text/story/book				
3 Communicative practice				
Speaking skills: Answer the open-ended questions in the context of teaching subject topics				

Transversal skills (by tasks)	Totally disagree	Don't agree	Agree	Totally agree
B-Collaborative skills				
Speaking skills: Pair work Dialogue Ask the questions Answer the questions A guessing game Play a board game in pairs or groups				
Speaking skills: Group work A boarding game Act out a story in groups				
C-Creativity skills				
Imitation level: Loudly quoting a piece of literary work in front of the class				
Variation level: Rewrite a sentence from a literary work, maintaining its grammatical structure and only changing the words used.				
Combination level: Create a machine or other object from figures created in the classroom.				
Transformation level: Create a timeline for historical events that separates political, social and economic units, using the notes you have made in the class				
D-Critical thinking				
Remembering: Say! Name! Remember and insert the missing one!				
Understanding: Describe using your own words! Describe it! Arrange in a specific order! Connect the compatible one! Find what's asked.				
Application by sample: Solve by model! Add up! Find among the given ones! Choose between the given ones!				
Analysis: Say what belongs to this group.				
Create: Create from details!				
Assessment: Assess by comparing criteria!				

(Fadel, 2017; Gomez-Rodriguez, 2010; Hajimohammadi et al., 2011; Purēns, 2017; Richards, 2006; the author of this study)

According to the criteria in table 1, four skills—collaborative, communicative, critical thinking and creativity—were analysed and summarised in tasks of five foreign language textbooks (see table 2). Textbooks were defined as A, B, C, D, and E. To analyse tasks in foreign language textbooks, criteria for each skill in table 1 were used.

Table 2. Transversal skills in five English textbook tasks

Skills	A	B	C	D	E	Total
Collaborative	27	17	25	19	16	104
Communicative	134	88	90	57	44	413
Critical thinking	46	67	63	29	20	225
Creativity	37	56	38	22	29	182
Total	244	228	216	127	109	924

(author of the study)

According to table 2, it is evident that the tasks are based on the transversal skills approach in all five foreign language textbooks. The results show that the highest number of transversal skills that appear in the tasks are in the following textbooks: A = 244 (year 2018), B = 228 (year 2018) and C = 216 (year 2017). Fewer transversal skills are in textbooks D = 127 (year 2015) and E = 109 (year 2013). The author explains these results by the year of issue of the textbooks. However, it is evident that in the latest textbooks, issued in 2017 and 2018, there are significantly more tasks that create transversal skills for students. In turn, older textbooks, issued in 2015 and 2013, the tasks are less based on a transversal skills approach.

Based on content analysis results and taking into account the spotlight on transversal skills in the 21st century, the author recommends the following foreign language textbooks, A, B, and C, for usage at schools because in these textbooks, the tasks are significantly more based on a transversal skills approach than in the textbooks D and E. Therefore, the author does not recommend textbooks D and E for usage at schools.

Conclusions

- The author considers the textbook to be an important tool in the teaching process not only with respect to knowledge but also with regard to communicative, collaborative, critical thinking and creativity skills.

- The author considers the evaluation of foreign language textbooks to be essential because it enables teachers to choose a textbook that meets the requirements of 21st century education, including tasks that develop transversal skills for students.
- The author has developed methods for evaluating tasks in foreign language textbooks. In practice, the author concludes that these methods can be used successfully in the evaluation of tasks in foreign language textbooks in terms of such transversal skills as communicative, collaborative, critical thinking and creativity skills.
- According to results of this study, the author recommends the following foreign language textbooks, A, B, and C for usage at schools because in these textbooks, the tasks are significantly more based on a transversal skills approach than in the textbooks D and E. Therefore, the author does not recommend textbooks D and E for usage at school.
- Before choosing a foreign language textbook at school, teachers should evaluate the textbooks. Teachers should be convinced that they are using textbooks that include tasks based on a transversal skills approach. Based on this study, the author has created criteria for teachers in order to evaluate tasks in foreign language textbooks in terms of four transversal skills: communicative, collaborative, critical thinking and creativity.

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A GAME FOR SELF-DISCOVERY IN A CAREER-CHOICE DISCOURSE FOR ADOLESCENTS

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ABSTRACT

The research examines the use of the didactic game for self-discovery in a career choice discourse for adolescents, to develop and practically approbate the didactic game to promote adolescent self-discovery. The theoretical aspects of the essence of self-discovery, the psychophysiological peculiarities of self-discovery during adolescence, the elements of self-learning during adolescence from the point of view of career guidance were considered. The role of the game in human life has been studied, as well as the role of the didactic game in supporting the learning process and career guidance, the importance of the game for self-discovery. The empirical research describes the pedagogical experiment conducted with the help of the didactic game "Pass On", which was developed by the author, used with students of Years 7 to 9 in examining the basic career questions: Want, Can, Need, and their opposites Do Not Want, Can Not, Do Not Need. Methods of data collection: a survey, questionnaires, interviews. The obtained results were quantitatively and qualitatively processed. The main conclusions of the study: didactic play is a valuable learning technique for self-knowledge, which provides an essential understanding of one's skills and abilities, develops logical and critical thinking, promotes awareness of earlier career choice research and its need during adolescence. Improves the microclimate in the class, promotes socialisation, collaboration and communication skills in the class.

Keywords: Self-discovery, adolescence, didactic game, career choice, career management skills.

Introduction

Pedagogical experience has shown that teachers at school really "chase after their students" to ensure that they complete all the tasks according to the curriculum. Up until the end of the 9th grade, this tendency is very pronounced as primary education in Latvia is compulsory (Constitution of

the Republic of Latvia, Article 112). Moreover, it is crucial for teachers, not students, that the national guidelines are met. Therefore, contrary to the mandatory conditions which are not particularly relevant for the students themselves, it is vital to ensure that the unity of freedom, autonomy and responsibility is implemented through new ways and techniques. For students, this would contribute to the personal interest in taking responsibility for the development of their life skills and career management skills. The society needs full-fledged members, which is also in line with the objectives set by the Education Law:

1. To acquire knowledge, skills and experience in attitudes, in order to participate in the life of the State and society;
2. For moral, aesthetic, intellectual and physical development, by promoting the development of a knowledgeable, skilful and socialised individual (Education Law, 1998).

Not only the development of a skilled and educated personality but the development of a character that is personally interested, responsible, independent and free. This is possible through ways, methods, techniques and means that are different from those that have prevailed so far. Therefore, career education, starting with the preschool stage, could be the binding element that makes formal education interesting, which promotes the transformation of formal education with the help of elements that link the current needs of children, students, adolescents and young people with the values, skills and competencies that will be needed throughout life. This means that there is a need for a personal interest in participation in the Lifelong Learning Programme, starting from childhood as envisaged in the 2008 Council of Europe Resolution on better integration of lifelong career guidance into lifelong learning strategies (*ELGPN*).

The central principle of humanism – human value – is still being updated in today's theorists' ideas (Dauber, 2009; Barrett, 2010; Huitt, 2011).

In the economy, the most valuable resources are human resources; its fundamental problems include unlimited desires and limited resources. Their resolution and economic development depend on how well each individual can apply their internal resources: competences, abilities, talents, throughout their lives through a career prism that includes five areas: *work, family, recreation, spiritual development and citizenship*.

Career guidance involves the development of self-centred career management skills consisting of self-discovery, career prospecting and creation skills, career planning skills, decision-making skills and the ability to cope with uncertainty (Ireland's National Career Guidance, 2019).

The preparation of a person for a career is primarily carried out using an educational system which is responsible for: ensuring the continuity of cognitive processes, organising teaching and learning, preparing people for

life in interaction with the society. Career is already a lifestyle in interaction with society, where the most critical aspect is the discovery of human abilities, talents, resources – self-discovery. Self-discovery intertwines with the exploration of the processes in society in accordance with existential questions: want – do not want, can – cannot, need – do not need, which help to assess themselves, their desires and needs in the context of the processes taking place in society.

The novelty, scientific and practical contribution of the research is theoretically justified by the need for self-discovery of Year 7 students; the methodology of didactic games for self-cognition of Year 7 students has been developed, approbated and evaluated; suggestions and recommendations for using the didactic game for self-discovery in the career guidance discourse for teenagers, which is available to school leaders, class teachers, subject teachers, career counsellors, educators – career consultants, students, etc.

State of Art

When looking at the concepts used in the research, it should be emphasised that: two parts of *self-discovery* should be examined:

- self (I; my, me, myself, mine);
- cognition (cognitive process, knowledge acquisition, research, familiarisation, identification, evaluation).

There are several variations: self-discovery, self-study, self-familiarisation, self-evaluation, self-determination (Geida, 2017). As a result of self-study, an individual acquires a perception of themselves.

The self-concept is viewed as a self-image, the “I” image, the “I” concept – I AM, which has been formed since early childhood. However, a person is a social being and their existence, including career development and management skills, must be viewed closely in relation to the processes in society, existing social and cultural beliefs, values, that are continually changing.

The cognition (discovery or inquisition) is the reflection (conceiving and mastering) of the phenomena actually observed, their essence and regularity in human consciousness. This process involves the ability to go deeper, understand concepts and ideas (Beļickis, Bluma, 2000). The result of the cognitive process is the acquisition of knowledge, both theoretical and practical (Beļickis, Bluma, 2000). Knowledge is the result of cognition processes obtained in the form of theoretical and practical lessons learned. “I” find out, the result is “I” know, when the process stops. An individual examines the state of their internal resources – their level of development. Theoretical knowledge is data and their interrelations. Practical knowledge is experience, abilities, skills and competencies. Part of the experience

gained may already be expressed in life as a conditioned reflex, an action that happens automatically. A person has developed the abilities for so long that they have become skills that no longer require deliberate action – everything happens automatically. The state of knowledge, “I know”, can be compared to the potential energy in physics, which is a stable, sustainable state. A certain conviction, a concept of the current role, a position, emerges when transferring it to human consciousness. The cognitive process, in turn, can be compared to kinesthetic energy that, which is always in motion and can be observed in dynamic interaction with the environment.

