

Education Reforms in Latvia:
Underpinning
Integration and Prosperity

Annual Report on Education

2003/2004

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Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS presents the third annual report on education in Latvia. This report focuses on education reforms, describing ways for effective implementation that would direct the country's transformation into a knowledge-based economy. The report outlines the role a well-organised policy-making process can play in ensuring successful introduction of reforms.

The Executive Summary presents the perspective of PROVIDUS concerning the problems in Latvian education system and possible solutions. The individual articles reflect the views of their authors and may not coincide with the views of PROVIDUS. The respective contributors bear responsibility for the content of their articles.

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Introduction

Executive Summary

In 2004 Latvia became a member of NATO and the EU. These achievements have opened new opportunities but raise new questions about Latvia's place in these organizations and its role in the context of new global economics, in which knowledge starts to exceed the importance of traditional production factors. In 2003 the growth of Latvian GDP was on the order of 7.4%. On the other hand, the GDP per capita in Latvia remains the lowest in Europe. This report will address the question of how, over the long term, Latvia can economically live up to the potential offered by its acceptance as a new European nation.

The ability of society to master, create, disseminate and effectively apply knowledge is an essential prerequisite for the country's competitiveness. The Report on Global Competitiveness indicates that currently Latvia is ranked 42nd among 75 countries.¹ Will reforms taking place in Latvia's education at present promote the development of a competitive society? Is the process of reforms far-sighted and oriented towards the increase of prosperity of society?

At present Latvia is working to meet the requirements of the Bologna declaration in higher education, it has created a system of academic and professional degrees, compatible with the demands of education systems of other European countries. The higher education quality assessment system was established in the mid 1990s. Latvia is trying to reorient its research potential towards national and European priorities to facilitate a more active involvement of researchers in solving economic, cultural and social problems.

To achieve rapid progress, Latvia should:

1. Develop a system of education that creates knowledge on how to use capable, competitive human capital.
2. Develop an economic environment, which promotes the use of knowledge and the development of entrepreneurship.
3. Develop a system of innovations, which encourages universities, research centers and enterprises to develop new products and services.
4. Promote an information society, which ensures effective dissemination and exchange of information.
5. Develop a multicultural (i.e., harmonious, mutually tolerant, pluralistic) and multilingual society.
6. Provide basic education to all youth, developing a flexible security system for those who have dropped out from the school (second-chance education).

Since regaining independence our education system has changed – it has disentangled itself from the uniform Soviet heritage where all pupils had access to the same resources and curricula and has shifted to a system more appropriate for a democratic society with diverse teaching/learning resources and methods. However, we are in the middle of a reform of minority schools. We have experienced a reform of the evaluation system, introducing non-grade assessment in primary school² and changing from a five-point to ten-point evaluation system in secondary school. Two years ago, obligatory preparation for primary school was introduced for five- and six-year-olds. Standardized, centralized examinations have been gradually developed and this year all secondary school graduates in most cases will be

¹ WEF(2001–2002).

² At the moment, there are discussions concerning the need to re-introduce the 10 point system and to abandon non-grade assessment in primary school. However, both systems are used currently.

enrolled in higher education institutions on the basis of the results of these examinations and they will not have to pass additional entrance examinations. We are expecting an introduction of new teaching standards. Reform of the universities is waiting its turn. Public discussion has turned to reforming the criteria underlying teachers' pay scales.

Experience shows that some reforms are introduced more successfully than others. Some are received positively by the public, while others are met with great resistance. In spite of good intentions, policy makers often make decisions in great haste and have expectations for policy implementation which can be deeply unrealistic. Sometimes decisions made in the spring are expected to be implemented by autumn. This was the case with the reform of bilingual education of 1999, the introduction of compulsory pre-school education of 2002 and the obligatory choice between Religion Studies and Ethics starting with September 2004. These reforms gave little time for schools, teachers and local governments to adjust to the new requirements and often precipitated adverse public reaction, not to the content of the reform per se but to the suddenness of the expected changes and the lack of discussion and consensus surrounding the policy change, and the underlying aims.

While it is true that education needs constant improvement, how can we ensure that education reforms can be effectively implemented and hence direct society towards a knowledge economy? Are there common principles that ensure the success of the political process in initiating change? This report will discuss how a well-organized process of policy management can lead to successful introduction of reform.

A Quality policy making process

The directions and sustainability of the education system of Latvia are defined in the Conception for Education Development 2002–2005³. This is already the third document since Latvia's regained independence, which has developed a vision on the education system. However, this is the first conception approved at a higher level, by the Cabinet of Ministers and thus it should better ensure a continuity in the system of the political changes. The aim of this conception is to increase the quality of education, to ensure equal access to education, as well as to increase the financial efficiency of the

system. The conception has set goals, has developed a strategy and has indicated the necessary funding to attain these aims. Unfortunately, instead of implementing the set goals, instant changes are demanded. For example, one objective had been an increase of teachers' salaries. Salaries were intended to change starting from September 2003, to reach a level when teachers would receive two minimal salaries for one teaching load. Unfortunately, this was not implemented as schedule and in February 2004, when the opposition voted this principle into the Law on Education, it precipitated a government resignation. Only in the summer of 2004 when the changes in the budget were discussed, the issue of teachers' salaries became one of the priorities of the new government and the necessary finances were found.

The MOES has offered several innovations which were not envisioned in the approved conception. The non-grade assessment system, which had functioned in the elementary school for ten years, was abolished and a ten-point scale was introduced. The reform of education content and the introduction of new standards were postponed for a year thus hindering the approval of the respective sample plans of the lessons and the development of syllabuses and new textbooks. The compulsory choice between Religion Studies and Ethics was introduced at the first grade level. Other rapid changes in the education system were planned and they all have something in common.

- They had not been included in the Conception of the Education Development.
- They had been prepared in a hurry without consulting either the education experts or those to whom these decisions refer.
- Schools were provided with little information about impending changes
- Sometimes strong objections emerged from the public. In some instances these stemmed from the poorly defined formulations in the Law on Education, from the rules pertaining to teaching Latvian language in minority secondary schools, or from the improvement of teachers' salaries according to certain categories.
- The suggested changes often lacked a long-term strategic vision. It was not clear what system of education our decision-makers wanted to see after five or ten years.

In order to better understand the policy-making process, it can be divided into four stages. During the first

³ Approved by the Cabinet on 17.06.2002.



stage, politicians make commitments to a particular policy. During the second stage, ministries prepare implementation projects and action plans, including an assessment of funding needs. At the third stage, government reviews the prepared implementation plans and, if necessary, talks to legislators about the need to introduce changes in the laws, and identifies available resources. At the fourth stage, the responsible ministry implements the policy (Blondel and Manning, 2002).

If the policy making process is uncoordinated, inconsistent and decisions are badly implemented or not introduced at all, then in the long run the development of the education system will not be successful. Figure 1 shows in which stages of the decision making the failures are possible.

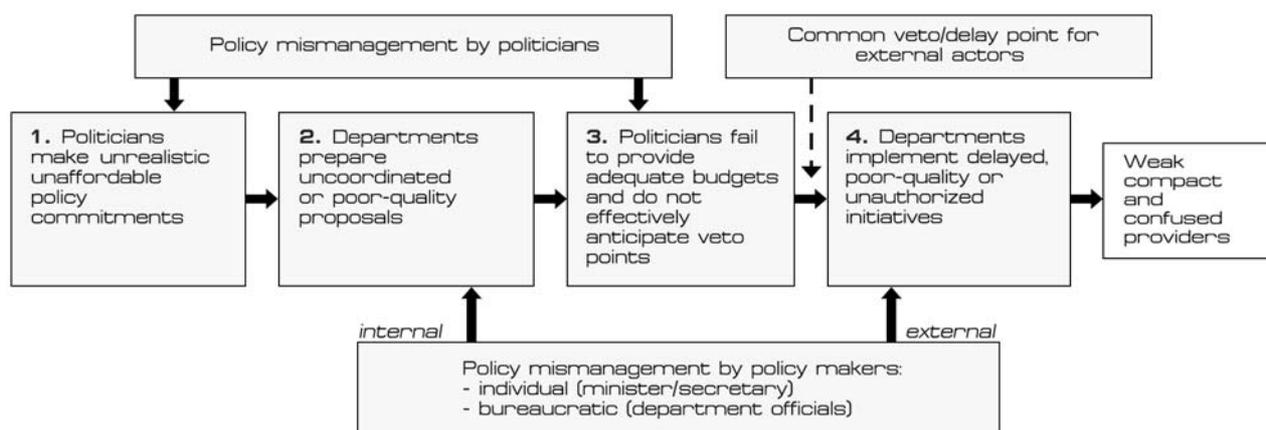
Today we believe that decision making in Latvia is weak at all four stages illustrated in Figure 1. One illustration of problems at the first stage is the experience of having Latvia's politicians suddenly refusing new health and education loans from the World Bank in the hope of receiving the necessary resources from European Union Structural funds. However, many changes need to be made for which there is no funding envisioned in the structural funds. School heating and insulation, successfully implemented in Latvia during the first World Bank loan, are an example. This renovation of schools has allowed the local governments to save on expenditures for school maintenance, and to allocate those resources to other needs such as the purchase of books, etc.

The cancellation of the teaching content reform in Latvia and the unplanned introduction of Religion Studies and Ethics in elementary school may serve as an example of weakness in the second decision-making stage. The haste has led to teaching standards and curricula of bad quality, ill-trained teachers and as a result doubts have been raised about the quality of the newly introduced subjects.

The teachers' salary reform is an example of weakness in the third stage. Although the Conception of Education Development had planned the increase of teachers' salary in September 2003, it did not happen because the politicians, when setting the budget, simply ignored the financial implementations of these. Although the decision on the increase of teachers' salary has currently been adopted, we still cannot consider this issue to be closed because in comparison with the percentage of GNP, teachers' salaries in Latvia even after the new increase, remain the lowest among all EU countries.

Currently, political instability in Latvia continues. In February 2004, the government of E. Repše resigned and a new minority government came to power, headed by I. Emsis, and including a coalition of three right-wing parties. Although the policy agenda has remained largely unchanged, the situation in the education system is still tense. On the one hand, the new government continues to maintain dialogue with the minority schools on the impending shift to Latvian language instruction at the secondary school level; on the other hand, it has not canceled or blocked the decision to introduce choice between the Religion Studies and Ethics in the first grade regardless of the evident unpreparedness of this project. Society and schools are poorly informed about the possibilities of teaching these subjects and these changes also lack needed budget reallocations.

Little has been done in Latvia in the field of independent policy analysis and providing for the possibility of such analysis in the state budget. Budget development still suffers from elements of the Soviet central planning



Source: WB, 2004a, Blondel & Manning, 2002.

Figure 1. Executive policy mismanagement at the four stages of the policy process.

system, which focused on one-year budget planning without medium-term planning of policies and respective expenditure commitments. This leads to inefficient allocation of the public resources. (WB, 2004b)

In order to ensure a successful policy making process, it is important to create a system which will distribute public resources according to strategic priorities and will ensure their effective use. Therefore it is particularly important to plan the state budget taking into account possibilities offered by the EU Structural funds, as those require medium-term strategic planning.

In terms of introducing new policy, two possibilities for improving public expenditure and transparency were not fully used. Government ministries were offered a policy instrument for defining priorities and attainable results and for underpinning their budget bids – the Medium-Term Strategy (*IDS*), which was approved also by the Cabinet of Ministers. It allows to present the planned results of the ministry's work to all those interested (society, legislators) in a very transparent way and to judge if the budget allocations for these aims are sufficient. However, Ministry of Education and Science did not use this possibility (unlike the Ministry of Economy and some other ministries) and did not produce a medium-term strategic action plan.

In 2003–2004 the status of institutions subordinated to ministries was reviewed and the aim was to establish state agencies. Some MOES subordinated institutions which have a strategic role in reform processes, were transformed into agencies – for example, the management team of the National Programme for Latvian Language Training (*LVAVP*) and the Agency for Vocational Education Development Programmes (*PIAPA*). However, the advantage of this process – the possibility to unite fragmented fields of policy (language policy, professional education policy) and to develop joint strategies for these fields was missed. The changes left essential functions in the hands of the institutions subordinated to other ministries. On the positive side, the National Programme for Latvian Language Training (*LVAVP*) was previously supported overwhelmingly by foreign donors, but responsibility is shifting to the state. The state has taken upon itself the responsibility for providing motivating linguistic education policy support necessary for minority integration.

Another element of success of a good policy making process is a favorable institutional culture and environment, and the continuous improvement of the performance and accountability of public officials and agencies. This can be achieved by merit-based recruitment and promotion, adequate remuneration, and achieving reasonable autonomy from political interference.

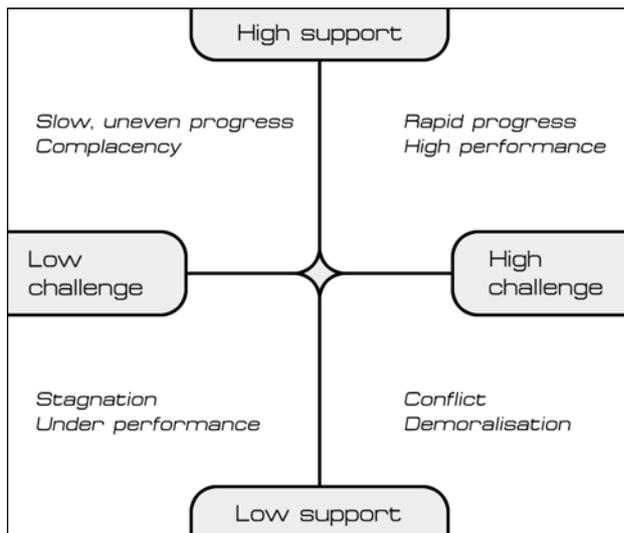
The Education Improvement Project (*ISAP*) has functioned in Latvia for four years and one of its aims was to build and strengthen the institutional capacity of management to develop and assess a qualitative education system. The specialists and experts involved in the project have gained new skills and knowledge. The project ends in September, 2004, and many of these specialists will have to look for employment elsewhere. It would be wise on the part of the MOES to offer employment to these specialists because they have already acquired the necessary skills to promote a good policy making process in the future.

Qualitative management is especially complicated in education because it demands an up front investment of financial resources even though the results of the intended changes can be expected only after several years. Therefore politicians often develop their own action programmes aiming for near term results. Independent and competent policy advisors may increase the effectiveness and quality of the policy making process.

A high quality policy process should take into account the following factors: discipline (decisions are realistic and can be introduced), transparency (systematic procedures that cannot be manipulated by individual members and that emphasize collective responsibility), possibility of discussions (consideration of alternatives) and a structured choice (only core issues come before the government). (WB, 2004a:193)

Success of the education reforms

In Latvia the MOES has often demonstrated that education policy is considered as implemented as of the moment when the decision is made. However, it should be noted that in reality a decision can be introduced only if society understands it and participates in its implementation. The lack of initial dialogue between policy makers and society regarding the reform of minority education has already resulted in a conflict. Students and teachers of minority schools have been involved in several demonstrations against the introduction of the reform. Though both parties involved in the conflict agree that it is important that all graduates from Russian language instruction schools have a very good knowledge of Latvian, there is no uniformity in views on how soon these requirements should be satisfied. Such a situation could be characterized as a “high challenge, low support” policy development approach (see Fig. 2), which leads to a conflict. Society faces a high challenge



Source: Barber, 2002.

Figure 2. Matrix of the Policy Approaches and Stages of Development.

because the reform influences a large part of society and demands fast adjustment to new objectives. At the same time state support for these changes to happen at an appropriate pace is small or insufficient. This matrix may help to analyze not only the minority education reform but also other processes of change.

Since regaining independence, the education system in Latvia has undergone constant changes. With Latvia's joining the EU, the demands for our education system have increased. We all wish rapid development for our country and the increase of its competitiveness with other EU countries. The transition to knowledge-based economy is taking place in other EU countries. In order for this to happen, the development of Latvia's education system needs serious support from the state. This support should encompass not only the development of new teaching standards, curricula and text books. Currently teachers' salaries are small, the quality difference between urban and rural schools is increasing, and there still exist two streams of schools – the Latvian language instruction schools and the minority schools (mainly Russian schools) with bilingual education. As a result, while the education system has good achievements in some areas, but Latvian society has never before experienced such serious conflicts as currently on the issue of minority school reform.

For instance, the education system in UK until 1997 was also in the stage of developing conflicts and the Government gave strong support to education as a priority, which ensured the implementation of a practical

policy strategy and to improve the school performance. (Barber, 2002)

What should policy makers do to secure the success of education reform? Analysts of the political process have developed methods for successful introduction of reforms (Barber, 2002, Kingdon, 1984, Lindblom & Woodhouse, 1992, Reimers & McGinn, 1997):

1. The education system should constantly be renewed, therefore it is important to state the urgency of reforms. Definite short-term objectives and steps needed to fulfill them should be clearly and persuasively explained to the society; information should be based on concrete facts.
2. Starting a reform, a clear vision and understanding of the attainable goals is absolutely necessary. It is necessary to understand what the positive result of the changes will be. Teachers should understand that reform is planned and will take place, that these are not just political slogans which will soon be forgotten. All the initiators of the reform should have a common understanding of it and they should "speak the same language." Otherwise teachers may just observe whose viewpoint will dominate and wait for further instructions instead of implementing the reform.
3. It is necessary to persuade society that success is possible. Data from international and local studies can prove it. Good, positive examples, successful innovative projects, pilot projects help to explain course of the reform. In order to convince the society about the success of the reform, it is necessary to divide any long-term vision into a series of short-term manageable steps with easily attainable results.
4. Every stage of the reform should be thoroughly prepared and the expected results of each stage should be announced. It could be done in the following stages:
 - planning – the analysis of the situation, development of the conceptual documents, strategic and tactical plans;
 - gradual and successive introduction of plans. At this stage something could go wrong, somebody could feel discriminated and could voice objections. If the planning process has been thorough, the stakeholders will change their opinion from objection to understanding and eventually will accept the idea of reform;
 - period of changes. This is a dangerous stage because there is a desire to leave the process on its own or fatigue may set in. This is the stage when people start to internalize the changes and

attach importance to them, losing the sense that these are instructions given from above. It is important at this stage to assess and announce the achieved results, to set new goals and to continue the work;

- progress – it is the stage when everyone thinks that the reform is very good and believes in its success.
5. It is necessary to assess the needs for reform at the planning stage. Policy makers should be aware that some ideas are valid only for small scale projects and are not suitable for the whole system. Excellence centers can serve as good examples and motivating elements, but they may not function equally well in all circumstances, or in other parts of the country.
 6. Each reform needs specialists who are able to promote it. This means that not only additional people need to be recruited, but they should also be appropriately prepared.
 7. Reform develops successfully if its place is clearly built into the larger picture of education policy. This calls for developing effective reform management mechanisms.
 8. It is important to predict how the reform will develop: what and when will take place, when to expect results. Successful development of reform needs constant monitoring. The best monitoring mechanism is a “Pressure and Support” principle: pressure is equally given to all actors in the reform and support is given to the best implementers.
 9. It is necessary to take into account the interests of all stakeholders: the system of education itself and the customers of education services. The reform needs support from those for whom it is meant. Customers of education services are not only students and their parents but also other stakeholders (e.g., employers). It is important as well to take into account teachers’ interests. Teachers are rarely asked what they think about the education reform. If everything is planned without teachers’ participation, they remain poorly informed about the essence of changes.
 10. The key to success of reform is constant capacity building and structured development of the system. Schools should take a great deal of responsibility for introducing reform. In general, the implementation of reform should be delegated to the lowest possible level. Reform is most successful when it is driven by teachers themselves for their own benefit.

Several risks could hinder the success of reform. Here are some:

- The reform will fail if the priorities are wrongly set. If the reform puts forward several goals, developmental directions and initiatives simultaneously, there will be chaos.
- It is dangerous to introduce new ideas without revising the old ones. If the same people constantly receive new instructions, while simultaneously attempting to implement the previous tasks, this will lead to overwork and failure to complete the tasks.
- Often the greatest problem of many reforms is the lack of communication. If the Government is the only initiator of the reform, its only announcer and its driving force, this is a recipe for failure.
- A strong resistance by teachers to participate in the reform process also poses danger. Initially it is understandable and justifiable, but if teachers’ resistance continues, it means that there is something wrong either with the idea of the reform itself or how the work with teachers is being organized. In order to avoid this there is a high need to establish a dialogue between the government and the teachers.

The examples given below describe various education reform processes in Latvia and the consequences they have caused in society.

I. Minority school reform

The Conception of Education Development 2002–2005 refers to bilingual education as a success, which has taken into account the interests of minority groups and at the same time has promoted integration of society. Four years have passed since bilingual education models have been introduced in the primary minority schools of Latvia.

The aim of the bilingual education was to prepare for the future when all minority secondary schools would have to switch to instruction in the Latvian language in September 2004. After long debates in February 2004, changes were introduced in the Law on Education establishing that 40 per cent of the study time instruction will be in the minority language and 60 per cent – in the Latvian language. However, the representatives of the minority schools, students and their parents continue to express their dissatisfaction with the course of the reform and demand its cancellation. Has the speed of the reform



been too fast? Are minority secondary schools ready for these changes?

Our studies indicate that students have already accepted these changes. In Rēzekne minority students show good results in Latvian language state examinations and successfully enter universities.

There is a question – if the students and schools are ready for these changes, why do we observe so strong resistance to this reform? We see several reasons for that. Firstly, during the development of the reform the opinions of the minority representatives were neglected. The school principals and teachers were not asked about their needs and possibilities to implement the reform.

Secondly, the policy makers and the minority community have different views about the aims of the reform. The policy makers and the official documents declare that the aim of the reform is the integration of society, the increase of Latvian language knowledge and the increase of competitiveness of minority school graduates in the labor market. The minority representatives consider that the reform has a hidden agenda, which eventually will lead to assimilation. At the same time both sides agree that Latvian language should be taught in all schools.

Finally, the defined 40:60 language proportion in the minority schools creates a system, which will control the study process, but not the result. The minority schools will have to report to the MOES in which language each lesson will be delivered so that the State inspection could easily check compliance. We think that it is possible to ensure Latvian language acquisition in minority schools in other ways. The schools should be given a possibility to develop their own models without setting a strict proportion of language instruction. However, it is important to control the outcome and to check Latvian language knowledge by means of a State examination on graduating secondary school.

There are about 100 dual-stream schools in Latvia which are models of successful co-existence of students learning in Latvian and bilingually. These schools are a good model of functioning integrated society. The article on bi-stream schools, included with this report, provides a detailed analysis of this issue.

Up to now state education policy introduced bilingual education only in schools implementing the minority basic school and general secondary education pro-

grammes. However, according to the Council of Europe Guide for the Development of Language Education Policies the aim of European language education policy is plurilingualism of the individual which should go hand in hand with the development of intercultural competencies (Beacco, Byram 2003). Plurilingualism is considered more and more to be an indispensable part of European democratic citizenship, therefore it would be wrong to limit ourselves to the introduction of bilingual education only in minority schools. In order to attain possibilities of plurilingualism for all children in Latvia's school system, more attention, especially in the secondary stage, should be devoted to bilingual education both in Latvian language instruction schools and minority schools.

Taking into consideration the significant controversies in society created by the existing state language education policy it would be useful to undertake a review of language education policy in Latvia. The procedure of preparing such reviews was elaborated in the November, 2002 Council of Europe Intergovernmental conference⁴. The review analyzes issues of language policy in the context of political and educational values.

It is important to take into consideration that the concept of plurilingualism which is offered by the Council of Europe guidelines does not limit itself to teaching the official languages of the European countries, the regional, minority languages, and the foreign languages in the actual proportion of each country's context but it emphasizes the necessity of a linguistic education policy that teaches intercultural competences and increases the democratic participation skills of each individual in order to develop competent European citizens. At the same time the aim of this policy is not to achieve a perfect level of each acquired language, because language is considered to be a means of communication and not an aim itself.

Recommendations

- More attention should be devoted to bilingual education both at Latvian language instruction schools and the minority schools at the secondary level.
- The minority school reform should be re-oriented to outcomes (the level and quality of the Latvian

⁴ National language policy reviews are an analysis of the linguistic policies of a particular country, including a self-assessment. The review is conducted with the assistance of the Council of Europe experts, many of which are responsible for policy-making in their own countries. Reviews have been conducted in Hungary, Norway, Slovenia, Cyprus and Lithuania.

language acquisition) away from the detailed control of the process (time devoted to teaching each subject in Latvian). The different methods toward achieving desired outcomes should be analyzed.

- Bi-stream schools are a good model of education organization for the integration of society. These should be popularized also in Riga where this model is currently not in use.
- The Government should work out a vision for the development of the school system in Latvia, giving a clear answer as what the place and role of the minority schools will be. They also should think how to establish a school system where the choice of the school would not depend largely on the ethnic background and the native language of the students, but on the education model implemented by the particular school.
- We should think how to lessen society's concerns about assimilation and at the same time involve the minority schools more in the decision making process.

II. Effectiveness of pre-school and primary school education

The teachers' salary system

In the report released in 2000 we introduced a discussion of teachers by pointing out that "most of Latvia's teachers are female, underpaid; they work long hours, and feel tired." The number of classroom contact hours of teachers in Latvia is about 25% higher than in France and Italy, and about double that of Japan.⁵ In the second report, we continued the discussion by pointing out that by international standards, Latvia has an "oversupply" of teachers. Teacher/pupil ratios in Latvia (1:10) are below those in other parts of Europe (1:17 in elementary grades; 1:15 in secondary education).⁶ Such small teacher/pupil ratios constitute an unnecessary burden on educational expenditures. We attributed the cause to two problems: (i) the large number of small rural school districts and (ii) the over-specialization in what teachers are licensed to teach, an inflexible tradition stemming from the Soviet era. Our argument was that these constituted a "second generation" of management problems in Latvia's education system's transition to democracy.

We argued that these problems could be addressed by deciding how to consolidate rural school districts and classroom responsibilities by allowing parents and students to choose themselves, and by arranging for student funding to follow family school choice. We stand by these previous analyses and conclusions.

But this year we wish to add to them by discussing in more detail the teacher salaries themselves. By international standards, teachers in Latvia are underpaid. They earn 20% of what a school teacher in Italy earns, and Italian teacher salaries are among the lowest in Western Europe. But Latvian teacher salaries are low even by comparison to other professions within Latvia. A Latvian teacher earns approximately one half of what a Bank clerk earns with the same education and experience. On the other hand, if "job appreciation" were the source for setting salaries, Latvian teachers would be earning four times what they currently earn, while bank clerks would be earning about 15% more (Pāvuls, 2003, p. 78). Latvian teachers are paid on the basis of length of experience (seniority), professional qualifications, and workload. The range of salaries is small, with only a 15% (25 LVL/month) difference between the low and high points. Since Latvian teachers are unable to influence their seniority and since the opportunity for in-service training is so infrequent, teachers see that the only real mechanism to raise the level of their salary is to increase their workload.

Countries with similar problems have begun to experiment with new ways to compensate teachers. New compensation criteria include paying teachers on the basis of:

- the academic performance of their students;
- their own classroom performance;
- the academic performance of their school (considering all teachers in a school as a team);
- the nature of the teaching assignment (with scarce skills being rewarded differently);
- improvement in the teacher's knowledge and skills;
- the teacher's individual productivity;
- pre-conceived career ladders incorporating much of the above;
- a "clerk's" 40 hour/week salary.

In January, 2004, MOES proposed to implement a "career ladder" model for reform of teachers' salaries, introducing five categories of teachers. At the first and lowest level, a teacher's salary would be 145 LVL per

⁵ SFL (2001). *A Passport to Social Cohesion and Economic Prosperity*, p. 6.