Making the most of the opportunities and peculiarities of development available in the respective age groups could achieve significant results in managing one’s life based on one’s self-knowledge.

The adolescence is associated with the most considerable changes in the life of a person when the transition from child consciousness to adult consciousness occurs, with the new “I” in the centre. It affects not only the physiological changes but also the relationships developed with peers and adults, which in turn influence the level of development, intelligence, skills of the cognitive process. A teenager is a person in the age between a child and a young person (about 11/12–15/16 years old) in the transition from childhood to youth. This age is associated with significant physiological changes, a desire for autonomy, independence. Self-awareness and self-assessment are evolving. Tendencies of self-education appear (Beļickis, Blūma, 2000).

Socialisation and the expression of “I” are identified as the most important factors from the perspective of pedagogy and psychology scientists for teenagers – the awareness of their own “I”, focusing on getting to know themselves through interaction with society. The main difficulties in adolescence are associated with insufficient self-awareness and difficulties in the process of decision-making (Greenhaus, Callanan, 1994).

The characteristics identified by career-choice researchers in relation to this age phase are the following: In the relationship between the roles and stages of life, there is an ongoing exploration, a search for one’s new “I”, especially in the context of socialisation, as well as examination of interests (Super, 1980; Latsone, Mackeviča, 2008.). Meanwhile, the research on career development conducted by Super in 1963 among 14-year-olds contributed to the emergence of a new concept of *career maturity*, in which six areas were distinguished, including understanding of one’s attributes – self-image formation and career orientation – an individual’s attitude to possible career choices (Latsone, Mackeviča, 2008). His career development model and research supported the need for career education within the framework of career guidance and the importance of promoting career

maturity and decision-making. Super also notes that the career decisions relate to self-image and role games contribute to the development of professional self-image; this is reinforced by practical trials. According to the periodisation of professional advancement of personality established by Klimov, the 12–17-year period was intended for preparation for an informed choice of profession (Климов, 1996). The Career Development Guidance Handbook states that teens are experiencing interest development and capacity development. At age 13–14, young people are starting to have an awareness of their capacity development. Preparation for career planning, career research, decision-making, the study of employment information and career orientation take place during adolescence (Latsone, Mackeviča, 2008).

Between the ages of 14 and 25, there is still a need to prove the current professional choice, to start working in the selected field, there is a desire to explore new opportunities and develop self-perception (Gibson, Mitchell, 2006).

According to the peculiarities of the new psychological and physical phenomena of the age group, adolescents must stay active, interested in various activities. One of the best ways to help a child build a positive self-image and avoid trouble during the teenage years is to help them develop interests and talents (Lickona, 1983).

It is during the adolescence that fundamentals are put in place for finding one's place in the adult world unless the family does it during childhood. Up to the age of 14, hobbies or activities that people are interested in are a critical aspect to consider. Becoming an adult is a process filled with emotional and social distress that needs to be made as interesting and exciting as possible so that acceptance of change and self-awareness become integrated and are transformed into a stable personality.

The author of the research recommends using teaching organisation techniques that are interesting and exciting for the students to distract them from the difficult changes happening to their bodies and psyches. This could be facilitated by the use of activities involving movement, such as games.

Game: a creative activity associated with unique techniques and regulations with a developmental and entertaining character (Beļickis, Blūma, 2000). In philosophy and culturology, the game is considered to be the essence of human existence, a means of examining the surrounding world; the axiological basis of the game and the value of the culture-ethnic phenomenon of the game are examined. In pedagogical science, the game is considered as a form of education and learning, as a component of pedagogical culture; the forms and optimisation of modern games are explored. In psychology, the game is viewed as a tool for activating

psychological processes; it is used for diagnosis, correction and adaptation; social emotions are studied (Михайленко, 2011).

The game makes the perception of life easy, interesting and exciting for all ages. Games help children to accept and understand the difficulties, contradictions and tragedies of life philosophically, teach them not to give up, see the bright and joyful side of life, rise above the “obstacles of life”, live with meaning, rejoice, live with a light-minded perception (Шмаков, 1997).

The didactic game is a situationally variable didactic exercise whose content and teaching nature are partially hidden by form and which involves the creative intellectual activity of participants (Beļickis, Blūma, 2000). A didactic game differs from a regular game by having a strictly regulated structure, under which the game has educational significance. The didactic game carries out upbringing and knowledge provision, since its main elements – didactic tasks, game tasks, playing the game, game rules, inventory and outcomes – are well structured and combine both teaching methods and the action of the game (Romadina, 2015).

Variations in the concept of the game: play, game-play, game, gamification.

Play – activities for children without special rules. Game-play – a play with specific rules. Game – a natural, free, imaginary activity whose members willingly comply with the rules. Gamification – a combination of two English words game and education; it is used when it comes to using the elements of the game in the learning process. The introduction and development of a system of support, recognition and awards at all ages, which makes it easy and free (easier and freer) to take on what is happening (Geida, 2017).

The experience of the author of the research shows that the role and meaning of the game are still not taken seriously; teachers oppose the use of didactic games in lessons because they feel as if they must become “circus artists, clowns” who need to entertain pupils. A game is perceived as a non-serious, irresponsible, pointless, entertaining, illusory action focused on the inappropriate use of time within the learning process. In the opinion of the author of the research, joining the game with gamification elements could lead to higher interest, since the evaluation system would become more intensive. This can be observed in, for example, computer games, where a certain number of points of experience make it possible to reach the next level, where various awards and benefits can be used in the progress of the game.

Pointing out the essentials – the game is the essence of human existence, a cognitive tool, a way of upbringing and learning that activates mental processes, it can be seen as a universal form of expression of children that

allows overcoming the differences between languages, nationalities and other cultural aspects.

At the same time, real and imagined/notional behaviour occurs, an action that is purely conceived by the circumstances and conditions in which the playing person is immersed, imagined during the process of the game; however, the emotional experience is real, thereby creating a relationship between the internal and the external world, when everything is both connected and detached at the same time.

Through collecting information on the concepts mentioned above, the author of the research worked on the development of a didactic game for teenagers in the discourse of career choice, setting out the following research tasks:

1. Study scientific, specialised and methodological literature on the self-discovery of Year 7 students in lower secondary school:
 - Assess career guidance opportunities with different forms, methods, techniques and means of organising the learning process;
 - Examine the learning process of students in lower secondary school, analyse the factors that affect them.
2. Justify the need for a didactic game in the development of students' self-discovery.
3. Develop a methodology for didactic games to encourage students' self-discovery.
4. Perform an experiment on the development of self-discovery of Year 7 students.
5. Develop conclusions and suggestions.

The practical contribution of the research is the methodology for the didactic game "Pass On", approbated between September 2013 and April 2017, with the participation of 81 student of Year 7.

The results of approbation were assessed, and proposals were developed for the further use of games in Year 7 lessons and the development of career management skills in the context of self-discovery.

Methods of data collection: **a survey, questionnaires, interviews.**

The Stages and Description of Empirical Research

At the beginning of the school year and the research, the students completed two questionnaires: "I was, I am, I will be" and "Free Time". They played the didactic game "Pass On".

The description of the game: throwing dice with six faces in three primary colours: yellow, red, blue. The inscriptions on the faces, three positive choices (I WANT, I CAN, I NEED) and three negative choices (I DO NOT NEED, I CANNOT, I DO NOT WANT). The game begins with a

demonstration of the leader of the lesson, by throwing the die in the air, catching it, showing that one has to read the face of the dice that is facing the player while holding the dice in their hands most comfortably, for example, I CANNOT. The die is passed on, calling after the next participant by their name. The next participant reads the choice/phrase from the die aloud; the lesson leader writes it down on the board. And so on until all the participants have played. The next task after the game of dice is to justify one's choice in 10 sentences.

The game was played in 2 versions. In the first versions, each student who caught the dice gave answers about a topic of their own choice, such as what is currently relevant to them. The answers were written on the board. In the second version, each student who caught the dice gave answers about the common theme: work, profession, career.

After each game version, the students answered six questions (time limit for each version with answers – 40 minutes). The final stage of the research was filling out the questionnaire “I want, I can, I do not want, I cannot, I do not need”.

The comparison of indicators using a Sign test. *WANT1*, where the data were collected at the beginning of the school year (do I already know what profession I would like to work in in the future?), and *WANT2*, where the data were collected 2 months before the end of the school year following a variety of activities in lessons of social science and other subjects as well as activities for the development of career management skills in Year 7 using the didactic game “Pass On”, it was concluded that $p\text{-value} = 0.000$, which is < 0.05 , and indicates that in the course of self-discovery, Year 7 students have demonstrated statistically significant differences when comparing the results at the beginning of the school year and in the second half of the school year. In numerical value, during the 7-month research process, 39 students of Year 7 chose a particular profession (at least in the optional section in the professional interest assessment attempt); there was one student had negative results, and the results stayed constant for 41 students.

The value of *WANT1* was identified at the beginning of the school year, in the hobby and interest questionnaire under the question/statement “My Possible Future Career”. *WANT2* students should have presented in the last activity. The questionnaire contained a *Wish to be, work as*, with an oral explanation – to try a profession, job. Twenty-five students experienced positive changes, one student – negative changes, 55 students – no changes. This indicator also shows that $p\text{-value} = 0.000$, which is < 0.05 , indicating that Year 7 students have demonstrated statistically significant differences when comparing the results at the beginning of the school year and in the second half of the school year.

When assessing the students' written responses on the benefits of this task, 12 pupils indicated that they now had a better understanding of their choices. This statement had similar answers, for example, to be more aware of their choices, to contemplate and justify them, to understand what the students want and what they do not want, to make their options carefully before they do or say something, to assess each of the next answers, to understand why they are saying something, to understand what they can or cannot do, want – do not want, and what is needed or not necessary, to think about what is said, to justify choices, to explore themselves better, to look into different issues which were not explicitly thought about until now, to develop the speed of thinking, to contemplate what should be done now in the choice of the profession, to understand what they do not want, need or cannot, to do more to improve, to begin to be more interested in the choice of the future profession. Several pupils indicated that they had been motivated to for the process, as well as motivated to be aware of their drawbacks, in order to avoid unwanted employment or occupation in the future.