⁶ PROVIDUS (2003). *Education in Latvia's Transition: The Challenge of Management*, p. 10.



month, and at the fifth level the salary would be 350 LVL. However, teachers protested against this option, since the criteria for moving between levels were not clear and they feared those would be subjective. Teachers' work experience and other achievements were not taken into consideration.

When asked for their view of these possible options, Latvian teachers tend to favor the latter category of compensation, bringing them in line with teachers in France and Spain, whose teachers are subject to national standards of work conditions and responsibilities of a 40 hour week. But their opinions might be affected by the level of compensation available for truly outstanding performance. If the level of remuneration based on performance is sufficient, their preference to the kind of salary reforms might well include many of the other categories.

Each category of remuneration has problems of measurement or definition. Since these are discussed in some detail in the paper by Linda Krūmale in this volume, we will not repeat them here. But it is important that we mention if teacher remuneration policies were to be left as they are, i.e., *status quo*, certain crises are likely to result. Without sufficient hope for earning a living wage, about one half of the young teachers graduating from Latvia's teacher training programs never enter the profession. Many with scarce skills such as in foreign languages and technologies are attracted away from the profession. In fact, so serious is the "teacher flight" problem that certain sections of Latvia's public school curriculum cannot be delivered in rural areas for lack of teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills. These problems reduce the effectiveness of Latvia's public expenditure on education. More importantly, regional inequality resulting from uneven delivery of a national curriculum may affect Latvia's social cohesion more generally.

Recommendations

We recommend further analysis of the existing teachers' remuneration system and to develop a new one which would provide competitive salaries, taking into account career growth opportunities and evaluation criteria. The upgrading of teachers' salaries should be based on objective and clearly defined criteria. The criteria should provide for gradual promotion on an individual basis and include teachers' qualifications, work experience, number of contact hours per week and other responsibilities, number of students in class, teaching aids developed and published by the teacher, working methods, supplementary training. The institution responsible for teachers'

evaluation should rely on independent experts and not depend on the teachers' employers and trainers.

School dropouts

School dropouts are a serious social problem in almost all European countries. It illustrates the stratification of society because the employment or continuing education possibilities of undereducated youth are limited. The rapid economic changes in Latvia are one of the preconditions for the fact that more and more students do not finish their basic compulsory education. The scope of this problem is not yet fully realized.

The study of I. Lukašinska (2001) "The Street Children in Latvia: Problems and Solutions" indicates the number of children not attending school. The precise number is not known but according to approximate calculations some 1.8 to 15 thousand children do not attend school. If we take a look to the youth in the labor market in Latvia, there are less youth who have completed secondary education if compared with other countries; there are also many who drop studies after primary school and who have poor achievement in reading literacy, mathematics and science. From the table below follows that about one fifth of young people in Latvia after getting the basic education, are no longer involved in education or training. This indicator is below the EU mean.

Table 1. Secondary school graduates and early school leavers

Secondary school graduates (%, aged 22)*		Early school leavers (% with basic education, aged 18–24, no further studying) **	
Sweden	89.3	Latvia	19.3
Estonia	89.2	Lithuania	14.3
Finland	87.3	Estonia	12.6
Austria	86.5	Sweden	10.0
Lithuania	83.5	Finland	9.9
Italy	72.9	Austria	9.5
Latvia	71.2	Slovakia	5.6
Spain	66.6	Czech Republic	5.4
Portugal	44.9	Slovenia	4.8
<i>EU mean</i>	<i>78.8</i>	<i>EU mean</i>	<i>16.5</i>

Source: Council of Europe (2004).

Notes: * Percentage of those aged 22 who have successfully completed at least upper secondary education.

** Share of the population aged 18–24 with only lower secondary education and not in education or training.

This year we experienced another problem – about 3000 nine-graders due to unsatisfactory marks in three or more subjects completed primary school without a certificate of basic education, receiving only a report card. What will happen with these children? Will they have a possibility to repeat the 9th grade? Do they have second chance education possibilities?

There are cases when school dropouts decide after some time to complete the compulsory basic education and they enter evening schools or vocational schools. Then they have to learn again even those subjects where they had satisfactory marks. Such a system lowers their motivation as well as makes unnecessary resource demands on the state budget.

Recommendations

We think that it is important to establish a flexible “safety net” – a system which will help school dropouts return to school and complete their compulsory basic education.

- It could be achieved with the help of social pedagogues and a more motivating school environment.
- The evening schools could react more effectively to the needs of these people by offering the possibility to acquire separate subjects and not requiring a re-mastery of the whole school programme. That would encourage more students who have not completed their studies to complete their schooling.
- The pedagogical universities and further education courses should emphasize those methods which help teachers to work with differently motivated students.
- The teachers should be trained to maintain an even-handed approach to differently motivated students involving them into out-of-class activities thus decreasing their rejection and the risk of marginalisation.

Teaching content reform and new education standards

After regaining independence, education content reform became one of the most important tasks in the transformation from a totalitarian socialist regime to a free, open and democratic society. New teaching standards

were introduced in the 1992/1993 academic year. In 1998 the Education and Examination Center published the “National Standard of Compulsory Education,”⁷ which determined the tasks of the school, the attainable results, the knowledge, skills and abilities to be mastered. The main aim of this education reform was (1) to change the emphasis of the teaching/learning process away from information acquisition on the factual level; (2) to introduce an emphasis on acquisition of functional knowledge and skills; (3) to integrate academic subjects and provide uniformity to teaching overload, repetition and discrepancies in the material.

However, it turned out that the new system did not offer enough possibilities for students to acquire social experience, to develop critical thinking skills and analytical abilities. The latter is especially important for the integration of Latvia in the community of democratic nations. This created the necessity to develop new subjects.

The newly developed standards should ensure that students are not overloaded with the factual material, and stress the need to acquire core skills instead. In order to promote the integration of the society, the Education System Development Project developed and approved standards in three subjects – native language and literature, Latvian as a second language and social studies. The rest of the standards were developed by the Education and Examination Center. Currently all 16 standards are ready for introduction and they ensure the mutual coordination of subject aims, objectives, content and requirements, as well as coordination with the “National Standard of Compulsory Education.”

The new standards form the basis of the teaching reform and they should have been introduced starting with September 1, 2004. However, the Ministry of Education and Science without proper grounds decided to postpone the reform for a year. At the same time it introduced a compulsory choice between Religion Studies and Ethics in elementary school. The standards for these subjects were prepared in a hurry. The motivation of the ministry and the minister remains unclear. The reference to the “rather atheist” nature of the integrated social studies course cannot be considered a fully exhaustive justification for introducing new policy.

The social studies standard, which was developed and approved over two years, envisages the integrated acquisition of four subjects – ethics, civics, introduction into economics and health. The changes introduced by the ministry – excluding Ethics from social studies and

⁷ Approved by MOES on 30.04.1998.



introducing Religion Studies instead – undermines the preparatory and probation work undertaken over the past two years.

The new policy would require schools to employ two separate teachers – one for Ethics, the other for Religion Studies. How many teachers will be needed? Will school be able to solve this in all cases? Until now the state trained social studies teachers who would be able to teach the integrated subject. There were no special ethics teachers trained. How should universities react to these changes?

It should be mentioned that Religion Studies as an optional course has already been offered in schools. However, it should be taken into account that starting with the 1998/1999 academic year both the number of schools and the number of students choosing this subject has decreased annually from 83 to 51 schools and from 8416 students to 3319, corresponding to 1 per cent of the total number of students.

The Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS in cooperation with the Market and Public Opinion Study Centre SKDS has undertaken a study *“Attitude to teaching Religion Studies in Grades 1–3.”* The results of the study show that society has mixed views regarding this compulsory choice. First of all, it should be mentioned that society has little information about these changes and most parents who responded (66%) learned about this change from the mass media.

The study shows that the majority of parents support the integrated social studies subject, and not Ethics or Religion Studies. However, if parents had to make this compulsory choice the majority (67%) would choose Ethics. The study also shows that Religion Studies would be chosen mostly by those parents whose children already attend church regularly and only by some parents whose children do not attend the church Sunday school. Approximately one half of respondents are worried about the division of children according to their attitude to Religion Studies and that it would have a negative impact on learning in the class. At the same time schools are worried about finding qualified teachers who will be able to teach these subjects.

There is no single model of how religion-related subjects should be taught at school. There are different approaches and policies in the world. Though religious subjects are taught in several EU countries, most societies have an increasing diversity of faiths, values and life styles. Thus the question arises, how should the contemporary education system reflect this diversity.

Recommendations

- Today the diversity of religions and opinions is increasing in the world. The question is how the education system should absorb this reality and how to teach children tolerance and respect for difference, the skills to act in a multicultural environment and how to orient themselves in different religions.
- It would be more useful to leave religious education to the responsibility of the family, especially because ethnic belonging and religious conviction are sensitive issues for every person, and these issues often lie at the basis of conflicts. By introducing Religion Studies as a compulsory optional course, schools risk getting into new conflict situations and there is no confidence that the MOES will be able to solve them successfully.
- There is a need to work out a policy introduction plan and to approve Ethics and Religion Studies as separate subjects in some schools before they are introduced on the state level.
- Society has not demonstrated a pronounced need for introducing Ethics and Religion Studies as compulsory course in grades 1–3. However, there is a demand for the integrated social studies subject. Taking into consideration that the introduction of this course has been so thoroughly prepared, we should acknowledge the necessity to return to it.

Pre-school education

Some years ago Latvia introduced compulsory education for five and six year olds to prepare them for school. This step has prolonged compulsory education in Latvia by two years. In most old European Union countries children start attending school at the age of six, in Great Britain and the Netherlands – at five but in Denmark, Sweden and Finland – at the age of seven. Among the new EU countries in most cases children start attending school when they are seven, but in the Czech republic, Hungary and Slovakia – at six. It should be noted that only in Luxembourg preschool education is compulsory for children aged 4–6.

In other EU countries preschool education is voluntary and the level of attendance varies from 100% in Belgium and France to 50% in Germany. This education takes place for one year before starting school. In Latvia, prior to the reform preschool was attended by 50% of six year olds. Now that the preschool education is compulsory, there is a shortage of places in preschools.

Another important question is – how are the five and six year olds being prepared for school? According to the preschool programme, preschool education institutions have to develop children's cooperation and communication skills but there are no requirements to teach them reading and writing. This has created uncertainty among the elementary school teachers and the preschool teachers – to what level should children be prepared for reading and arithmetic skills so that they are ready for learning in grade 1? Where does teaching reading actually take place – in the preschool or grade 1? Which methods are used? Our observations show that this uncertainty also influences the authors of text books – some authors already expect a rather high level of reading skills in grade 1, some concentrate only on introducing letters. The consequences of such discrepancies are that pupils gradually lose learning motivation. We think that it is necessary to review the requirements included in the preschool and elementary school programmes in order to ensure a successive transition from one learning stage to another.

III. Adult and higher education

Higher education

In our report in 2000 we pointed to the very significant increase in the supply of higher education since the restoration of Latvia's democracy. Between 1989 and 2000 the proportion of the age cohort enrolled increased from 15 to 26%, with the number of Latvian students growing by 50% in that period.⁸ We also pointed out that this increase was not matched by a change in higher education infrastructure. Classroom and laboratory space remains limited. Use of technology is still infrequent. By international standards, library search engines are primitive and basic materials are often outdated. Our question in 2000 concerned the quality of higher education. What is the quality of higher education in Latvia, and how might one measure it using outputs, such as knowledge and skills, in addition to inputs (such as percentage of teaching faculty with doctorates)?

In the second report we extended the discussion of quality by pointing out that higher education expenditures per student in western Europe (\$8,252) were more than 10 times the expenditure per student in Latvia (440

LVL or \$730), the equivalent of being 15% greater than Latvia's GDP per capita. We pointed out too, that the definition of higher education quality had changed. Excellence in quality no longer depends on how much a higher education system possessed in terms of expensive goods and services. Higher education quality depends instead on the degree of flexibility and capacity to respond to changes in the external environment – shifts in the labor market, new resource requirements, and innovations in faculty compensation. We pointed out that criteria in Latvia for public finance in higher education were based on precedent rather than productivity. We mentioned the problems in achieving cost/effectiveness in pre-service teacher training, the problems that student loans were based on merit rather than on need, and that higher education institutions still had not been able to manage their financial problems with clarity about the status of their tax and property ownership.

This year we intend to deepen the higher education discussion by extending the understanding of student loan programs and by introducing a new concept in higher education, that of student study contracts. In terms of student finance, the system in Latvia is designed as a dual track system. There are grants for tuition fees, and a small stipend for those who perform in an exemplary fashion on entrance examinations. Those who score at a lower level are offered an opportunity to borrow money for tuition, fees and daily expenses.

Among OECD countries, the US maintains a national system of student loans which deserves to be scrutinized carefully. The primary goal of the program is to provide higher education opportunities for students from low income families, and in a way which generates constructive competition for those students among higher education institutions. This primary goal ensures access to higher education from groups in society who have had little opportunity in the past. The secondary goal is to create an engine to achieve higher and higher education quality, largely independent from any central command or control.

In the US there are also programs to assist students based on merit. But it is assumed that those of higher merit have often emerged from backgrounds which have the ability to afford the costs of higher education without government intervention. Need-based policies allow low income students to be served by higher edu-

⁸ This increase was mirrored by increases throughout Eastern and Central Europe. Student growth was 31% in Estonia, 64% in Hungary, and 70% in Poland.



cation without at the same time, inhibiting access from highly talented students. It is an efficient system. Latvia should consider gradually shifting its student loan program from one based on merit to one based on need. We also believe that Latvia should review the way in which fields of study are chosen for student assistance. One key virtue of a student loan program is its potential flexibility and its ability to send market signals quickly to the right target groups. School teachers with foreign language and computer skills are needed in rural areas; social workers for the poor, and hospital nurses are needed too. Future professionals in these fields could be encouraged if there were a way to quickly alter the interest rates and amortization period, and perhaps debt forgiveness for loans to Latvian students who apply for those programs and who agree to a contract period of service after their university.

What do students receive when they enroll at a university? They receive the right to attend classes, the right to borrow books and other materials from the library, the right to use university property and facilities. What does the university receive when a student enrolls? The university has a right to expect that tuition fees and other financial obligations will be paid on time. It has a right to expect that students will adhere to their obligations with respect to their program of study, and can be expelled if there is an abrogation of those expectations.

But what happens if a student enters a three year program of study and pays the tuition fees accordingly, and in the second year, the program is eliminated? Who is responsible for the two years opportunity and direct tuition costs? What happens if a student signs up for a particular course and a key professor does not attend the classes he/she is obligated to teach? What happens if a student hands in a paper and the content of that paper is later used by a professor in a personal publication without the student's knowledge or permission? What happens if a faculty member places pressure on a student to pay for a change in grade? What happens if the materials required for a course are not available in the library?

The problem is that the agreement between a student and the institution is not treated as a way to ensure that the rights and obligations of each party are consistently applied. In a market democracy, public services, including services for fees, are treated as a public contract. The public has a right to know what they should expect, and the public institution has an obligation to provide that service in accordance with the agreement.

We propose that Latvia consider a system of study contracts as part of its higher education. Study contracts are agreements through which the higher education

institution ensures a program study and the student agrees to abide by the demands with regard to institutional regulations and procedures. The key virtue of a study agreement is not just the contract itself. Rather its virtue lies in the dialogue which it creates between consumer (student) and service provider (the higher education institution).

An adequate supply of reading materials in the library to support a particular course of study, faculty standards of attendance, agreement to "grandfather" current students for completion before a course is changed – these are legitimate issues for a potential study contract, whose discussion will benefit all sides.

In some instances, such as the agreement to have a minimum amount of materials in the library to support a course of study, the university may have to agree to the new performance standards. But there may be cases in which a request may be unrealistic. Some students may ask for a tuition freeze over the course of a four year program of study. However, given the uncertainties in external finance with rising costs and often declining public revenues, few universities would be able to uphold an agreement for more than a year at a time. Nevertheless, it would be a positive outcome for students and the higher education institutions to have an increased level of transparency about what each has a right to expect. In addition to study contracts, there should be a system of review, adjudication and dispute resolution. And there should be a system of review of student behavior by student committees whose members are broadly representative of the general student population.

Adult education

Closely associated with the issues of student loans and higher education financial efficiency is the question of general adult education. In our report in 2000 we mentioned that adult education had changed significantly from the Soviet era. During the Soviet era adult education was treated as an exercise in planning. Workers were considered privileged to have the opportunity to improve their knowledge and skills to help make them vocationally more effective. We pointed out that today the typical adult will be required to change careers many times. This may involve a change of technologies, a change in economic sectors and a change in geographic location. During the Soviet era, adult education was considered to be a public good and it was expected that the public would be responsible for its financing. We pointed out, however, that no amount of

public financing would be sufficient today, and that no market democracy can rely on public finance or public delivery of all adult education. We pointed out that adult education was a partnership between local and international commercial firms, various government ministries, entrepreneurial training institutions (proprietary schools), local authorities, and private individuals willing to invest in their own training.

This year we wish to raise the question of who should pay for what kind of adult education and why. There are four categories of adult education:

- The teaching of *skills which are useful for one company alone*. This might include training on a particular piece of equipment located at a particular factory. In these instances, the company should be expected to shoulder the largest share of the training costs.
- The teaching of *skills which are useful for an economic sector*. This might include well drilling technologies which could benefit many petroleum companies. In this instance, the group of companies which utilize these skills might be expected to shoulder the largest share of the training cost.
- The teaching of *skills which are needed across the economy*. Reading literacy and numeracy are typical examples, and are typically covered by public taxes.
- The teaching of *skills which are needed for personal consumption*. If a person wishes to learn poetry or yoga, these are regarded as personal decisions for personal benefits. In these instances, the individual or the family would be expected to shoulder the lion's share of the expenses.

The question is how Latvia might make decisions based along this set of principles. Because these issues are well beyond the responsibilities of the public education, decisions should receive the benefit of input from many ministries, not just the Ministry of Education and Science. And because many of these issues involve the private sector, the responsibility cannot be confined to public ministries alone. Lastly, because new resources are available under the auspices of the EU, resources which require local contributions from Latvia, these decisions are likely to have considerable consequences.

Currently the Centre of Professional Career Choice is working under the supervision of the Ministry of Welfare, though its functions are rather limited – mainly providing assistance in choosing a profession and giving psychological consultations. Some of these functions

are of commercial character (assistance in selection of profession) and on the whole the model of the centre's activities does not promote its involvement in developing a policy for lifelong education.

We would recommend that an autonomous body be assigned the responsibility for making policy in the field of adult education. Precedents for such authorities exist in Germany, Britain, Brazil and many other countries. While chaired by a public official, such an institution should have public representation from several ministries on its governing board, and representation from the private sector and local authorities.

Conclusions

One of the main features of a modern education system is a well informed public and an effective system of feedback. After looking at the changes offered in Latvia we conclude that decisions have been made on the sole basis of the intuitive judgment of whatever minister has recently been appointed. Decisions are not based on analysis or research. They have not been discussed with the public. On the other hand, it is clear that significant changes will be needed in the future in content and teaching methods and in higher education. The question arises as to whether the tendency to make policy changes precipitously and without sufficient planning will make it impossible for Latvia to achieve a modern school system, competitive with other European countries.

IV. Recommendations

- The development of a knowledge economy would need cooperation between MOES, Ministry of Economy and Ministry of Finance. It is important to determine which areas of education and enterprises could be developed with the help of EU structural funds and where the other sources of financing (e.g. The World Bank loans) would be necessary.
- Government should start the next Plan of Development of the System of Education in Latvia. This plan should focus on the development of medium and long-term visions, as well as be coherent with the EU vision of structural and cohesion funds. During the drafting process of the development plan, consultations with society and NGO sector are advisable.



- Government should plan for a sustained increase in education investment every year. This would drive continued reform and help to ensure high standards.

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I. Minority Education Reform

Dual-Stream Schools - Assessment of an Example of Bilingual Education

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Summary

In addition to schools where Latvian or Russian is the language of instruction, there also exist “dual-stream schools.” These are schools where instruction is in two separate languages. Dual-stream schools provide education both to children whose family language is Latvian, as well as to children whose family language is Russian. In spite of the difference in language, children attend school together and they share many educational activities together. Teaching in these schools is organized in Latvian and Russian separately, but also bilingually – according to the guidelines on the ethnic minority education reform.

In recent years the implementation of bilingual education in ethnic minority schools in Latvia has become extremely popular. Teachers and students are said to be inadequately prepared. But however true, it is also useful to give credit to the structures and institutions which are already in place and which may already be working well. When evaluating the reform, it is important not only to criticize the weaknesses, but also to identify and give credit to achievements. Given their natural multi-lingual and multi-cultural environment, dual-stream schools serve as a positive example for the implementation of bilingual education. As a model of bilingualism, dual-stream schools reflect the bilingualism in the society of Latvia. Therefore, the analysis of dual-stream schools and their potential development should be viewed not only as an evaluation of a case of bilingual education, but also as a model for development of the environment for an integrated multinational society.

The purpose of the study was to gather knowledge on the current situation in dual-stream schools to use the experience of these schools for the improvement of ethnic minority education and to assess their potential for the development of an integrated multinational society. Among other things, the study found that:

- in dual-stream schools the principals and teachers are more actively engaged in teaching certain subjects in Latvian prior to the introduction of bilingual education;
- dual-stream schools have more resources for the development of multi-lingual teams and cooperation among students and teachers of both strands;
- dual-stream schools are a prerequisite for the successful implementation of bilingual education because teachers and students work and play in a bilingual environment;
- dual-stream schools are characterized by cultural diversity and the positive interaction of these cultures, thus encouraging intercultural tolerance;
- many dual-stream schools implementing general and minority education programs have developed based on the initiative of both parents and the school administration, which attests to the desire by Russian-speaking parents to encourage the integration of their children into Latvian society.

The report reaches several conclusions about how to use two-strand schools to better implement current bilingual education and achieve its objectives.

Introduction

Dual-stream schools in Latvia were established in the 1960's. Education was organized for two separate streams of students belonging to the two main language groups in Latvia – Russian and Latvian. The term “dual-stream schools” is still being used, although the current focus is on the division of schools according to the educational programs they are implementing. Therefore, in the future this term might be replaced with a different one, in view of the fact that the educational process has become more inclusive and the policy for integration of



society is aimed at intensifying cooperation between various language groups.¹

The terminology problem is based on two sets of circumstances. First, although a wide range of national policy documents have been devised in the area of integration, no uniform conceptual approach to the issue of dual-stream schools has been identified. Second, at the moment in Latvia we can distinguish between several types of dual-stream schools. Along with the dual-stream schools created during the Soviet period, a new type of dual-stream school has emerged on the basis of general full-time ethnic minority schools.

Based on the data collected during the study, we can identify the following types of dual-stream schools in Latvia:

(1) Linguistically mixed dual-stream schools providing education to children belonging to the two main language groups in Latvia – Latvian and Russian; this group includes also the traditional dual-stream schools created during the Soviet period (in the 60ies). This is the dominant type as historically dual-stream schools were established based on ethnicity and mother tongue. In addition, this group comprises the dual-stream schools created in the middle and end of the 90ies to which the ethnic Latvian classes were added. It should be noted that often in these schools ethnic minority children are enrolled in the Latvian language stream.

(2) Dual-stream schools are attended almost exclusively by ethnic minority students, but the schools implement both the general education program and the ethnic minority general education program. This means that part of the Russian-speaking students receive education only in Latvian and constitute the so-called Latvian stream, while the other part of students receive education bilingually and constitute the Russian stream. This type of dual-stream schools emerged in the middle and end of the 90ies as a response to the demand by parents and competition between schools.

(3) In relative terms we can also identify a third or combined type of dual-stream school, i.e., linguistically mixed schools where ethnic minority students can choose to receive education either according to the general education program or according to ethnic minority education program (in fact, there are three streams in such schools).

There may also be other types of dual-stream schools, depending on a whole range of social, economic, demo-

graphic and socio-political factors in the respective local government territory.

The legal basis for the existence of dual-stream schools is Section 36 of the Education Law (of 1998), which states that an educational institution may implement several programs of which one, in this case, is the ethnic minority education program and the other – an education program delivered in the Latvian language. More specifically the link to the specific type of school is described in the by-law of the school approved by the local government council.

This article includes excerpts from partially structured interviews conducted during the study in order to illustrate the results of the study and the generated opinions and conclusions.

Research Strategy

The following activities were carried out within the framework of the research:

First, **collection and analysis of statistical data on dual-stream schools**.

Second, 22 partially structured interviews were conducted with **expert researchers** (5), **representatives of ethnic minority NGOs** (7), **educational policy makers** (4) and **Members of Parliament** (6).

Third, partially structured interviews were carried out in 10 dual-stream schools with the following target groups: **principals** (10) and **teachers** (21) working with both streams or bilingually, as well as **students from Latvian** (30) and **Russian** (35) streams.

Fourth, an analytical summary and evaluation of the collected data was carried out based on the analysis of the interviews.

The sample of dual-stream schools (10 schools) was based on the regional principle. In Kurzeme, Zemgale and Vidzeme regions, two dual-stream schools were studied in each region, whereas in Latgale, which has the highest concentration of dual-stream schools in the country – 4 secondary schools were analysed. The specific schools were identified by means of a draw. Given the fact that this study analyses dual-stream schools in the context of bilingual education, and that one of the target groups is students, only dual-stream secondary

¹ For the purposes of this article the term “dual-stream school” refers to all general secondary full-time schools implementing both general education programs in the Latvian language, as well as ethnic minority education programs. Where required, the respective type of dual-stream school will be specified.

schools were included in the sample. For this reason the sample does not include dual-stream schools of Riga city, because there is only one such type of dual-stream secondary school in the capital.

Political and social context

Dual-stream schools and the policy for integration of society

Latvia is not ethnically or linguistically homogeneous. It is divided into two large language groups – Latvian and Russian. At the same time it must be admitted that these are not closed groups and interaction between the members of the two language communities takes place in a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic environment.

Pursuant to the concept of the national program “Integration of Society in Latvia,” ethnic integration in Latvia should be based on shared civic values and knowledge of the Latvian language. The integrative function of the state language policy is supplemented by the education reform with the main focus on reform of ethnic minority education. Therefore, school is one of the main social institutes enabling the implementation of social integration and state language policy in the country.

Regardless of the fact that dual-stream school as a specific model of bilingualism to a certain degree reflects bilingualism in the society of Latvia, so far nobody has studied and assessed the role and potential of such schools. Moreover, school as a space for social relationships is created not only by the teachers, school administration, and the students, but also by the parents and extended families of the students. Just as in society at large, interaction between individuals in dual-stream schools also takes place in a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic social environment, where the issue of coexistence of representatives of two language groups is the main focus, i.e., in what way does it take place and what are the models for coexistence?

Dual-stream schools are a very essential stage in the process of forming an integrated society because, first, in the case of linguistically mixed dual-stream schools, these are schools where bilingual education is implemented in the context of a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic social environment; second, dual-stream schools where ethnic minority students receive education bilingually and in Latvian should be particularly highlighted, as these schools have been developed acting on the initiative of the administration and the parents. This testifies to the interest by the parents towards learning

the Latvian language and awareness of the role of the Latvian language for the integration of their children into Latvian society.

So far the place and role of dual-stream schools in the development of social integration policy has been underestimated. Members of NGOs protecting the rights of minorities quite unanimously support the view that such schools contribute to the consolidation of society and emphasize that they are a miniature model of the society of Latvia and, therefore, can serve as an example for the development of an integrated multi-ethnic society. For this reason the existence of such schools should be supported.

“In terms of the integration model, which promotes the coexistence of different mentalities, world outlooks and cultures, dual-stream schools would be the optimal choice.” (NGO representative)

“Dual-stream schools are the future of the Republic of Latvia (..) and the basis for its integration.” (NGO representative)

“And we are proud of the fact that we are a small model of Latvia. If the children learn to get along in our school, they will find it easier in their future lives.” (principal from Kurzeme region)

Principals and teachers from dual-stream schools recognize that dual-stream schools are a way to bridge the gap between various ethnic groups, as they provide an opportunity for the school youth to learn more about each other and to find common interests. In such an environment youngsters gain experience in mutual relations and build the foundation of a consolidated society.