The answers provided by students show that the didactic game with dice and the choice of answers, as well as their justification, develops logical and critical thinking; thus, the basis for sustainable, strategic thinking is laid. The didactic game “Pass On” was tested in practice, in author-led lessons for more than 400 students of Years 7 to 9 throughout Latvia. Two versions were played out – a free choice and a combined theme of work, profession and career. Pupils wrote 10-sentence long justifications for their choices and answered six questions. The opinions of the students on the potential benefits of the game in many ways coincided with the answers from the pilot study: one has to really think, to justify the answers, it seemed interesting, and I enjoyed learning the opinions of the classmates, we enjoyed working together. This shows that the didactic game also promotes collaboration between students in the classroom and improves communication. Of course, such a task can be given to students to perform academically, without an element of the game, but then the possibilities to develop socialisation, team-building and self-presentation skills are missing.

Conclusions

The students like the didactic game “Pass On” for self-discovery, it makes them think about their needs and desires. A game is a powerful, motivating factor for learning. With the help of the game, the activation of the cognitive process is intensified and faster, and more themes are explored in the game than in the daily learning process.

The game has more precise, more understandable goals for students compared to academic teaching methods. The development of new psychological formations is essential in adolescence, as emphasised by career scientists, educators and psychologists. Until adolescence, the playful perception of the world in which everything has to be approached with lightness, which means – not stopping when facing difficulties, not giving up, coping with the uncertainty; these are promoted through the didactic game “Pass On”. The game can be used as a method to link the needs of a person’s inner world with the skills and abilities needed for life/ career, by creating a link with what is already known and new concepts in a light, exciting atmosphere; creating a new, growth-enhancing experience.

In the assessment of the students, the objectives of the game enable them to understand their choices, to assess their motivation, to be more aware of the necessity of their choices and to justify them.

The “Pass On” didactic game is suitable for the upper classes of lower secondary school, for self-discovery, personal and professional interest assessment, familiarisation with professions, the discovery of strengths and weaknesses of students.

Through analysis of the results obtained, it can be concluded that the didactic game “Pass On”, developed by the author of the research, contributes to the process of self-discovery during adolescence, according to the questions/statements *I want – do not want, I can – I cannot, I need – I do not need*, which are the basis of all existential choices and processes, and which are particularly relevant to the physiological and intensive psychological processes, creation of new concepts during adolescence.

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DYNAMICS OF STUDENTS' PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL STATES IN DANCE MOVEMENT TRAINING

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ABSTRACT

The article presents a study of the dynamics of students' psychological and emotional state in the implementation of the author's program of dance movement training. The effectiveness of the training was monitored by evaluating the types of the participants' psychological problems and their emotional and functional state.

The study involved 96 students of Nizhny Novgorod universities aged from 18 to 25. We used: the author's questionnaire for subjective evaluation of the training participants' psychological problems; Cattell's questionnaire; the method of computer campimetry to assess the functional state of the body by the function of color differentiation. The technology used for measuring differential thresholds based on the coordinates of color models in a computer environment was the HandTracker (Polevaya) campimetry test for virtual environment. The system of dance movement training included methods of body-oriented psychotherapy, vegetotherapy, dance movement therapy, including contact improvisation. The structure of the class included: warm-up (aerobic and anaerobic exercise, muscle stretching exercises);

thematic muscle relaxation; choreographic performances (learning movement stereotypes, free and contact improvisation).

The data of the control experiment show statistically significant dynamics of the main indicators of psychological and emotional states ($P < 0.05$). At the same time, the dynamics of anxiety is statistically significant, while the level of depression decreased only at the trend level.

Keywords: dance movement therapy, psychological and emotional states, students, functional states.

Introduction

Dance movement therapy is a positive and emotionally intense motor experience widely used in modern psychological and educational practice.

Dance movement therapy is popular because the mechanisms of its influence on psycho-physical health and personal growth are obvious and well-studied (Rohricht, 2009; Earhart, 2009; Julian, Cherkin, Steuten, Sherman, Vrijhoef, 2011; Karkou, Meekums, 2017; Pallaro, 2007, etc.).

The uniqueness of the impact of dance movement therapy is in the integrative influence on the subject's psychophysical individuality as a whole (Hannah, 2007; Levi, 1988). At the same time, the researchers state the lack of validity of the effects of dance movement therapy, which is due to small samples and low quality of quantitative data, as well as the insufficient duration of studies (Erhart 2009), which reduces the external validity of the results.

Nevertheless, the results of studies of the influence of dance movement therapy on the psycho-emotional state in neurological and psychosomatic diseases (Erhart, 2009; Karkou, Meekum, 2017) allow us to assume the effectiveness of the use of dance motor therapy as a positive activity in order to prevent psycho-emotional problems in students.

The relevance of our study is due to a sufficiently large sample of respondents and the use of sustainable contact groups of DDT. In this article, we present the data on the study of the influence of dance movement therapy on the psychological and emotional state of students participating in the training group.

Stable psychological and emotional states (states of satisfaction/dissatisfaction, stable functional states) at student age most often reflect the effectiveness of solving the key problems of this age: academic and social success, interpersonal and intimate relationships. The problem of dissatisfaction with one's own image of the body is quite acute, especially in girls, from the perspective of solving the latter issues. Studies show that body image in case of college and university students is related to satisfaction with oneself (Blanco, Rivera, Gonzalez, Rodriguez-Villalobos, 2015;

Wright, 2012); academic performance and self-efficacy (Newton, 2015); self-esteem (Daniali, Azadbakht, Mostafavi, 2013); the type of preferred physical activity, attitude of family and friends (Pop, 2016; Holmqvist Gattario, 2013); one's life habits (Lowery, 2005).

Dissatisfaction with oneself and one's body reduces self-acceptance and causes a state of frustration, anxiety, social maladjustment, and makes communication difficult (Reich, 1999; Lowen, 2002; Shilder, 1978).

The answer to the problem of students' dissatisfaction with themselves is, first of all, positive motor activity with the experience of pleasure and joy (Gattario Holmquist, 2013). Dance movement therapy is a communicative and emotionally intense motor and physical practice that enhances self-acceptance, gives emotional relaxation/catharsis through creative self-expression and arouses great interest among students.

Methodology

We believe that the system of dance movement training is an effective practice of emotional relaxation and optimization of mental states of students.

The aim of this study was to study the dynamics of emotional and functional states of students – dance-motor training participants.

We used the author's questionnaire for subjective assessment of the participants' psychological problems; Cattell's questionnaire; the method of computer campimetry to assess the functional state of the body according to the color differentiation function (Polevaya, Runova, Nekrasova, 2012). Statistical assessment of the dynamics was carried out using the χ^2 – Pearson test and Student's t-test.

The system of dance movement training took place at the Studio of dance movement improvisation "Kinesio" (Nizhny Novgorod) under the direction of L.N. Kuzminykh. The study involved 96 students of Nizhny Novgorod universities and colleges, including 58 women and 38 men aged 18 to 25 who visited the Studio during the year. The control group included 84 students, 49 women and 35 men aged 18 to 25.

The respondents of the experimental group attended classes in the Studio on their own initiative. The selection of respondents for the control group was based on university students' voluntary participation in the survey; the sample of subjects in the control group was formed by random number generation.

The objectives included: to study the psychological and emotional problems of the group members; to measure differential color discrimination thresholds as indicators of the functional state; to develop a program of group dance and motor training, including group psychotherapeutic classes

on motor improvisation and expressive plastics based on images of world art culture; to conduct a control experiment.

Results

The survey has revealed a range of students' psychological problems. The authors' questionnaire for the subjective assessment of participants' psychological problems included a list of typical social and personal problems, and students were asked to choose personal life problems from the proposed list. The frequency of students' responses indicating problems of interpersonal relationships, self-confidence and the need for self-expression, psycho-emotional states and moods, etc., was calculated.

In this study, we used the classic Cattell's questionnaire as adapted by V. I. Pokhilko, A.S. Soloveichik and A.G. Shmelev ($Mst = 5.5$; $st = 2$). An analysis was performed of the group mean profile values that significantly deviated from the normative profile.

Campimetry (lat. campus – field + gr. metreo – measure) is a group of methods for the investigation of the central and paracentral parts of the visual field on a computer screen. Computer campimetry is a technology for measuring differential thresholds by the coordinates of color models in a virtual computer environment (Bakhchina, Koroleva, Poleyaya, 2015). Campimetry is used for a qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the degree of damage of visual functions in medicine and in physiology (Bakhchina, Koroleva, Poleyaya, 2015). In psychophysiology, campimetry is widely used to assess functional mental states through the study of maximum thresholds of color differentiation (Stromkova, Parin, Poleyaya, 2004).

We used the maximum differential thresholds for color differentiation by basic colors (green, blue, red) as indicators of the respondents' mental states. In this study, the campimetry test in the HandTracker virtual environment (Bakhchina, Koroleva, Poleyaya, 2015) was used to measure color discrimination thresholds. In this test, a set of color stimuli generated inside the virtual color model is proposed. The set of stimuli includes 25 color samples (5 basic colors, with 5 shades of each), which are presented to the subject in a random order. Each stimulus consists of a color background (background stimulus) and a color figure (target stimulus) inside the background. At the initial presentation of each stimulus to the subject, the values of the background shades and the target stimulus shades are equal. The subject's task is to determine the shape of the target stimulus in the background, by increasing the value of its shade in relation to the background shade. Each subject's differential thresholds are then measured on a scale and a base color with the maximum differential threshold is

chosen. Next, the percentage of subjects with the maximum differential threshold in a certain color (green, red, blue) is calculated.