“This is normal, this is what both Latvians and Russians need, otherwise the two communities live separately. Otherwise a person loses some opportunities to develop a broader perspective and world outlook. Dual-stream schools provide such an opportunity. What is needed is the willingness of both parties to communicate, see each other and become friends. It seems that in our society there aren't that many alternatives, so this is one possible alternative.” (a teacher from Daugavpils)

The dual-stream school and ethnic minority education reform

The beginning of ethnic minority education reform was in 1995 when amendments to the Education Law were adopted providing that in ethnic minority schools



3 subject areas in secondary school and 2 subject areas in primary school must be taught in the Latvian language.

The bilingual education program was launched in ethnic minority schools nation-wide in 1999, when each educational institution providing education in the Russian language chose one of the four ethnic minority primary education models developed by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Policy makers had the following reasons for implementing the ethnic minority primary education program: they believed that if the Latvian language was taught only as a subject area, the students would never start speaking Latvian, but the Latvian language, in their view, was the basis for Latvian statehood. The overall goal of the reform is the development of a uniform educational system in Latvia, as "it can ensure the development of Latvia's society as a united body of citizens sharing the same values and responsibilities." (National Programme, 1999, p. 51)

"The reform must take place, we should never step back, otherwise there will be no basis for statehood. If this country wants to continue its existence, this is one of the cornerstones." (expert-politician)

"Teacher surveys, studies that were carried out prior to the development of the program revealed that in the given circumstances where the language environment was deformed, especially in the former schools of the Russian language of instruction, it was not possible to educate active Latvian language users by teaching Latvian only as a subject area." (expert-politician)

When evaluating the impact of the ethnic minority education reform on dual-stream schools it must be stated that in the so-called Russian streams bilingual education is being implemented in the same way as in all other schools implementing ethnic minority education programs (BISS, 2003). However, it should be noted that in dual-stream schools, more often than in other schools implementing the ethnic minority education program, the principals and teachers already prior to the introduction of bilingual education nationwide were more actively focused on teaching certain subject-areas in Latvian, being aware of the demand by parents for this kind of approach and also recognizing their ability to provide it.

"Regarding bilingual education, we are running ahead of time. Even before the discussions on bilingual education began in our country, we were already teaching several subject areas in Latvian." (principal, Latgale region)

In the context of bilingual education it must be emphasized that the resources available to dual-stream schools make it easier to implement bilingual education, as these schools have teachers who are able to teach in both languages, textbooks in both languages, as well as a multi-lingual and multi-cultural environment.

"The schools must definitely use the resources available to them. They have teachers who can teach in one language, and teachers who can teach in the other language – they must develop something new, a joint bilingual and multilingual team of teachers." (researcher: psychology)

Therefore, we can say that in dual-stream schools bilingual education can be implemented more easily and effectively. In this context, from the perspective of implementation of bilingual education, the separation of dual-stream schools in the beginning of the 90ies can be regarded a hasty decision.

Decision-making

With respect to dual-stream schools and their establishment, abolishment and transformation, the decision-making process and models have had a crucial role in ensuring the working process and its effectiveness at schools, both individually as well as collectively.

Historically, dual-stream schools in Latvia were established by an administrative order, with the purpose of closing unjustifiably small schools. As a result, dual-stream schools were a combination dominated by the interests of the Russian stream, and the relationships between Latvian and Russian streams were either non-existent (both streams were isolated) or hateful, even aggressive.

After Latvia regained its independence, many dual-stream schools were abolished or split, especially in Riga. As the Ministry of Education and Science has no documents explaining the reasons for reorganizing these schools, it is difficult to interpret this process, however, according to the experts, again it was an order from above.

However, over the last 10 years an opposite process can be observed: many schools have again transformed themselves into dual-stream schools. When describing this process, it should be noted that in these instances the top level policy-makers (the Parliament, the government, the MOES) had a lesser role, whereas the importance of the initiative by local governments, parents and educators (principals and teachers) is increasing.

“Bottom-up” initiatives and activities are very important for the creation of a positive psychological environment and atmosphere in schools: both experts and educators from dual-stream schools emphasize that there is currently nothing resembling ethnic tension and conflict in dual-stream schools. According to experts, one of the reasons for improved relationships lies in the fact that these schools have not been forcibly established as dual-stream schools.

“By creating artificially, just by creating artificially, we can learn only negative things about each other.” (NGO representative)

“I believe there should be a natural selection: if parents do not want their child to attend a particular school, it will cease to exist, but we should not opt for artificial merging or splitting.” (teacher from Daugavpils)

Cases where schools have been transformed into dual-stream schools on the initiative by the school administration or parents can be viewed as the most positive ones, also from the perspective of implementing bilingual education. Often, these schools have faced prejudices and negative attitudes in the beginning of the process, but some of the parents had always supported the establishment of such schools. Positive assessment is given to the establishment of such dual-stream schools where ethnic minority children receive education according to the general (i.e., Latvian) education programs and ethnic minority education programs, and where the parents have been one of the main initiators of setting up such schools (bottom-up decision-making model).

“This school has been a dual-stream school for nine years. That was the parents’ choice because they wanted their children to be taught all subject areas only in Latvian starting from grade 1; consequently we decided to establish this kind of a parallel class.” (principal from Zemgale region)

Analysis of the situation of dual-stream schools reveals that in cases where the initiative to establish such schools has come from “the bottom,” namely, from the parents, and has received support by the school administration, the teaching process, the relationships between the students, and the practice of implementing the bilingual education are seen more positively by the respondents.

Dual-stream schools as a model of bilingualism

Background information

Dual-stream schools are not a new phenomenon in Latvia. In the majority of cases they were established in the beginning of the 60ies as part of the process of “liquidation of small schools” and establishment of large educational institutions. Experts have told us that most dual-stream schools were created by the decision “from the top,” disregarding the views of the parents and students. Perhaps the prejudice against dual-stream schools is due to this kind of policy-making model.

“(..) At the 23rd Communist Party Congress the Secretary General of the Latvian Communist Party Arvīds Pelše simply boasted that we have lots of dual-stream schools in Latvia. Actually, there weren’t that many. And (..) then it had to be made sure that, indeed, in Latvia we have as many schools as indicated by Pelše in Moscow.” (researcher: history, ethnic policy, ethnic psychology)

At the end of the 80ies and in the beginning of the 90ies some of the dual-stream schools were abolished. This was especially the case in Riga. Typically, these educational institutions were split on the grounds of lack of space. The result was two separate schools – one with the Latvian language of instruction, the other one – with the Russian language of instruction. Unfortunately, it is impossible to trace this process in policy documents and educational statistics, as no information is available about the respective period except for combined statistical data. Expert-researchers and politicians provide different explanations regarding the splitting and liquidation of dual-stream schools, however, it should be noted that their explanations are not mutually exclusive and the separation of dual-stream schools in the early 90ies should be viewed as a complex process determined by various political and social factors.

According to experts from different fields, dual-stream schools during the Soviet period were “disintegrating,” and that was the main reason for dividing them. Today the principals of dual-stream schools admit that the conflicts and intolerance characteristic of the Soviet period have disappeared, and a dual-stream school is a place where communication between Latvian and ethnic minority children is taking place. Moreover, some of the principals of schools that have been dual-stream schools



since the Soviet times state that there were no harsh conflicts even during the Soviet period.

The increase in the number of dual-stream schools in the middle and end of the 90ies was due to establishment of a new type of dual-stream school. The information collected during the research shows that these schools were developed on the basis of Russian schools. Basically we can distinguish between two types of dual-stream schools.

The first group includes those schools to which a Latvian strand was added – separate classrooms were formed for children whose mother tongue was Latvian. In this case a school was transformed into a dual-stream school pursuant to the local government strategy for optimizing the schools, based on the demographic situation in the respective municipal territory and the ability of the local government to ensure the effective use of financial resources allocated for education (the local government's responsibilities include opening and closing general educational institutions, and approving financial appropriations as the state budget finances only salaries for teachers).

The second group includes schools attended by students whose mother tongue is Russian, but these schools, in addition to the ethnic minority education programs, have offered educational programs also in the Latvian language. Students receiving education according to the Latvian program constitute the so-called Latvian class (the Latvian stream). This kind of model for development of dual-stream schools can be described as a "bottom-up" initiative, based on requests by the parents to provide education to their children in the Latvian language from grade 1 onwards.

"In fact, the first were the parents who decided that they want their children to receive education in the Latvian language regardless of the fact that these children came from mixed families – the mother was Latvian, and the father – Russian, or vice versa. How did they motivate their choice? Initially they took their child to a Latvian school, (...) but that presented a psychologi-

cal barrier for the child. And these anxious mothers raised the following question: if there is this trend that so much importance is attached to the Latvian language and that education must be provided in Latvian, and if we are not Latvians, but we want our children to receive education in Latvian, wouldn't it be more comfortable and cozy for the children to receive education in this kind of atmosphere?" (principal from Zemgale region)

The principals of these schools indicated that, apart from parental initiative, another reason for licensing educational programs also in the Latvian language was an increase in competition between schools to attract students and secure jobs for teachers. In the view of the principals, by offering various educational programs, the school can meet the interests of those parents of ethnic minority children who want their children to receive education in the Latvian language only.

"We knew that we had a Latvian school next to us, that we had to do something to face competition. (...) In 1994/95 there were active parents who demanded (...) that not only the Latvian language should be taught more extensively as a subject area, but that children should be taught various subject areas in the Latvian language starting from grade 1. And so we did – we opened one class with the Latvian language of instruction and another one – with a Russian language of instruction." (principal from Latgale region)

Statistics on dual-stream schools²

The analysis of statistical data on dual-stream schools is possible only for the period after 1991. No statistics are available on the establishment of dual-stream schools during the Soviet period.

The analysis of the available data on general full-time dual-stream schools in Latvia between 1991 and 2002 shows that their number was increasing slightly until the

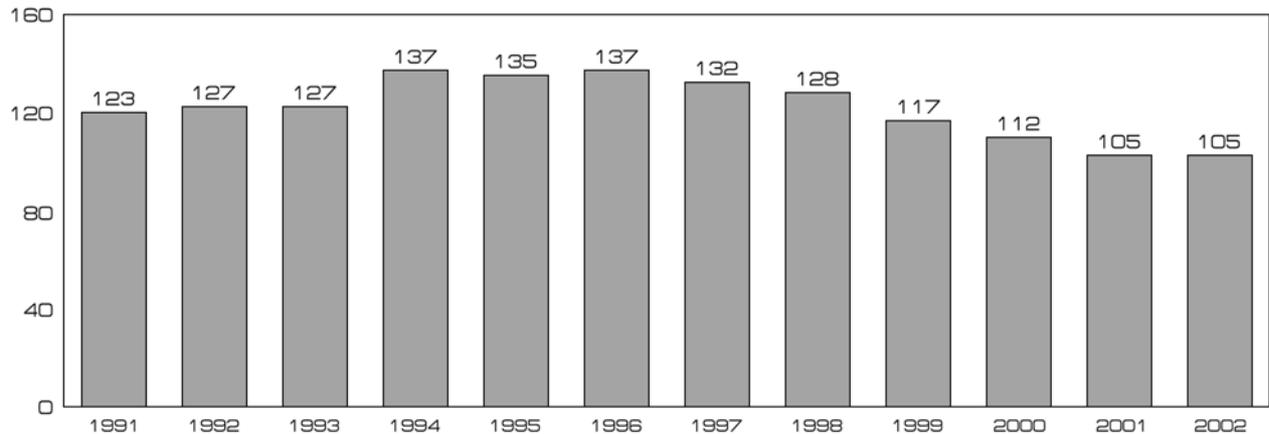
² Two sources were used for collection and analysis of statistical data:

1. Annual statistical bulletin of the Central Statistics Bureau of Latvia "Education institutions in Latvia as on the beginning of the academic year ..." (1991–2002);

2. Data on general full-time schools published on the web-site of the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES) of the Republic of Latvia.

The analysis was also based on unpublished information of the MOES on the period before 1998. Unfortunately, a large proportion of these data is not comparable, as the methods for collection and processing of data have changed over the course of time.

One should also take note of the differences between the data of the CSB and that of the MOES, as the latter includes also the data on specialized schools in the data on general schools in which dual-stream schools are included.



Source: CSB, 1992–2002.

Figure 1. Dynamics of the number of dual-stream schools between 1991 and 2002.

middle of the 90ies and then – gradually decreasing. Over the period from 1994 till 2002 their number has decreased by 30, or fallen from 14% to 11% of the total number of general full-time schools. In the beginning of the academic year 2002/2003 there were 953 general full-time schools in Latvia, of which **105** (about 11%) were providing education according to both the Latvian program as well as one of the ethnic minority education programs, i.e., dual-stream schools (see Figure 1).

About one half of dual-stream schools provide primary education only, but the rest – secondary education as well. Of 105 dual-stream schools in Latvia in the academic year 2002/2003, there were 4 pre-schools, 53 primary schools and 48 secondary schools. (MOES, 2004)

Currently about one-tenth (10,5%) of all students in Latvia (excluding those attending specialized schools) are educated in dual-stream schools. Two thirds of such students are educated according to the Latvian program, and one third – according to one of the ethnic minority programs.

Compared to the beginning of the academic year 1991/1992, the ratio of students of dual-stream schools has decreased by 3.5% or about 13, 000 students in 2002. In 1991 dual-stream schools were attended by 14% of all students, but in 2002 – only by 10.5%. Moreover, the reduction in the number of students has been almost the same in the Latvian and the Russian stream. The total number of students in dual-stream schools amounts to 33,125, of which 355 are in pre-schools, 9030 – in primary schools, and 23,740 – in secondary schools. (MOES, 2004)

When analyzing the statistical data on general full-time dual-stream schools by regions, one can conclude that the highest concentration of such schools is in

Latgale (44 schools), and Vidzeme (30 schools). It should be noted that more than half of all dual-stream schools in the Vidzeme region are located in Riga District (19 schools). There are 7 dual-stream schools in Kurzeme, and 17 – in Zemgale. In Riga the number of such schools is relatively low – only 7, of which only 1 is a secondary school. (MOES, 2004)

Offering a choice in ethnic minority education

Representatives of NGOs protecting the rights of minorities repeatedly emphasized that a freedom of choice must be provided in education, namely, schools should be different – ethnic, Russian, Latvian, or two-strand schools, because in a democracy all people should not be the same.

“There should be at least one dual-stream school in each district. Some would prefer to receive education in Russian and communicate with their Latvian friends. There should be a Latvian school, perhaps also an ethnic Russian school – at least one in each district, an ethnic Ukrainian school, and so on. There should be this broad selection, and then, it seems to me, we will not need any special textbooks and we will not have to invent this smart term “integration”.” (NGO representative)

“There should be a large diversity of schools. We have left behind ourselves the time when all people had to be the same. We have various Latvian schools and various Russian schools, and they must be different. We will never have an ethnically pure school. Not one.” (NGO representative)



From the perspective of broadening the choice, dual-stream schools should be viewed as a very good example: under Section 36 of the Education Law an educational institution may implement several education programs, for example, one in the Latvian language and the other one – in an ethnic minority language, and dual-stream schools are a way to offer an option to the population in the face of insufficient supply (in small towns and rural areas) to receive education in Latvian or in an ethnic minority language. Moreover, the several types of dual-stream schools present in Latvia increase the opportunities for ethnic minority children to choose a general full-time school in accordance with their needs and approaches to education.

For those ethnic minority children who want to receive education in Latvian only, dual-stream schools where ethnic minority children are educated according to both general education and ethnic minority education programs can be considered positive on the psychological comfort level. Namely, these schools provide an opportunity for ethnic minority children to acquire general education in the Latvian language in a cultural environment to which they are accustomed, thus reducing the negative emotional tension they experience when attending a Latvian school. The teachers working in dual-stream schools admitted that, compared to Latvian schools, dual-stream schools are more suitable for ethnic minority children in terms of the language and that they enable the successful learning of education content.

“As these children basically are Russian-speaking, they may have been afraid to go to the Latvian school. And I believe that they have probably benefited more by staying here. It seems to me that in the Latvian school the teachers are not obliged to translate if students do not understand what they say. But we must approach the children differently.” (teacher from Ilūkste)

Linguistically mixed dual-stream schools offer an opportunity for ethnic minority children to receive education in the Latvian language – in the mixed dual-stream schools ethnic minority children are also often enrolled in the Latvian class (stream). It is advisable for such children to undergo special linguistic preparation. Often these children have learnt the Latvian language in kindergarten or pre-school preparatory groups. This shows that the parents of these children have made a timely decision in favor of education in the Latvian language.

According to the principals, in several mixed two-strand schools ethnic minority children have an oppor-

tunity to move to the other stream and continue their education in Latvian. This opportunity is offered both at the primary, as well as the secondary school level.

The role of the language environment in a dual-stream school

Contrary to ethnic minority schools, in dual-stream schools there are ample opportunities for interaction between the two main language groups at the level of students and teachers, and also parents. This has a positive effect on the implementation of bilingual education in the school’s Russian stream, acquisition of the Latvian language and speaking habits, and intercultural communication, which allows us to look at the dual-stream school as a model for the development of a consolidated multilingual society. However, it should be noted that the positive impact of the multilingual dual-stream school on bilingual education and acquisition of the Latvian language basically applies to linguistically mixed dual-stream schools.

For the purposes of implementing bilingual education it is important that two language environments – Latvian and Russian – exist next to each other. In linguistically mixed dual-stream schools a multi-cultural and multi-linguistic environment is a precondition for successful implementation of bilingual education, as the students and teachers use the Latvian language not only during learning activities, but also outside classrooms. This enhances the motivation both to acquire the Latvian language and to learn bilingually. Moreover, this provides an opportunity to develop the practical skills of using the Latvian language.

“(..) this school already has a two-language environment, and this is the first precondition that has to be met in order to discuss bilingual education in the wider context.” (policy implementer)

The coexistence of two linguistic systems has a positive impact on the Latvian language skills of the teachers, and thus enhances the learning process according to bilingual education methods. Responses by teachers from some mixed educational institutions reveal that working in the Latvian environment has helped them to improve their command of the official language. When describing communication between the teachers in a dual-stream school, several teachers state that daily communication with the colleagues takes place both in Latvian and Russian.

A whole range of studies (BISS, 1996–2002) suggest that the routine use of the Latvian language is closely related to the language environment and depends on the type of the environment (formal or informal), as well as on the cultural environment (Latvian or Russian environment). Typically ethnic minorities use the Latvian language in a formal environment – in public institutions, at work, also at school – and less often – in informal environments in the public space – in streets, shops and public transportation.

In this context it is important to appreciate the unique nature of the environment in dual-stream schools. Namely, it is a formal environment in which both formal and informal communication takes place, the latter can be observed during breaks, social and recreational events, etc. Therefore, the multi-lingual environment of a dual-stream school facilitates the development of Latvian language skills, as the ethnic minority students use Latvian not only in class, but also at extra-curricular events. Moreover, students develop social networks at school that involve representatives of both language groups. According to the interviewed principals, teachers, and students themselves, the communication between Latvian and ethnic minority children goes on also outside of school.

“I have to say that the students stick together not only at school. During the month of May various events are organized at the castle-mound, and (...) I also participate (...) and I see our students there. I observe them and I have noticed that they keep together. It is not so that boys from grade 10A would keep separately from grade 10B. In our school A is the Russian stream, and B – the Latvian stream. They are all together in one crowd. I see all my secondary school students sticking together. They already are all together when they are here at school.” (principal from Zemgale region)

Politicians who have been actively involved in shaping the official language policy are more skeptical about the coexistence of different linguistic systems in a mixed school. They are convinced that informal communication between students takes place mainly in Russian. However, expert-politicians and researchers active in the field of the official language policy admit that such informal contacts are part of the private life and cannot be subjected to state regulation.

“(.) in such schools the language of communication between students still is Russian. And, therefore, these schools function contradictory to their goal. Instead of

promoting integration on the basis of the Latvian language, they strengthen self-sufficiency of the Russian language. (...) problems emerge not during the teaching process in classrooms, but during the “extra-curricular activities.” From joint events organized by the school to the lay-out of the school. In this respect informal contacts among the students are very important, which naturally cannot be regulated – like any other aspect of private life – but which, nevertheless, the school should purposefully develop.” (politician)

What we have heard and observed in dual-stream schools partially supports the statement that the Russian language dominates in mutual communication between students. Communication in Russian takes place in those dual-stream schools that are attended only by the ethnic minority children, even though some of them are enrolled in education programs that are implemented only in the Latvian language. Communication in Russian outside the school is more characteristic of dual-stream schools in the Latgale region. This can be explained by the different overall ethnic and linguistic environment in Latgale, as the Russian language here is more self-sufficient compared to other regions in Latvia.

At the same time it should be noted that several principals and teachers of dual-stream schools emphasize that communication between the students outside the classes takes place bilingually.

Cultural interaction as an integrating factor

Dual-stream schools are characterized not only by the bilingual environment but also by the diversity and interaction of cultures that to a large extent are related to the use of two languages. In this context the dual-stream school should be seen as an environment that facilitates inter-ethnic dialogue.

“The composition of students is multi-national, and they are all educated according to the Latvian language program. Everything takes place in Latvian only. But there are Russians, Poles, Roma, Byelorussians – a variety of nationalities. And, in fact, I believe that for many students in the “Latvian classes” the mother tongue is Russian. I teach the Latvian class myself. The education program is Latvian, but the students include Russians, Poles, Byelorussians – a large bouquet of various nationalities.” (teacher from Ilūkste)

“(.) I find it very positive that we are two ethnic groups



in one school and we can learn from one another, for example, I receive education in the Russian stream, I am Latvian myself, and at home we are representatives of three nationalities. I would not find it difficult to move to the Latvian strand and continue my education there. Maybe in some subject areas, like physics, I would face some difficulties, but otherwise not.” (student from Iecava)

Informal communication and extra-curricular activities are a way for cultural dialogue in dual-stream schools to find expression. Communication between representatives of the two largest language groups was discussed in the previous chapter, therefore in this chapter we will focus on extra-curricular activities in dual-stream schools and their role in enhancing tolerance and interaction between cultures.

The information collected in dual-stream schools enables us to distinguish between two types of events organized in schools. First, the experience of linguistically mixed dual-stream schools shows that bilingualism dominates in various extra-curricular activities in which students from both streams participate. Such events relate to learning and life at school. The second group of events are those organized on the occasion of various national festivals for each language group separately. Such events take place in Latvian or Russian respectively.

The fact that activities related to national festivals are organized for each stream separately, cannot be assessed straightforwardly. On the one hand, in this way each language group learns and maintains traditions characteristic to its cultural environment. Moreover, this is a way for each culture to preserve its identity and prevent potential threats of assimilation in one or another direction. On the other hand, this restricts opportunities for students to learn about other cultures and to develop tolerance towards them, which is crucially important in Latvian circumstances, where several cultures must coexist in the public and, partially, also in the private space.

At the same time it should be noted that in dual-stream schools Latvian and Russian streams are not physically separated in terms of premises. In some cases pre-school students are separated (but the same happens also in Latvian and ethnic minority schools), but in secondary schools they share the same space. The physical space surrounding the students (artistic elements and visual information on the walls, announcements and posters) is the same for everyone. In the context of mutual communication between the students this is a positive fact, as it enables students from both language groups to receive information on events and activities planned for

the other group. Moreover, students are not forbidden to participate in events organized for the other group, which take place only a few times a year, while the events at the level of the entire school – contests, sports competitions, discotheques, etc., take place at regular intervals and, as mentioned before, for both groups together.

Conclusions

This analysis of the surveyed dual-stream schools enables the identification of several positive aspects related to such schools. However, one should distinguish between the linguistically mixed dual-stream schools and the dual-stream schools that implement general and ethnic minority education programs.

Linguistically mixed dual-stream schools

(1) When evaluating the dual-stream schools in the context of the ethnic minority education reform, it must be concluded that in the so-called Russian streams bilingual education is implemented in the same way as in all other schools implementing an ethnic minority education program. The management, teachers and students face the same problems as in schools implementing an ethnic minority education program only. At the same time in linguistically mixed dual-stream schools several preconditions exist that facilitate a more successful and faster resolution of such problems.

First, in these dual-stream schools, more so than in other schools implementing an ethnic minority education program, the principal and teachers were more actively engaged in teaching certain subject areas in Latvian even prior to the introduction of bilingual education in the country, recognizing the demand by the parents for this kind of approach and being able to satisfy this demand.

Second, in the context of bilingual education it should be emphasized that linguistically mixed dual-stream schools have resources for the development of multi-lingual teams of teachers and enhanced cooperation between the students and teachers from the different streams.

Third, the multi-lingual environment in linguistically mixed dual-stream schools is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of bilingual education, as the teachers and students use the Latvian language not only during the learning activities, but also outside of class. This, in turn, enhances the motivation to learn the Latvian language and receive education bilingually, and

develops a positive attitude towards the Latvian language.

(2) Linguistically mixed dual-stream schools are characterized by diversity and interaction of cultures, which to a large extent is related to the use of two languages. In this context dual-stream school can be viewed as an environment that facilitates an inter-ethnic dialogue.

Informal communication, extra-curricular activities, as well as shared space in which students and teachers representing various ethnic groups and cultures communicate with each other, provides an opportunity to learn about other cultures and develop tolerance towards diversity. It contributes to integration not only at the level of school, but also in the society, while enabling each culture to preserve its identity.

Dual-stream schools that implement general and ethnic minority education programs

(1) In the context of bilingual education the experience of these schools shows that preconditions exist that have a positive impact on the implementation of bilingual education. Students who receive education in the so-called Latvian class are positive and loyal towards the Latvian language and the need for bilingual education. By their attitude and motivation to receive an education in the Latvian language, they indirectly and positively influence the overall attitude in school towards the ethnic minority education reform and integration of society.

(2) Dual-stream schools that implement general and ethnic minority education programs provide an opportunity for ethnic minority children to acquire general education in the Latvian language in a cultural environment to which they are accustomed, thus reducing the negative emotional tension experienced by a major part of ethnic minority children when attending a Latvian school.

(3) This type of school that has been developed acting on the initiative of the administration and the parents, testifies to the interest by the parents to facilitate the integration of their children into Latvian society by choosing the general education program in the Latvian language.

Overall, the analysis of dual-stream schools enables one to conclude that in these schools bilingual education can be implemented more easily and effectively.

The reasons giving rise to doubts as to whether dual-stream schools should be regarded as a positive example in Latvian society, relate to the traditional negative per-

ception of such schools. Given the fact that they were initially imposed as part of the policy for russification of Latvian schools, the public perception is that the environment in these schools generates conflict and supports assimilation of Latvian children. These two reasons form the basis for the negative attitude towards Latvian and ethnic minority children learning together in the same school.

When evaluating the benefits from dual-stream schools for different target groups, the following should be distinguished:

Students

Dual-stream schools considerably enhance the freedom of choice for ethnic minority students in the area of general education.

The coexistence of two linguistic systems, thanks to the successful implementation of bilingual education and the possibility for students to develop their Latvian language skills, has a positive impact on future opportunities for ethnic minority students to continue their education and enter the labor market.

Both Latvian, as well as ethnic minority students benefit from inter-ethnic communication. The environment in dual-stream schools develops their understanding of cultural diversity, which is crucially important in Latvia's case, where several different cultures must coexist in the public space.

Teachers

In dual-stream schools multi-cultural teams of teachers are developed that considerably contributes to mutual cooperation between Latvian and Russian teachers in the implementation of bilingual education.

Moreover, the environment of a dual-stream school, the classroom work and its organization positively affects the Latvian language proficiency of the teachers, which, in turn, is one of the main preconditions for the successful implementation of bilingual education.