Studies have demonstrated that measurements of the maximum differential threshold for color discrimination in a post-stress situation show a decrease in differential thresholds for color discrimination in green and an increase in blue and red. In the process of functional and stress loading, the maximum thresholds of color differentiation increase in the blue spectrum, while depressive states increase the maximum thresholds for color discrimination in the red spectrum (Stromkova, Parin, Polevaya, 2004; Polevaya, 2009).

A survey of respondents in the ascertaining experiment allowed us to identify some common psychological and emotional problems of the training group participants. Three quarters of the students indicated: inability to build deep interpersonal relations (78.12%), psycho-emotional instability with a predominance of negative mood (68.75%), dissatisfaction with one's own way of life in general (81.25%), lack of a meaningful type of creativity, the need for creative self-expression (85.41%); about half of the respondents indicated lack of self-confidence (58.33%) and a high proneness to conflict (48.95%).

Cattell's questionnaire showed that, in general, there was a prevalence of average ratings among the respondents for most personality factors in the sten score range from 6 to 7, the profile was quite uniform. At the same time, there was a tendency to affectothymia / factor A ($M = 7.56$); sensitivity, capacity for empathy and understanding the other / factor I was decreased ($M = 3.27$); there was also a pronounced tendency to hyperthymia, i.e. carelessness and self-confidence / factor O ($M = 3.15$).

The campimetric study showed the following ratio of subgroups of respondents: 22.91% tend to be depressed (with the maximum threshold in red); 15.62% show the state of anxiety (with the maximum threshold in blue); 61.47% have the optimal state (with the maximum threshold in green).

Thus, the ascertaining experiment revealed the markers of social maladaptation, psycho-emotional tension, anxiety, depression, increased reactivity, affectivity and sensitivity in the respondents.

Dance movement trainings with participants of the experimental group were conducted during one year (Gutko, Kuzminykh, Suvorova, 2018).

The following tasks were set: to encourage self-analysis, to analyze one's psychosomatic states, internal and external conflicts; to develop awareness of the relationship of the psyche, movements and bodily reactions in situations of spontaneous interaction, of the internal and external boundaries of one's body; to develop flexibility and to expand the range and variability of mental and motor reactions in situations of

spontaneous interaction; to develop the skill, delicacy and complexity of self-presentation, spontaneity and arbitrariness; to develop the ability of awareness, evaluation and creative response to external changes.

Trainings were based on the methods of body-oriented psychotherapy, V. Reich's vegetotherapy, dance movement therapy, including contact improvisation.

The following techniques were used: sharing (verbalization of psychological and psychosomatic problems and states); warm-up using soft muscle stretching techniques; spontaneous dance based on an arbitrary image; contact improvisation with the learning of the basic skills of pair dance; choreography (thematic performance).

Each class included the following stages: warm-up (aerobic and anaerobic exercise, muscle stretching exercises), thematic muscle relaxation; choreographic performances with different forms and types of movements.

After studying new stereotypes of movements, a number of creative tasks for free improvisation in pairs and solos were given, work with one's voice and breath, as well as creative tasks for improvisation and verbal vocalization were offered. There was also a discussion of emotional states during the classes, which allowed the participants to identify unconscious resistance to new experiences, to clarify bodily experiences and feelings, as well as bodily response to new experiences.

The process of individual plastic creative performance smoothly turned into a contact improvisation by pairs and groups, where the skills of "recognition" and acceptance of another person and of building communication based on empathy were practiced.

Of special significance in trainings was the use of the works of world art culture and expressive plastics, as well as the use of the stress component, namely, plastic drama theatrical performances.

The following means of world art culture were used: listening to classical music, jazz and ethnic music with subsequent discussion; viewing and discussion of classical and modern paintings with the subsequent use of images in improvisational plastic performance; motor improvisation to poetry recited without music (Gutko, Kuzminykh, Suvorova, 2018).

Table 1. Stages of implementation of the author's program of dance movement therapy training

Methods and techniques used during the stages	Values of world art culture
<p>The first stage (2–3 months.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Working with muscular armor, on the basis of vegetotherapy (V. Reich, A. Lowen, M. Feldenkreis, A. Baskakov, G. Timoshenko) 2. Sharing at the beginning and at the end of each class. 3. The development of authenticity based on the improvisation using the set characteristics (smooth – long, soft – short, pulsation, staccato) 4. Vedic stretching. 5. The use of bodily metaphor and its analysis. 6. Basic skills of dance steps (working with the feet, grounding, sense of self-support) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Popular modern music; 2. World music; 3. “New Age” music; 4. Dance music (waltz, Argentine tango, Rumba); 5. Classical Jazz, Blues.
<p>The second stage (3–4 months.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increasing the complexity of the workout by introducing a more complex control and working on exercises (“Star”, “Red Ball”, choreographic placing of the feet, body, posture) 2. Increasing the complexity of the figurative elements of the authentic dance (“Smoke”, “Positive aggression”, “Skeleton dance”, “Muscle tension dance”, “Breath dance”, female and male dance, “Form”, “Body geometry”, “Vice versa dance”...) 3. Spontaneous expressive dance without reliance on the task. True authenticity. 4. The basics of contact improvisation. (Work in a pair and study of elementary steps of ballroom dancing, dance “dialogue”, elementary support) 5. Vedic paired stretching. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Popular modern, Ethnic, «New Age». Dance music (waltz, Argentine tango, Rumba); Classical jazz, Blues. 2. Classical music (Viennese classicism, great romantics, Impressionists) 3. Joint viewing of video films, their discussion and rendering of new images by means of expressive plastic with the fixation of psychological state.
<p>The third stage (3–5 months.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Study of psychological problems on an individual basis on request; 2. Creative tasks on the transformation of the original image given by the psychologist by means of plastic drama; 3. The study of new forms and styles of movements, the location of the body in space, choreographic sketches; 4. Improved methods of contact improvisation, supports become spontaneous and more complicated; if necessary, diagnostic control of interaction is provided; 5. Creative tasks for the group as a whole, studies, group cohesion exercises 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Music of various styles, from Mozart to Led Zeppelin; 2. World art culture, historical review with «full immersion» – using masterpieces of art and music, studying the world view and style, producing costumes.

Methods and techniques used during the stages	Values of world art culture
<p>The fourth stage (5–7 months.)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The warm-up includes the study of the means of plastic drama: pantomimes, choreography, expressive authentic forms of bodily expression; 2. Discussion of the theme of theatrical performances, roles, storyline; 3. “Homework” in the form of a thorough description of the characters’ psychology; 4. Rehearsal process (staging, work on bodily and psychological difficulties, special attention to the moment of transformation of the characters) 5. First night performance. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Selection of music with participation of all group members; 2. Viewing of theatrical productions and movies with discussion of the means of actor’s expressiveness; 3. Selection and discussion of scenery and costumes.

The control experiment allowed us to reveal the positive dynamics of psychological and emotional state of students participating in the dance movement therapy training. The most pronounced positive dynamics was observed in relation to: dissatisfaction with one’s own way of life in general (81.25%/29.16%) and unsatisfied need for creative self-expression (85.41%/30.20%). The percentage of respondents’ indications of communicative and emotional-volitional problems in the questionnaire decreased significantly ($p < 0.01$). The Cattell questionnaire showed that the indicators of affectation, sensitivity and hyperthymia were somewhat lower than before, thus indicating a decrease in emotional tension, anxiety and harmonization of background mood. The dynamics in both the control and the experimental group was not statistically significant (Student’s t-test).

Campimetry data reveal the following dynamics of states of the respondents in the experimental group. The proportion of subjects with the maximum threshold in red (depressive state) slightly decreased from 22.91% to 19.79%); with the maximum threshold in green (optimal state) – increased from 61.47% to 78.13%; with the maximum threshold in blue (alarm state) significantly decreased 15.62%/2.08%, which allows us to conclude that changes in the states of training participants are mainly associated with overcoming anxiety states ($\chi^2 = 16.67$, $p < 0.001$). Indicators of depression obtained by campimetry in the control experiment remained almost at the starting level, despite the positive dynamics of emotional and functional states.

In the control group, positive changes were insignificant. There were no valid variations in the dynamics of the subjective assessment of psychological problems by the control group respondents; dynamics indicators of the personal profile (16 PF) among the respondents in the control group were statistically insignificant, although there was a tendency

toward mood background harmonization; according to the campimetry test, the changes in the state of the control group respondents were insignificant ($\chi^2 = 3.54, p > 0.05$).

Conclusions

Thus, the study of the dynamics of psychological and emotional states of the dance-movement therapy training group participants has revealed a positive dynamics of their changes at the psychological and physiological level.

The combination of spontaneous and cultural movement based on the artistic image and words optimizes the psycho-emotional state of students through creative self-expression in the process of awareness and expressive-motor study of psychological problems of adolescence, overcoming self-dissatisfaction through positive motor and physical experience of social acceptance.

The data of the control experiment showed statistically significant dynamics of the indicators of psychological and emotional states ($p < 0.05$). At the same time, the dynamics of anxiety was statistically significant, while the level of depression decreased to the trend level. The percentage of respondents' indications of communicative and emotional-volitional problems in the questionnaire decreased statistically significantly ($p < 0.01$). At the trend level, there was a decrease of affectation, sensitivity and hyperthymia among the respondents.

According to the results of the control experiment, the psychological and emotional states of the students in the training group of dance movement therapy were optimized, they became more calm, harmonious and functional.

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IMPORTANCE OF DUAL CAREER IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SPORTS SCHOOLS IN VIDZEME REGION

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ABSTRACT

The main objective of this research is to analyse the situation regarding the development of dual education in Vidzeme regional sports schools. The paper consists of an introduction, the results of the research and their analysis, a discussion and conclusions.

The introduction examines the structure of the basic premise of dual education and examples from European countries, responsibilities and competences of educational institution management.

The research is based on surveys of 9 major representatives of Vidzeme sports schools regarding the current state of dual education and plans for the future as well as 73 athletes of sports schools to learn about their experience. The data are analysed, followed by a discussion and conclusions.

Keywords: dual career, education management, Latvian sports schools, sports.

Introduction

Sports has become an integral part of modern society promoting socialization and communication. Over time the definition of sports has evolved to a broad and encompassing term. The main document establishing the fundamental principles of sports is the Olympic Charter that emphasizes the importance of harmony of the body and mind. The European Sports Charter is also significant and establishes the principles of tolerance and fair play. The aim of the Charter is to encourage continuous

individual progress and enhancement of interaction between the emotional and physical state.

Dual careers have become a relevant matter in the European Union as they are one of the main tools that can improve social life. The authors believe the fusion of sports and education to be a productive way of ensuring gradual development of a personality in Latvia. Another important aspect adding to the relevance of this research is the current situation of dual careers in Latvia as the current system has areas in need of further development. Several officials, representatives of sports schools and academics have referred to the issue of high-profile athletes experiencing difficulties successfully managing sports and academics. These difficulties persist throughout primary, secondary school and university.

The authors wish to outline the possible modes of cooperation between sports schools and secondary schools. The government classifies sports schools as equivalents to vocational education institutions. The definition of a sports school is an institution established by the state, municipality, legal entity or private individual with the aim to implement programmes of sports education. Students enrolled in these educational institutions should receive academic and professional support as they merge two vital components of their development, namely, academic education and professional sports.

The next stage in the development of a dual career system is cooperation with higher education institutions. The system of sports education in Latvia ensures a high level of preparation of young athletes until graduation of secondary school. This is mediated by local sports schools that to the extent possible provide their students with the necessary equipment and the opportunities to compete. A crucial aspect is prescribed by the regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers that grant the opportunity for athletes to continue their chosen education until the age of 25. However, the main reason for opting out of this opportunity is the lack of suitable conditions, for example, the lack of appropriate infrastructure central to successful management of sports and academics (Sports Law, 2002).

The alternative solution put forward by the authors is the possible cooperation between sports schools and higher education institutions. Conclusion of mutual agreements could provide the necessary framework for further development of a dual career system. The tasks of sports schools would be to prepare young students capable of joining the students' sports communities, whereas the tasks of higher education institutions would be to provide the academic environment for athletes warranting the necessary social guarantees.

As a result, upon graduation from secondary school, young athletes would have additional motivation to continue their professional development in higher education institutions.

Methodology

Objectives. To research and analyse the importance of dual careers in the development of sports schools in Vidzeme region (Latvian Northeast region) as well as conclude cooperation agreements between sports schools and educational institutions. Location of research – central city on Vidzeme – Cēsis.

Research. The authors carried out quantitative research using survey research design that included 80 athletes currently enrolled in one of the sports schools in Vidzeme region participating in this research. 73 respondents provided answers. The average age of the respondents was 15 to 19. The athletes were chosen based on the current self-evaluation reports of these sports schools and availability. They were given a set of 15 statements with the possible answers of *completely agree*, *agree*, *disagree*, *completely disagree*. The data were collected and analysed using the SPSS software of statistical analysis and *Microsoft Excel*.

Kendall's coefficient of concordance was used. It is a method of statistical analysis that is used to determine the concordance among variables. The value of the coefficient is between -1 and 1, the closer it is to either of these values, the higher the concordance among variables. If it is closer to zero, then the concordance is minor (McClave2, 2003).

Concordance among variables is considered statistically significant, if the corresponding p-value is lower than the determined significance level. Correlation significance is evaluated at 1% and 5% levels, sometimes also at the 10% level. For example, if the p-value is less than 0.05, then the corresponding correlation is considered statistically significant at the 5% level.

Results

The first seven statements of the survey were designed to acquire the opinions of respondents in regards to possibilities of a dual career in the setting of middle and secondary school. The resulting correlations point towards important trends.

Between statements two and five a p-value of 0.00 can be observed, which is statistically significant. The former statement asserts that sports can easily be balanced with academic studies, whereas the latter statement claims that coaches are understanding in regards to academic studies. The

Table 1. Correlations among responses

Kendall's tau_b			1. Assertion	2. Assertion	3. Assertion	4. Assertion	5. Assertion	6. Assertion	7. Assertion
1. Assertion	Correlation Coefficient		1,000	,354**	,116	,070	,137	-,083	,138
	Sig. (2-tailed)			,001	,281	,517	,204	,446	,196
	N		73	73	73	73	73	73	73
2. Assertion	Correlation Coefficient		,354**	1,000	,514**	,232*	,436**	,279**	,288**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,001		,000	,029	,000	,009	,006
	N		73	73	73	73	73	73	73
3. Assertion	Correlation Coefficient		,116	,514**	1,000	,332**	,382**	,268*	,243*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,281	,000		,002	,000	,012	,021
	N		73	73	73	73	73	73	73
4. Assertion	Correlation Coefficient		,070	,232*	,332**	1,000	,135	,255*	,184
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,517	,029	,002		,204	,017	,081
	N		73	73	73	73	73	73	73
5. Assertion	Correlation Coefficient		,137	,436**	,382**	,135	1,000	,584**	,154
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,204	,000	,000	,204		,000	,142
	N		73	73	73	73	73	73	73
6. Assertion	Correlation Coefficient		-,083	,279**	,268*	,255*	,584**	1,000	,247*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,446	,009	,012	,017	,000		,019
	N		73	73	73	73	73	73	73
7. Assertion	Correlation Coefficient		,138	,288**	,243*	,184	,154	,247*	1,000
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,196	,006	,021	,081	,142	,019	
	N		73	73	73	73	73	73	73

1. Assertion – I learned studies without difficulties

4. Assertion – Sports school interested about education

11. Assertion – Sports school interested about dual career in university

12. Assertion – I believe that sports schools need to make sure that athletes turn in to dual career process

13. Assertion – I also plan to focus on dual career in study phase

Other assertions are described in the text

correlation is 0.436. This signifies the impact of coaches on development of dual careers. If a sports teacher comprehends and emphasizes the importance of academic education in the daily lives of athletes, students are encouraged and have better chances of successfully balancing their studies and professional sports.

Academic secondary education institutions have an effect on development of the dual career system. This is displayed by the p-value of 0.00 between the second and third statements, the correlation is 0.514. The statements mention the support of the academic education institution for young athletes. Similar to the correlation described previously, the respondents appreciate the support of the academic education institution, in this particular situation the secondary schools attended by the respondents. If teachers support the extracurricular activities of these students and look for compromise and cooperation, it can be considered as a way of improving and developing dual careers. (Golsorhi, 2015).

The second part of the survey consisted of statements targeted towards the potential of a dual career after secondary school. A statistically significant correlation can be observed between the final statements (14, 15). The p-value of 0.00 is identical to the aforementioned

correlations, the correlation is 0.462. The statements ask about future plans of representing the sports school after finishing secondary school as well as the overall assessment of the functionality and possibilities of dual careers in sports schools. The correlation shows the desire of young athletes to continue their career in professional sports after secondary school, however in reality the outcome is the opposite. Bearing this in mind, the replies for the next statement gravitate towards the negative spectrum of answers as respondents do not see opportunities to be able to continue representing their sports school during studies in universities. The authors believe that this could be explained by the experience of dual careers by previous graduates of these sports schools. Therefore, current students view their future associations with sports schools in a negative way.

Table 2. Correlations among responses

11. Assertion	Correlation Coefficient	.067	.121	.209 ^{**}	.312 ^{**}	.143	.161	.528 ^{**}	.277 ^{**}	.100	.123	1,000	.369 ^{**}	.027	.149	.031
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.539	.256	.050	.004	.180	.134	.000	.010	.349	.254		.001	.804	.163	.763
	N	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73
12. Assertion	Correlation Coefficient	-.010	.289 ^{**}	.298 ^{**}	.020	.129	.207	.281 ^{**}	.318 ^{**}	.049	.148	.369 ^{**}	1,000	.362 ^{**}	.108	.101
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.927	.006	.005	.851	.222	.051	.007	.003	.644	.163	.001		.001	.308	.329
	N	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73
13. Assertion	Correlation Coefficient	-.040	.153	.177	.071	.065	.081	.056	.209	.071	.192	.027	.362 ^{**}	1,000	.106	.164
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.714	.151	.096	.506	.541	.449	.599	.050	.505	.072	.804	.001		.320	.116
	N	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73
14. Assertion	Correlation Coefficient	.260 [*]	.197	.235 [*]	.086	.047	.069	-.001	-.116	.347 ^{**}	.803 ^{**}	.149	.108	.106	1,000	.462 ^{**}
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.016	.063	.026	.418	.658	.516	.995	.272	.001	.000	.163	.308	.320		.000
	N	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73
15. Assertion	Correlation Coefficient	.171	.126	.206 [*]	.010	.058	.084	.022	.094	.360 ^{**}	.484 ^{**}	.031	.101	.164	.462 ^{**}	1,000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.104	.223	.046	.921	.575	.420	.830	.366	.001	.000	.763	.329	.116	.000	
	N	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73	73

All data described in the previous sections have a 1% significance level representing strong correlations.

Correlation between statements 11 and 12 is statistically significant as the p-value is 0.01 which includes it in the 5% significance level. Correlation between both statements is 0.69. The first statement asserts the initiatives of sports schools to motivate the individual respondents to continue their academic education in universities. The second statement enquired about the respondents' opinions in regards to the necessity of sports schools to stress the importance of higher education. The correlation shows that young athletes wish to receive more information and motivation from sports schools regarding higher education (Geranisova, 2015). In reality, however, they have not received such information. The authors suspect that sports schools may not devote enough attention to encouraging the development of dual careers.

The authors wish to draw attention to the statements that directly present the inclination of sports schools to focus on dual careers. The fourth statement of the survey included the efforts of sports schools to show concern regarding the academic performance of their students.