The social and pedagogical environment in a dual-stream school facilitates an inter-ethnic dialogue not only among students, but also between teachers, which results in developing and strengthening positive relations between teachers from different language groups.

Local governments

At present the institutional responsibility for establishing, closing and merging schools lies with the local government. Dual-stream schools, particularly in small local governments, is a way to ensure the effective use of resources allocated for education, taking into consid-



eration the demographic situation in cases where the number of students is insufficient for the local government to run separate schools, as well as the demand of the students to receive education in the Latvian language in a school which represents not only the Latvian, but also the Russian cultural environment.

Recommendations

The experience of dual-stream schools included in the research forms the basis for the following recommendations:

First, in the context of development and implementation of ethnic minority education policy the positive experience of dual-stream schools regarding the implementation of bilingual education must be taken into account, given the fact that in these schools the process of implementing bilingual education was started earlier than in the rest of the country.

Second, based on the integration processes taking place in dual-stream schools, the development of a positive discourse should be facilitated by breaking the old stereotypes from the Soviet period about dual-stream schools as an environment that generates ethnic conflict. Currently no ethnically based conflicts emerge in dual-stream schools in Latvia.³

Third, based on the current practice of dual-stream schools where ethnic minority children are organized in two streams and receive education according to the general and an ethnic minority education program, the possibility should be promoted, especially in Riga and other large cities, to establish separate classes in ethnic minority schools where ethnic minority children would be educated according to the general education programs in the Latvian language. This type of model not only broadens the choice of education for ethnic minorities, but also has a positive impact on the implementation of bilingual education in ethnic minority schools.

Fourth, the analysis of dual-stream schools reveals that their success in terms of bilingual education and integration can be explained by the fact they have been established "from the bottom." The initiative to establish a dual-stream school should come from the teachers and the parents, and the local government would be one of the parties in the decision-making.

Fifth, based on the positive experience of the existing dual-stream schools regarding the implementation of bilingual education and development of an integrated society, it would be advisable to attract EU Structural Funds to support and promote the development of the model of a dual-stream school.

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³ The analysis of dual-stream schools under this research project allows one to assume that conflict between two language groups is more prevalent in those dual-stream schools that are considered a legacy of the Soviet period, and in those regions of Latvia where the Russian language is linguistically self-sufficient.



Minority Schools and the Education Reform of 2004

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Summary

In September, 2004, changes will take place in minority schools in Latvia. There will be an increase in the number of subjects taught in the state language, either as the language of instruction or using both Latvian and Russian in bilingual fashion. Many experts assess the Law on Education as being democratic and constructive. But many local teachers and politicians see the law as constituting discrimination against minority students on the grounds that the state language will overshadow the native language, and as reminiscent of forced assimilation.

The situation is intensified as ideas are transferred into partisan slogans, and educators transformed into puppets, manipulated by the authors of the slogans.

The Latvian public suffers from a lack of unbiased information. In other words, it learns about bilingual changes through the mass media or from political slogans shouted by “voices” of political parties with their own, non-educational agendas. To a large extent minority school reform and bilingual education is easily used by “trouble makers” because the lack of factual knowledge renders biased interpretation possible.

Four minority schools of Rēzekne city have been chosen as the object of this research. In 2001/2002 the study administered a survey of 60 teachers, 350 students and 172 parents. In the spring of 2003 the students of grades 10–12 of these schools were surveyed.

This report will show that the changes with regard to using the state language and bilingualism in educating minority students, when gradually introduced, is not an educational handicap. On the contrary, it is a process

promoting development and improvement. Furthermore, the majority of schools are prepared for it.

Introduction

“Many reproach us for not wanting the Latvian language, but we do want it! But this reform will bring no good...” These words of a tenth grade student from Riga in fact reflect the dual attitude of some members of the public: fear of the reform, fear of the coming change, and the ghost of forced integration, all overshadow the idea of having a nation with a diverse and rich culture heritage.

Problem

The essential questions are very simple: Is the reform perhaps premature? Will the minority schools be able to implement it? What will be the impact of the reform upon the future possibilities of minority school students? Will the minority ethnic identity be traumatized or completely destroyed?

Background¹

Bilingual education change in Latvia started a long time ago, although it was introduced in schools in the late 90ies. Its roots can be found in the processes of change that have taken place with the restoration of independence. The following may be considered the most important achievements:

¹ Markus, D., Grīnfelds, A., Švinks, U. (2001) *Bilingvālās izglītības ieviešanas izpēte*. IZM 2000.–2001.g. valsts pasūtītais pētījums. [Study of the implementation of bilingual education. Ministry of Education and Science, 2000–2001; state commissioned research.]



- the content of national education has been defined;
- educational institutions abide by and implement uniform state education standards, regardless of the language of instruction;
- teaching aids are developed in Latvia and, except for foreign language training aids, necessary teaching aids are published in at least two languages: Latvian and Russian;
- a uniform national testing or examination system has been developed; state exams are currently in development in three languages: Latvian, Russian, and Polish.

The changes affect a large part of society, creating preconditions and significantly influencing the development of democratic society.

During the period of Latvia's independence, schools with Russian as the language of instruction have significantly changed. Since 1996, one subject has been taught in Latvian at the elementary school level, two subjects in primary school, but in secondary school – three subjects are taught in Latvian. In 1999 bilingual education was introduced in primary school and knowledge of the Latvian language among students significantly improved.

Education reform is in the interests of the students and the schools, since improved knowledge of the Latvian language will make students more competitive in the labour market and public life. If the implementation of minority education policy is efficient, it will leave an impact on Latvia's successful integration.

Present situation

At present the minority representatives in Latvia are offered several options for attending school:

- Latvian language education program;
- four sub-programs of bilingual education recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science;
- licensed, original school program.

The introduction of minority education programs (started on September 1, 1999, and assigned to students of grade 1) was originally envisaged as a gradual process.

Three years were planned for the complete transfer of primary schools to the new programs – until September 1, 2002, when throughout primary school (grades 1–9) all students studied in two languages (bilingually)².

This means that even studies at state and municipality schools in grade 10, where it is anticipated that starting with September 2004, 60% of the subjects will be taught with the state language as the language of instruction and 40% – using the native language, is a logical continuation of the process of changes. Since the beginning of the reform those schools were actively and effectively involved in its implementation. Consequently, they have no reason to feel anxious and can continue with the constructive work they started.

What are the obstacles hindering the implementation of innovations at minority schools?

School directors mention the lack of readiness of teachers and the lack of teaching aids³. The situation seems contradictory. Investments from the state budget into the training of minority school teachers, raising public awareness, including education of parents, from the National Programme for Latvian Language Training alone have been 4.5 million Lats; in 2003 the budget allocations for the Ministry of Education and Science was 957,000 Lats. The Riga City Council has also contributed to the solution of the problem, and other local authorities and non-governmental organisations have also provided financial assistance. Five thousand Lats have been allocated for textbook acquisition for minority schools. Also in the future significant financial resources are going to be invested to further implement the reform; furthermore, out of 1009 general education schools only 149 have to implement the gradual transfer to 60% of teaching in Latvian in 2004.

In this case arguments citing insufficient financial support do not seem accurate. Lack of dialogue and lack of information in society are of greater concern. It is no secret that individuals will have to get involved in the change processes. Their involvement will be influenced by their own needs. In order to achieve these aims, the idea of social solidarity is needed. Schools are no longer institutions providing only knowledge, as M. Fulan indicates "... there is a Greek word *metanoia*, essential change of the mind. We need it in order to arrive at a new perspective and concept of changes in education."

² Vēbers, E. (2004). Erķšķainā izglītības politika. Žurnāls *Sociāldemokrāts* Nr.3/4, 26.02.2004., pp. 5–6.

³ IZM (2003). *IZM Valsts inspekcijas veiktās aptaujas dati Rēzeknes pilsētas četrās mazākumtautību izglītības iestādēs 2003. g. martā, aprīlī, IZM dati.* [The data of the survey carried out by the State Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education and Science in four minority schools of Rēzekne city, March, April 2003, data of the Ministry of Education and Science.]

Research

To find out if students of minority schools are ready for the changes, we asked them directly in an environment where the linguistic environment is non-Latvian. Rēzekne has a population of 39,243, out of which 17,138 (44%) have Latvian language as their native language, and 21,872 (56%) have Russian as their native language. The survey included 60 teachers, 350 students and 172 parents in the academic year 2001/2002, and from minority schools in the spring of 2003 students from grades 10–12.⁴

Eighty-six percent of parents, 70% of students and 90% of teachers in the survey listed Russian as the language of informal communication. However, the attitude towards learning the state language is quite positive. Fifty percent of students say they are willing to use it whenever such an opportunity arises. Thirty-seven percent are willing to use it when it is unavoidable. Only 13% do not use Latvian at all in informal situations; for them, all communication in the state language takes place during classroom time. Thirteen is not a very large portion, and it suggests that the range of subjects taught bilingually or using the state language as the language of instruction should be expanded. Using classroom time is the only possibility to help these students create a new environment of social contacts, promote their integration into society, enhance their social experience, change their attitude towards bi- and multi-lingualism.

The survey also reveals the positive attitude of respondents to the possibilities of studying bilingually. Eighty-three percent state that the main reason to know the state language is to use it in conversation.

Interviews with teachers have revealed another significant fact: those students who attend lessons during which bilingual methods are used, feel more at ease. It is easier for them to communicate with their peers from schools with Latvian as the language of instruction, their classmates and teachers. They are more active during lessons, do not feel embarrassed to pose questions, in case they have not understood something; in other words, bilingualism facilitates the development of their social competencies. When encountering linguistic problems, 50% of students most often seek assistance from their teachers, 22% from their classmates. Only four percent of the students ignore the problematic

issues related to the Latvian language or have no wish to solve them. Of course, the process of learning Latvian is made easier by communicating with Latvian speaking peers. It is of special importance to those young people for whom the opportunity to learn Latvian is limited to the school lessons. In Rēzekne 77% of minority school students admit that they have Latvian friends with whom they like to communicate. It means that such informal contacts may turn into a significant incentive and motivation for acquisition of the state language and a change in attitude towards it in a positive way.

Parents are able to participate in the bilingual education of their children to a rather limited extent, since quite often their language skills are more limited than those of students. Only 18% of the parents of Rēzekne minority school students have fully mastered Latvian, understand when it is spoken, are able to communicate freely and without mistakes, 47% understand spoken Latvian, but make mistakes when speaking; 31% do not speak Latvian, but understand, 4% of the parents do not speak and do not understand Latvian. Regardless of those handicaps parents have a positive attitude about having their children learn Latvian. Eighty-two percent support the reform; 18% oppose it.

Those parents, who support the implementation of bilingual education in minority schools give the following reasons:

- bilingual education is one of the most effective ways to learn a second language;
- bilingual training develops communication skills of the students;
- the child or the young person is not afraid to express his or her views and to substantiate them;
- knowledge of the Latvian language is/will be necessary and needed;
- bilingual education is contemporary.

Some parents indicate, however, that the implementation of bilingual education in minority schools is happening too fast. They mention that not all children are able to master subjects in Latvian within a short period of time. Others are of the opinion that more time should be dedicated to the teaching of the Latvian language.

Of course, all processes, including education reform, encounter problems. Do such problems exist and what are they in Rēzekne? Each group of respondents takes its

⁴ Pētījums "Mazākumtautību izglītības iestāžu skolēnu, skolotāju, vecāku attieksme par 2004. gada izglītības reformas ieviešanu". Pētījums veikts 2001./2002. mācību gadā. [Study "The attitude of the students, teachers, and parents of minority institutions of education towards implementation of education reform." The study was carried out in the academic year 2001/2002.]

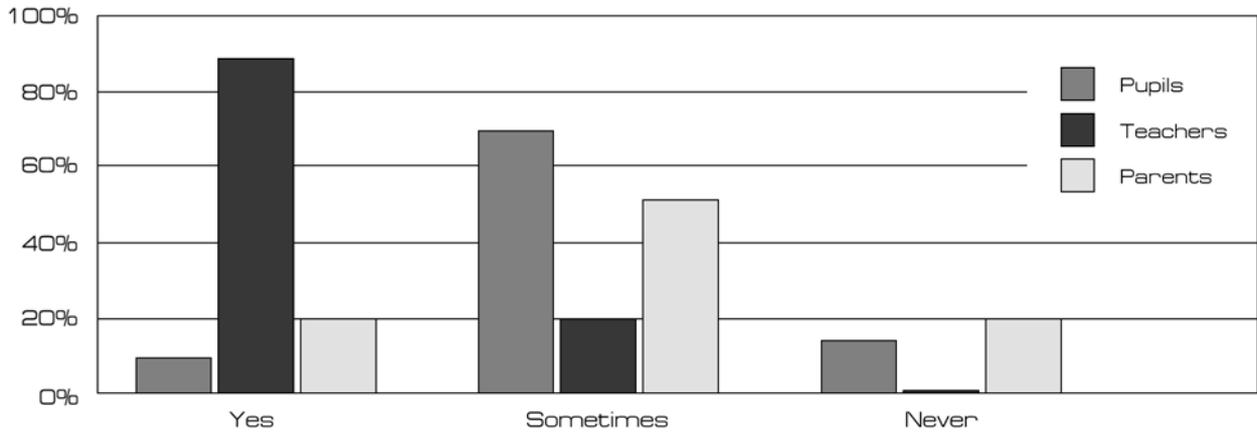


Figure 1. Answers to the question: “Do students encounter problems during bilingual classes?”

own perspective on it, revealing a rather interesting picture (see Figure 1).

Students see the fewest problems in bilingual education and teachers – the most. Parents, most often not being directly involved in this process are in the middle, but closer to teachers.

The similarity of teacher and parent opinions may also be seen in the factors that hinder bilingual education, the main one being the difficulties the students have in expressing thoughts in Latvian. On the other hand, students frequently admit that during the bilingual classes they are unable to follow the teacher.