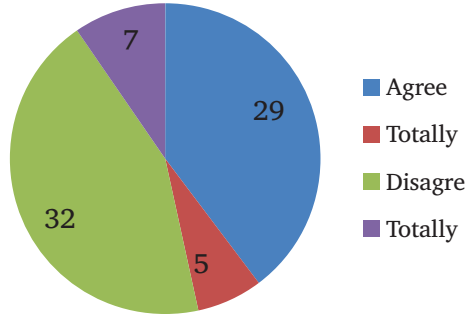


Figure 1. Interest of sports schools in the academic performance of students

Analysis of respondents' opinions regarding the interest of sports schools about their academic performance (see Figure 1) reveals that the results can be assessed as partly positive. Although a significant part of respondents (n-29) stated that their sports school is interested in their academic performance, most respondents (n-32) marked *disagree* as their answer to this statement. The authors presume that these statistics are influenced by the general position of the executive management of sports schools as well as that of individual coaches and their approach towards their students' academic performance.

The answers of *completely agree* and *disagree* were the least popular among respondents (n-5) and (n-7), respectively.

The authors would also like to address the 11th statement. It is concerned with the activity and initiatives of sports schools in the development of dual careers.

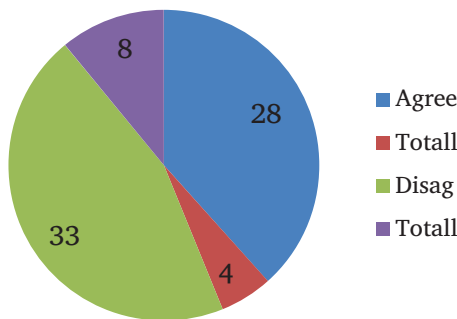


Figure 2. Recommendations of sports schools to obtain higher education while continuing professional sport

The results represent a similar situation to the one in regards to cooperation with secondary schools. Most respondents (n-33) point towards a negative trend as no activities have been established to support students in considering and choosing a higher education institution while continuing pursuing professional sports. Eight respondents (n-8) were even more strict stating that they *completely disagree*. Conversely, (n-28) respondents had noticed such initiatives in their sports schools and (n-4) respondents stated that they *completely agree*. Analysis of international literature confirms the trend of local sports schools struggling to adapt to new tendencies and innovations or being late in their implementation. Thus, the development and promotion of dual careers is not at a satisfactory level (European Union, 2013).

Assessment of dual careers in Europe and consulting with local officials regarding the situation in Latvia, facilitated the authors in development of a real example how a local sports school can cooperate with a secondary school. The cooperation was established between Cēsis Sports School and Cēsis Secondary School which are in Northeast Latvia. Implementation of this cooperation is planned for academic year 2019/2020.

This cooperation model created by the authors is based on collecting data, experience and trends in dual careers across Europe taking into account the local setting and possibilities in Latvia. The cooperation model plans to introduce a health and sports profile. It has already been elucidated by a Norwegian researcher (Kristiansen, 2017) that during the study process, it is vital that students have swimming lessons, physical education and also skiing to the extent possible. A similar presumption has also been put forward by a British researcher (Lee, 2017) underlining the importance of development of personality and its stimulation by the educational institution.

Examination of conclusions made by different researchers in the context of what is required for a dual career and adapting these requirements to coincide with the actual capabilities, the authors propose that the students enrolled in the health and sports profile have:

- An additional third physical education class per week;
- Physiotherapy classes;
- Swimming lessons under coach supervision;
- Skiing lessons.

The health and sports profile will be implemented from grades 5 to 7, the mandatory curriculum will remain unchanged, however it will be adjusted to include the extra sports activities. Due to the load on infrastructure, the physical education classes are planned in the mornings. Students enrolled in the health and sports profile will have to conform with the academic requirements regarding the average grade (minimum of 6.0) as well as all semester/year grades which will have to be at least 4 in every subject.

Students incapable of attaining this level of academic performance will not be permitted to continue their studies in the health and sports profile. The project will receive financial support from the Cēsis Municipality.

The other cooperation agreement involves a more problematic area of the sports system, that is, university students and sports. During studies in higher education institutions, most young athletes stop pursuing their career in sports, although their potential has not been reached. The reason is a combination of issues concerning domestic and professional life that affects the ability to balance professional sports and studies. Students attempt to manage their academic life, sports and also enter the job market, all of which impact their achievements in professional sports (Verslandn, 2016).

The authors have developed a type of consultative agreement that stipulates that the best athletes receive additional motivation and stimulus. The cooperation is planned between Cēsis Sports School and University of Latvia. This collaboration would provide young athletes with the opportunity to continue pursuing professional sports until graduation.

Discussion

Development of dual careers can vary among countries. However, the European Parliament has named the three most important factors that should be considered by all EU Member States (European Guidelines, 2012). Firstly, mental and physical development of children that is balanced and planned, retaining the development of physical education. Training loads cannot be extensive and should be even. Another aspect is adhering to a healthy balance between academic studies and sports (Budeviča, 2018). According to the European guidelines, the focus should not shift in favour of either, for example, only achieving success in sports. A final point is made in regards to the end of athletes' careers. The transition from sports to a different career should be smooth and successful regardless of the amount of job experience (EU Guidelines...2012). Investigation of the aforementioned guidelines leads the authors to conclude that the dual career system in Latvia lacks development in the area of transitioning from professional sports to another career. Unfortunately, the authors have to conclude that there is no support system or programme in Latvia that would aid athletes in entering new careers.

In many European countries, such as, Norway, France, the Netherlands, the dual career system is highly developed (Kristiansen, 2017). Great Britain has created a support system for young athletes, The Talented Athlete Scholarship Scheme (TASS). It is a government funded institution that supports more than 300 young athletes representing 30 different types of sports (Talented Athlete, 2014). The programme is intended for

athletes aged 16 and above. It provides them with the possibility to receive education in secondary school or university alongside their career in professional sports. TASS cooperates with 24 higher education institutions across Great Britain. The athletes receive a scholarship in their chosen university, exemptions from tuition fees, medical services (specific for their chosen sports) as well as other provisions necessary for achieving outstanding results.

Director of TASS Guy Taylor indicates that this institution is the world's main brand that ensures cooperation between universities and development of dual careers. It is confirmed by their expertise and achievement. More than 6500 students have been part of this system and during their professional careers they have won more than 100 Olympic medals (Dual Career...2015).

The daily routine plays an important part for the students-athletes concerning their training schedules and academic studies (Geranisova, 2015). One research carried out in the EU about the routines of athletes show the variations among different countries. At the level of higher education, Latvia has the largest proportion of athletes that study and work full time amounting to 26%. Whereas in Finland such athletes make up only 5% of the respondents. The proportion in Estonia is average, around 17%. (Athletes Dual, 2013).

Conclusions

Youth development and general intelligence is dependent to a large extent on the functionality of the educational system. One of its main tasks is to promote a diverse outlook on life that is based on a healthy and physically active lifestyle.

- Mutual interest from sports schools and secondary schools is a prerequisite to establish the foundations for development of dual careers;
- The current situation in Latvian Northeast region Vidzeme can be considered satisfactory;
- Analysis of the responses of young athletes reveals that a dual career is regarded in a positive way by less than half of respondents. It refers to the statements relating to sports schools showing interest in the academic performance of students. When the statement includes a specific action for development of a dual career (for example, cooperation between secondary schools), most respondents reply negatively;
- Transition to sports in higher education institutions occurs without an established system, this is verified by most respondents;

- The ability of educational institutions to adjust the daily routine of young athletes for sports and academic studies is a crucial aspect;
- Education for coaches is important in the field of dual careers;
- The cooperation agreement between Cēsis Sports School and Cēsis Secondary School is an example that proves the dual career system can be improved in a short time span;
- The other cooperation agreement between Cēsis Sports School and University of Latvia is currently a type of consultative agreement, however it is planned to be reviewed to render this cooperation functional.

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ACCESS TO INTEREST-RELATED EDUCATION IN LATVIA FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE: PARENTS' PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

According to the Education Law of Latvia, every child in Latvia has the right to access education including interest-related education. There are several interest-related education programmes available for children and young people up to age 25. The research seeks to discover the parent's perspective on child and youth access to interest education. This paper uses data from an on-line questionnaire developed and disseminated to parents through social media. A sample of 124 parents with experience in interest education was used. The small-scale research findings suggest the four most popular reasons why children are not attending the interest-related education programmes are: lack of information, no interest-related classes provided or conducted, children are too busy so overload can occur, and there is no support stuff provided during the classes.

Although the majority of parents have had a positive experience concerning their children's accessibility to interest-related education, some parents have been refused access to an interest education due to children/youth's behaviour, a teacher's refusal to work with the child, social inclusion problems in the classroom, and a teacher's negative attitude. Research reveals that refusal to access is experienced more often by parents whose children have a disability. Several other issues which emerged from the research are also discussed – what are the barriers to accessibility to interest-related education and how to overcome them.

Keywords: parent's opinion, interest-related education in Latvia, access.

Introduction

The access to education is one of the main objectives of Latvia's education policy to promote equality for all the children involved. The

Law of Education of Latvia states that, every child in Latvia has the right to access education (Education Law, 1998), including interest-related education or so-called hobby education. The interest-related education system in Latvia supports activities for the development of every personality as individual to promote their talents. It is a long-term, curriculum-based supervised education outside a formal educational setting. According to the current information provided by the National Centre for education of the Republic of Latvia (National Centre for Education, n.n.) interest-related education provides a variety of activities outside a formal education, which can also include extra-curricular activities and events. One of the tasks is to promote useful and meaningful leisure time for children and young people, considering their needs and necessities. It is a fact that an interest-related education is providing a real impact on the development of values in children and young people (Pavlovs, 2018). There are several interest-related education programmes which are implemented in Latvia in such areas as: cultural education, sports education, technical creativity, environmental education and youth work.

Usually the local municipalities in Latvia are encouraged to provide the interest-related programmes, as the Education Law (1998) stipulates that every municipality has a duty to provide children living in its administrative territory with the opportunity to implement interest-related education. According to Paragraph 1 of Article 47 of the Education Law of Latvia (1998), interest-related education is voluntary and it does not require a particular level of education to enroll in the interest-related education programmes. Interest-related education programmes are implemented usually in the afternoon hours, either at educational institutions of interest (hobby education institutions or interest education centres), or in educational institutions (comprehensive schools) which are linked with the formal education. The majority of interest-related programmes are available free of charge or for a very small co-payment. One of the most comprehensive in Latvia on interest-related education “Interest-related Education in Latvia and the Role of Interest-related Educational Institutions” (Kalniņa et al., 2012) explains that social integration and leisure and recreation programmes are also implemented in interest education institutions for children with special needs, “street” children and those who are juvenile offenders. The most recent research pointed out that children from orphanages also utilise interest education (Nimante et al., 2018). However, the study found that the participation of these children in interest education is often limited due to the fact that every municipality offers a different quantity of interest-related programmes and the offer of interest-related education programmes may vary from one municipality to another. Access to interest education is also limited if the

children's home is located far from the municipality centre. Those findings are in line with what has been discussed in previous studies (Kalniņa et al., 2012). It means that in theory, interest-related education should be accessible for all children, but it can be limited due to geographical location.

Access is most often associated with logistics issues such as availability of transport, buildings, services and information. The main criterion for accessibility would be that the programme is easy and quick to reach, with minimal obstacles and barriers. Very often the accessibility question is raised in relation to persons with disabilities (United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006, Article 9).

In the context of education, several aspects should be taken in consideration:

1. Physical accessibility – access to the building, freedom of movement, access to the classroom, gym, or facilities (Ackah-Jn & Danso, 2019);
2. Access to information – accessibility by different users and barrier free information (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2015);
3. Access to the programme – children and youth acceptance in the programme or access to the programme (Beddow, 2012);
4. Individualized and personalized support – availability of support and necessary resources (Cobb, 2015; Ramberg, 2013; Rose, Shevlin, Twomey, & Zhao, 2017). By enhancing access to education all learners, there are less barriers for those whose individual characteristics can be viewed as challenging within the current educational system;
5. Geographical accessibility – geographical proximity to services (Kalniņa et al., 2012; Nīmante et al., 2018).

Previous research on interest-related education has mainly focused on the motives children and young people have to participate in interest-related education (Kalniņa et al., 2012; Pavlovs, 2018). However, there were further research questions recommended by Kalniņa and colleagues: to find out what the reasons are for children to not attend interest-related education and what are the barriers of participation of children and young people in interest-related education. Although there is no research specifically related to interest-related education, based on research on the reasons why children and young people refuse to attend school, there is not one particular reason, but rather there are several factors which drive students away from the school: school factors (poor attendance, poor discipline policies, consequences of bad behaviour, tests), non-school factors (financial, employment, family needs, childbirth, health, illness), or the students are disengaged from school (student apathy, non-completing school work, insufficient educational support (European Agency for Special

Needs and Inclusive Education, 2016). Children's special needs are also mentioned as one of the factors (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2016).

This research seeks to discover the parent's perspective on child and youth access to interest education curriculum. There are several research questions:

- What are the reasons for children/youth to not attend interest-related education?
- Have parents experienced a refusal to their children participating in interest-related education which reduces accessibility for interest-related education?
- Is the refusal related to the child's disability?
- What are the main barriers to participation and what are possible solutions?

Methodology

The study was conducted between 10 February 2018 and 15 August 2018. A descriptive, survey research design was used. As part of the survey, there was an opportunity for parents to respond by explaining or adding information and there were two open questions provided: what are the main barriers for participation in interest-related education and how to overcome those barriers?

Questions discussed demographic information, information on children/young people with and without disabilities, attendance of interest education programmes at both educational institutions and interest education centres, and reasons for not attending interest education classes. Parents responded to several statements that were based on complex stories about interest-related education in media and on social networks. The research also analysed respondents' experiences of access to interest education. In total, 83 questions were put to the respondents; 22 were analysed in this study.

The questionnaire was created and placed in Google sheets. Potential respondents were reached online via Facebook and through the general school e-mails. Data were collected and analysed quantitatively using mathematical statistical methods and qualitatively by summarizing respondents' statements into thematic groups. One hundred twenty-six parents responded, 120 of them were women, 6 were men, 107 were employed and 19 were unemployed. All of them have had experience with interest-related education as a parent and all of them have children between the ages of 2–25. Twelve parents stated that they have children with a disability and two parents stated that their children are in the disability assessment process.

In Latvia, disability (*invaliditate – Latvian*), in accordance with Law of Disability (Invaliditātes likums [The law of disability], 2010), is a long lasting or permanent disability of a very severe, severe or moderate degree that affects a person's mental or physical abilities, ability to work, self-care and social inclusion. The limitation of a person's functioning is evaluated by the doctors of the State Commission and disability status is confirmed by an administrative act.

Results

The results of the survey show that most of the parents confirmed that their children are involved in interest-related education, however 15% of parents indicated that their children are not currently engaged in interest-related education. The majority of parents surveyed had agreed with the statement that their children most often attend interest education classes in schools where interest education classes are offered. However, a relatively large proportion of children also attend interest education classes in interest education centres (see Figure 1).

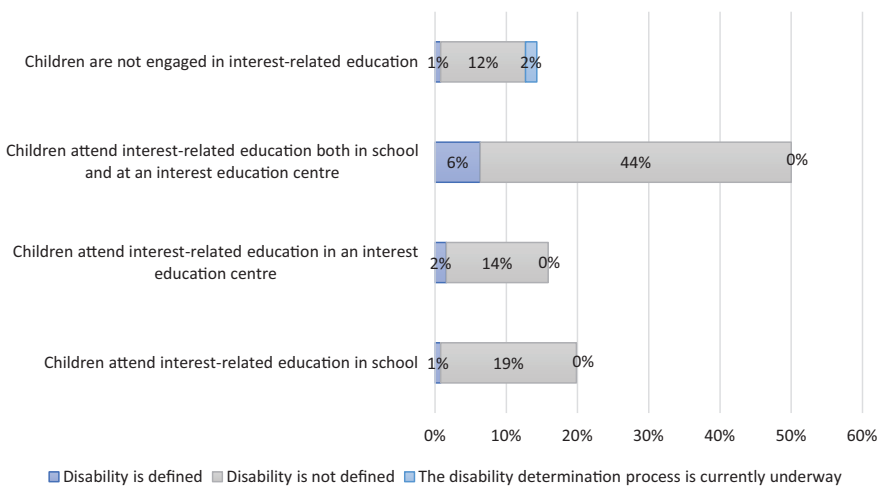


Figure 1. Attending interest education classes (%)

When answering the question about why children do not attend interest education, the five most popular answers were: lack of information, there are no interest-related classes conducted, have no interest in the interest-related education classes that are offered, children are too busy so overload can occur, and there is no support staff during the classes who could assist in interest-related education (see Figure 2).

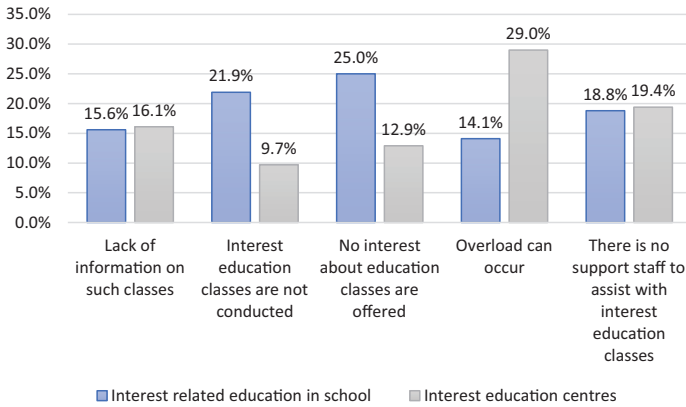


Figure 2. The reasons why children do not attend interest-related education (%)

The researchers chose the five the most common reasons for the refusal to educate children in the interest-related education classes (i.e., due to health conditions, children/youth behaviour, a teacher’s refusal to work with the child, social inclusion problems in the classroom, and a teacher’s negative attitude; see Figure 3) and asked parents to provide their own experience or other parents’ experience. The majority of parents supported the idea that they did not have an experience of refusal due to the five reasons mentioned above. Nevertheless, almost a fifth of respondents agreed that they have experienced some cases when children were refused access to interest-related education due to health conditions, children/youth behaviour, a teacher’s refusal to work with the child, social inclusion problems in the classroom, and a teacher’s negative attitude.

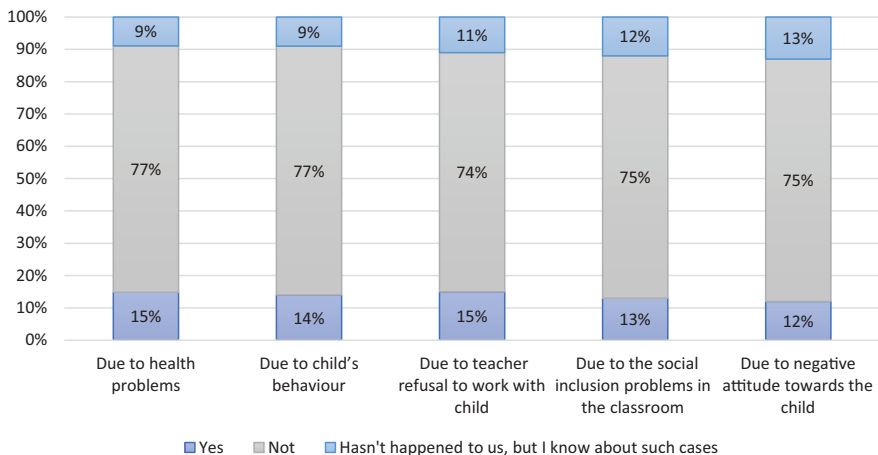


Figure 3. Refusal of access to interest-related education (%)

Researchers were interested in whether refusal was related to the child’s disability. As illustrated in Figures 4, 5, 6, and 7, that parents whose children have a disability experience a refusal more often than those who do not have children with a disability.

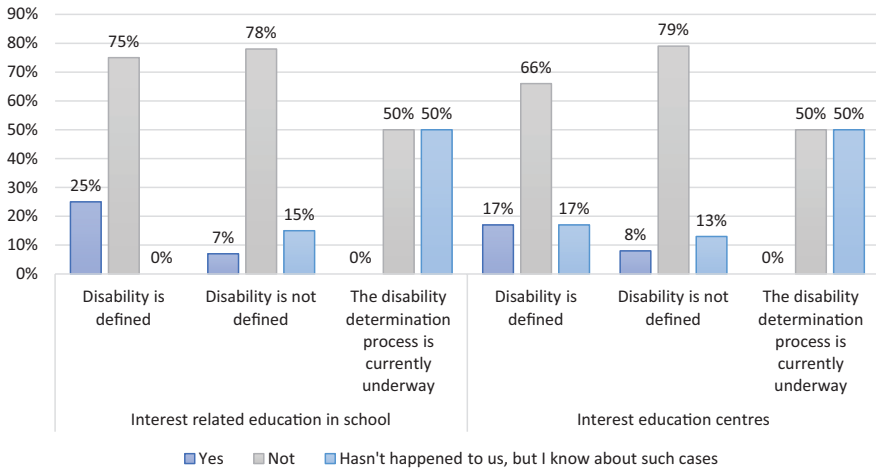


Figure 4. Refusal due to child’s behaviour (%)

Parents who have children with disabilities admit that in interest-related education in school they have experienced refusal more often due to the child’s behaviour and a teacher’s refusal to work with the child than in interest education centres (see Figure 4, 5).

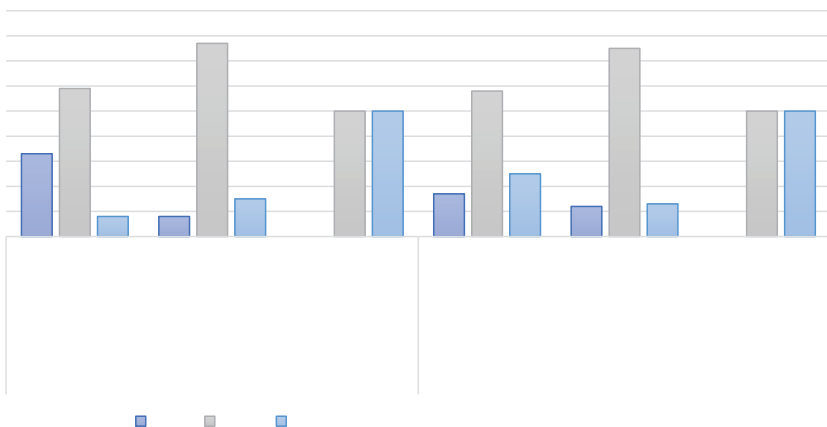


Figure 5. Refusal due to teacher’s refusal to work (%)

Parents who have children with disabilities state that the refusal due to social inclusion problems in the classroom are more often experienced in interest-related education in school than in interest education centres. However, in both cases, more than a third in interest education centres and almost half of parents in interest education centres who had children with a disability admit that they were refused due to social inclusion problems (see Figure 6).

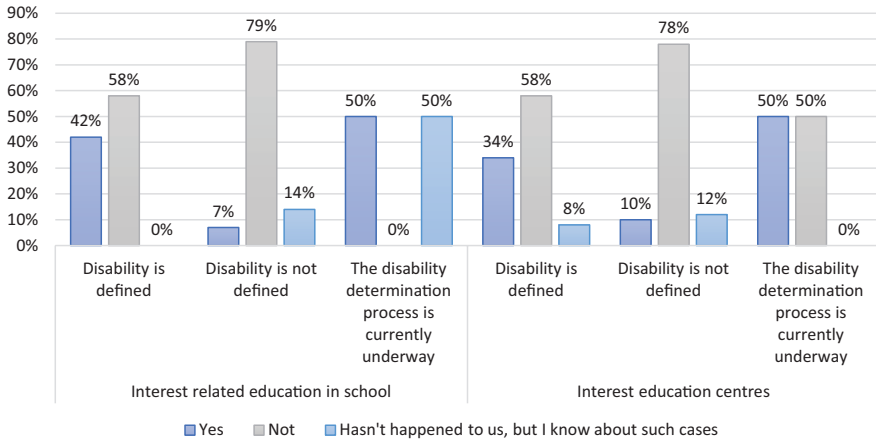


Figure 6. Refusal due to social inclusion problems in the classroom (%)

Parents who have children with disabilities state that in interest-related education in school they have experienced refusal more often due a teacher’s negative attitude towards the child than in interest education centres (see Figure 7).

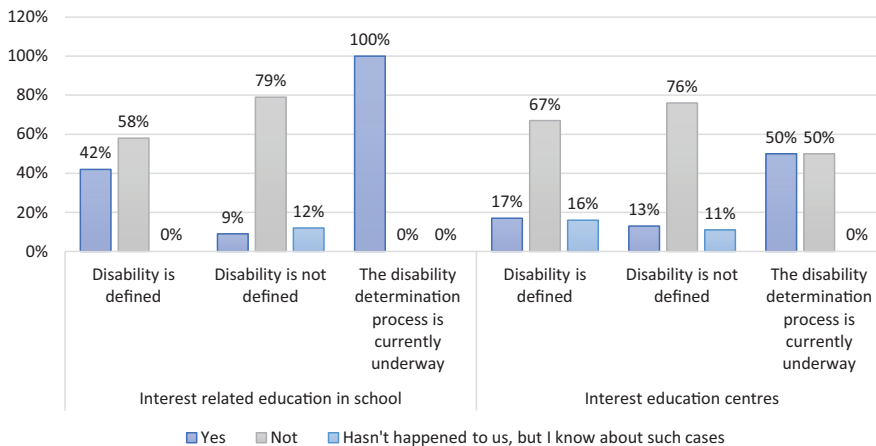


Figure 7. Refusal due to negative attitude towards the child (%)

Qualitatively summarized respondents' statements were divided into thematic groups outlining barriers to accessing an interest education and suggestions to overcome them.

First, they defined barriers to access. Parents acknowledge that there are several barriers to access. One of the most important barriers to access is that the offer of interest-related programmes differs between large and small cities. When living in the countryside, there is less availability and fewer choices in interest-related programmes.

«In a small town the choice is not as great as I would like. Looking at the offer in Riga, there is “envy” about the possibility of having so many interesting things for the child there.»

«In rural schools the offer is critical, there are no “interesting” specialists.»

Although the majority of programmes are offered in afternoons, the interest-related education programmes are generally still offered during parents' working hours.

«The desired changes could be related to the time — at what time the interest education groups are available.»

Parents stated that the offer of interest education does not meet the demands of modern society and the interests of children.

«There is a feeling that the programme is from the Soviet era. They could introduce classes on healthy eating or lifestyle lessons.»

In many statements, parents stated that there are limited interest-related education offers for children with disabilities or for small children.

«For children with developmental disorders, there is a very small choice of classes.»

«For young children up to the age of 3, there are very few classes offered at municipal/Riga interest education centres. These centres are half empty in the first half of the day, so there could be an opportunity to use them.»

Unfortunately, the parents believe that pedagogues are not prepared to work with children with disabilities in interest-related education.

«Works only with children without disabilities.»

«There is a lack of staff and a lack of knowledge in how to communicate with such a child and how to include them in the group.»

«After the third class, the teacher asked me to choose another group because she could not deal with the discipline (with other children laughing at the special child's behaviour in a non-standard situation).»

There are problems with children having a lack of understanding towards a child that is different.

«Do not want to dance or perform, because it should be explained to others that it is not a punishment to learn with a child with FT (functional disorder).»

Second, they made suggestions to overcome the barriers. Parents suggest that the only solution to overcome barriers to accessing interest-related education is the teachers' education. There is also evidence that parent's must rely on the next generation of teachers.

«Teachers should also be encouraged to work and involve healthy children in common lessons. It is difficult to be productive if teachers do not have the competence. These children scare them.»

«The new generation of educators is more open, accepting and understanding. They perceive everything more easily, do not complicate, and co-operation is mutually stimulating.»

Discussions and conclusions

Recognizing the limitations of this small-scale study, the survey sample suggests that whilst policy in Latvia promotes equality for all the children involved, there are some barriers to accessing interest-related education. From the parents' perspective, there is a lack of information about interest-related education, children are too busy (overload can occur) to participate in interest-related education, there are no interest-related classes provided or conducted in some cases and there is no support staff during the classes that could assist in interest-related education. The findings correspond with theoretical conclusions, namely that there are barriers to access connected with accessibility of information (European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education, 2015), access to the programme (Beddow, 2012), and availability of support (Cobb, 2015; Ramberg, 2013; Rose, Shevlin, Twomey, & Zhao, 2017). A new aspect has also been discussed — child overload, which can be related to the personal characteristics of the child/young person.

Although the majority of parents have had a positive experience concerning their children's access to interest-related education, almost a fifth of parents have had negative experiences or they knew somebody who was refused access to an interest education due to child/youth behaviour, social inclusion problems in the classroom and a teacher's negative attitude or a teacher's refusal to work with the child. Research reveals refusal is experienced more often by parents whose children have a disability. One can

conclude that from the parents' perspective, children with disabilities have fewer equal opportunities to attend interest-related education programmes; therefore, access to the interest education service is not provided equally to all target groups of learners.

There are several barriers to accessing interest-related education programmes. Similar to previous studies, this study found barriers to accessing interest-related education in connection to the geographical aspect and proximity to the municipal centre (Kalniņa et al., 2012; Nīmante et al., 2018). However, there were some additional barriers: the available interest-related education is "outdated"; inconvenient time for interest-related classes (i.e., interest education classes are at the same time as parents' working hours); insufficient supply (both quantity and variety) for young children and children/young people with disabilities; insufficient readiness of teachers to work with children/young people with disabilities; the inability to explain to other children/young people how to participate in the classes with children and young people with disabilities; and the negative attitude of other children towards children/young people with disabilities. The solution to overcome those barriers is teacher education.

As this was a small-scale study, future studies would probably benefit from exploring research questions in a wider range.

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