Teachers have an important role in the reform process. Even though they state that diverse pedagogical methods are used, in reality traditional methods are predominantly used, the ones which are well known by teachers and do not demand additional investment in time and effort. Teachers from Rēzekne admit that the preparatory work and the implementation of every bilingual class demand additional effort since they have to prepare for it specially. Since 30% of the respondents mention this as the main obstacle to organising bilingual classes, special time should be allocated for explanations in the native language, improving the diverse possibilities for communicative cooperation of the students. The majority of the teachers admit that their work is very poorly remunerated; it means that the teachers have no motivation for quality bilingual cooperation with the students in mastering the subject. Quite often no moral satisfaction is achieved – the teachers who are, in a sense, pioneers, use diverse bilingual opportunities in teaching the contents of the subject, those who make mistakes and are reprimanded more frequently are the creative and the active ones, compared to those who for

many years cultivate uniformity, and rely upon outdated stereotypes in their work. It reminds us once again to think about the problems associated with continuing education for teachers in this country and the need to find practical solutions, taking into consideration several crucial factors: the rather low level of initiative by teachers and their wish to continue education, as well as the usefulness of the offered courses and programs, so that participation would not turn into a useless waste of time. Another significant problem, especially in Rēzekne, is poor knowledge of the Latvian language among teachers of minority schools.

For example, in the academic year 2002–2003 at the four Rēzekne secondary schools with Russian as the language of instruction and that implement minority education programs, 123 teachers worked in grades 10–12, of which 77 were teachers of various subjects (excluding languages). Forty-two of the teachers were organising classes in Russian, 26 – in the state language and only 9 – bilingually. Moreover, the fact that the activities were held either in the state language or bilingually gives no indication as to the quality of the language used. After assessing the state language knowledge of these teachers and its practical application during lessons, the school administration has provided to the Ministry of Education and Science the following information: 21 teachers have been identified as having good, 43 – satisfactory, 13 – inadequate knowledge (see Figure 2).

Surveying the teachers themselves revealed the following situation: 60% of the teachers admitted that they had partial knowledge of the state language, 30% – very good knowledge.

Observing the classes in practice, quite often it has to be admitted that the teachers have poorer knowledge of

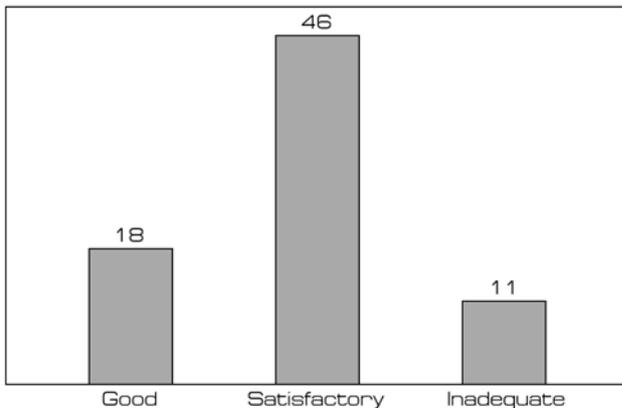


Figure 2. Methodological qualification of Rēzekne teachers.

the state language than their students, and teachers also experience greater psychological barriers in using it. Cooperation continues to be minimal between schools and even teachers who implement bilingual programs; creative and successful work is not facilitated by the large number of students per class. All of these considerations seem to be well founded, but rather formal. More extensive debate should be developed with regard to the attitude towards these processes, in which the teacher continues to have (disregarding the students as an equal subject of the study process) the leading role. Those times when only knowledge and its acquisition were discussed at school are over. New conditions place in the core of the study process such concepts as *competencies*, which include as elements of equal importance knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values. The latter two are of special importance in the contemporary situation: the study process is incomplete if a positive attitude is lacking towards the knowledge and the skills to be mastered. If the students (and first of all – teachers) do not

perceive the state language as a value, it is impossible to achieve its successful use in a monolingual or bilingual study process.

Many parents and teachers are thinking about the significance of the state language in the future life of the young people (see Figure 3).

The most essential incentive for mastering the state language is the possibility of future studies at universities (mentioned by 39% of the parents, and 61% of the teachers). Vocational education is also thought to be an important factor (mentioned by 52% of the parents, and 60% of the teachers). Use of Latvian in informal situations (mentioned by 48% of the parents, and 53% of the teachers) and taking examinations in Latvian and certification of state language knowledge in the future were also thought to be important (mentioned by 50% of the parents, and 60% of the teachers).

With changes in the situation and approach of education reform, the attitude of the respondents towards mastering the state language also undergoes changes. The survey carried out in Rēzekne in 2003 reveals a different situation. The number of reform supporters has significantly decreased over the course of one year. Surveys of students from grades 10–12 of the four Rēzekne minority schools, who are already studying three subjects in the state language, reveal that their readiness for the reform process has decreased (see Figure 4).

An assessment of the survey results leads one to conclude that students have different opinions regarding their readiness to study more subjects in the state language. The majority of secondary school students admit that they are only partially ready for this process (32–42.5% of the respondents), fully prepared for it are 29–39% of the respondents from two schools, but in two other schools the situation is much worse, since only

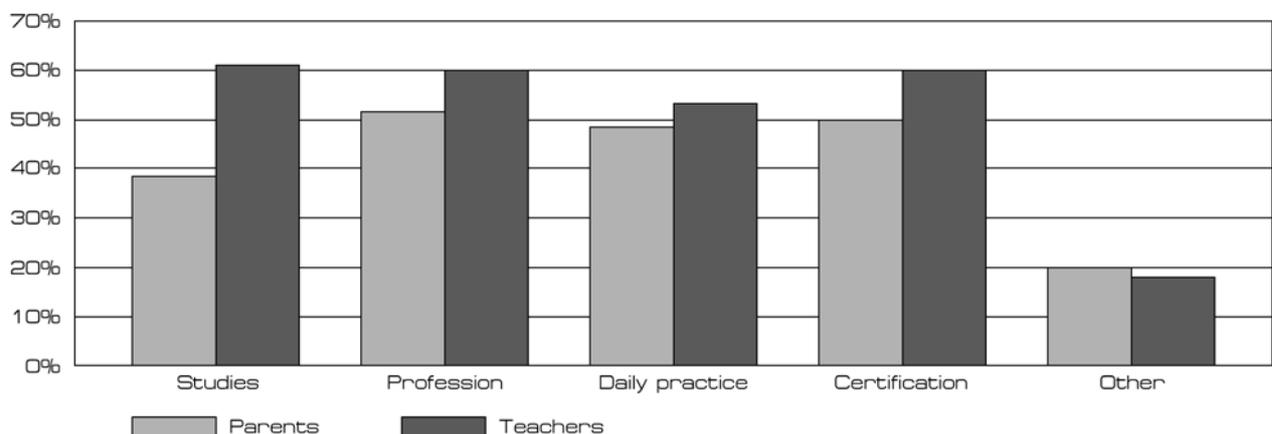


Figure 3. Motivation for mastering the state language (parents' and teachers' opinion).

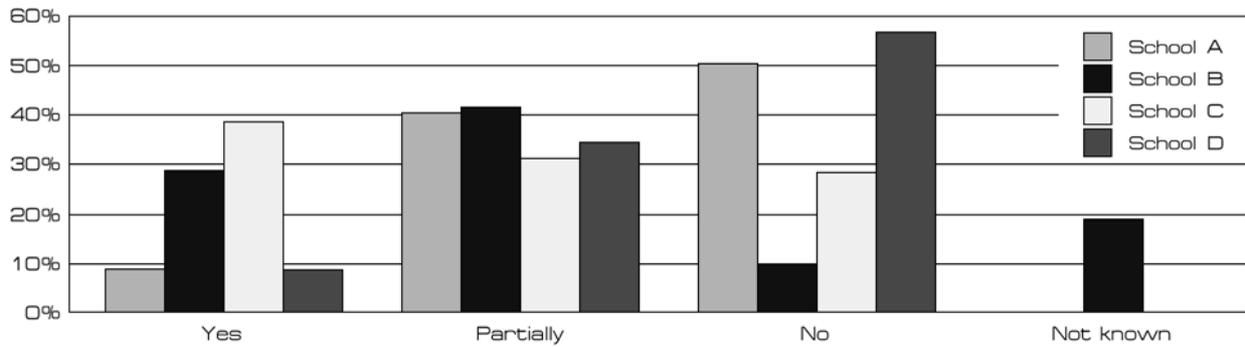


Figure 4. The readiness of students for education reform, spring 2003.

approximately 9% of the respondents state that they are ready to take part in the reform process. It seems contradictory that the students of two schools admit (50.9–56.4% of the respondents) that they are not ready for the reform, regardless of their preparedness and former experience (3 subjects in Latvian).

There are grounds to question this discrepancy. Was it determined by the pre-election atmosphere of the time, changes in the attitude of teachers, parents, which has left an impact upon the views of the secondary school students, or should another explanation for this situation be sought? An overview of the newspapers of this period leads to the conclusion that the largest part of the Russian speaking population interprets the education reform as a threat to their native language, the cause of deterioration of the overall quality of education, forced assimilation, the inability to compete in the

labour market, as well as to living life appropriate for a human being. The local media are not discussing these problems at all or are expressing predominantly negative attitudes, ignoring the positive trends of development and the success of minority school students in mastering the state language. The Rēzekne population is still poorly informed about the essence and the process of the reform. This is also revealed in the survey of the students' parents (see Figure 5).

When answering whether they support the transition to training in the state language in secondary school for minority school students, 24–26% of the parents express openly negative views. The negative attitude of parents is proportional to the readiness of students to take part in the reform process. This suggests a certain bias of some schools in developing the attitude towards the state language. Understanding the close relationship

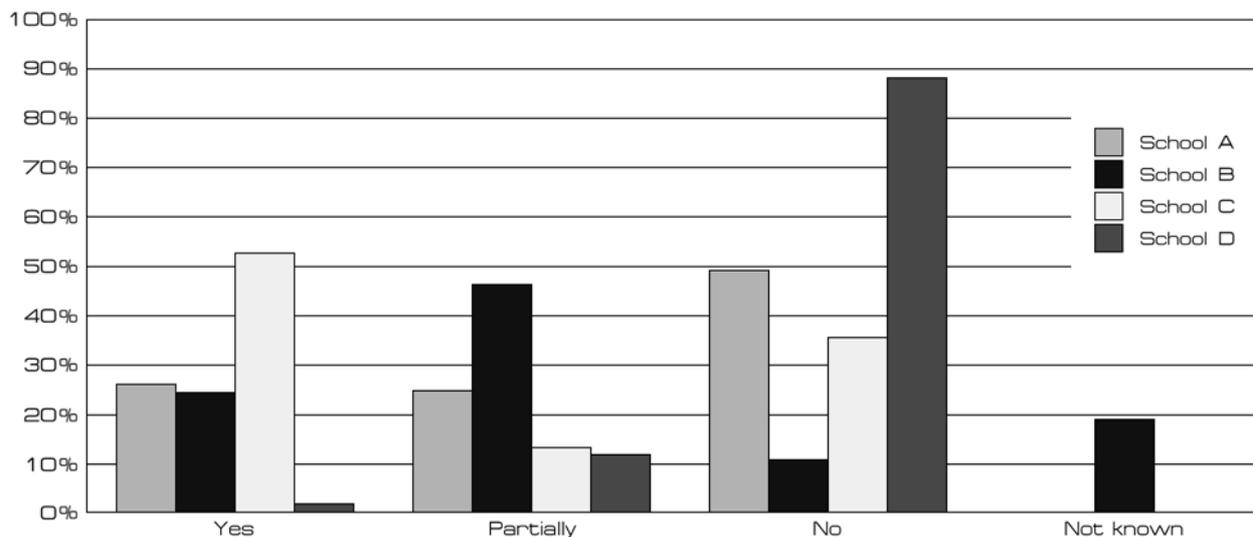


Figure 5. The attitude of students' parents towards the education reform (data of 2003).

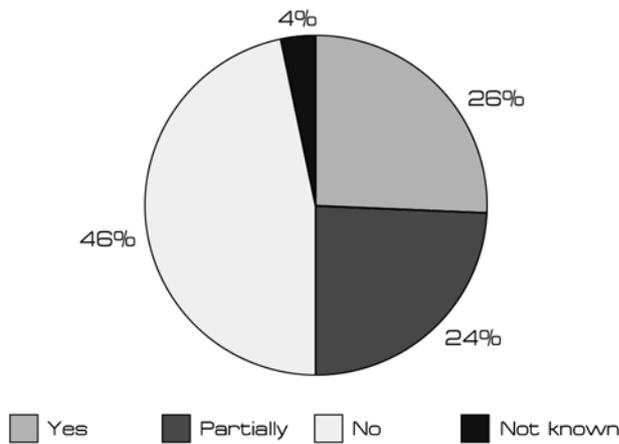


Figure 6. The attitude of students' parents towards education reform (average data, 2003).

between parents and children, it is difficult to forecast good results in mastering the state language if the parents of secondary school students have a negative attitude towards the increased use of the Latvian language in minority schools (see Figure 6).

It is important to identify the causes of these negative parental attitudes. Parents are predominantly concerned about teachers' and students' insufficient knowledge of the state language. This statement leads to two further rather controversial and problematic questions. The first is related to the quality of teachers' work. The parents perceive the quality of teaching as being low and inadequate. This suggests that teachers have to look for a solution as well. But solutions are also the responsibility of the authorities.

The second question concerns the opinion of parents that the knowledge acquired thus far by the students is inadequate, and that the number of subjects taught in the state language should not be increased.

On the other hand, how can the knowledge and skills of the students be increased without the opportunity to supplement theory and practical skills? How can their development be enhanced if their schoolwork is confined to only 3 subjects in the state language? Many parents believe that by focusing on teaching some subjects in the state language or bilingually, the quality of knowledge in these subjects will deteriorate and after graduating from school, young people will be not be able to continue their studies at universities, or successfully compete in the labour market.

It is worth remembering that contemporary young people are talented, purposefully oriented and intelligent. Their capacity for work should not be deliberately or unwillingly decreased. Furthermore, among the stu-

dents enrolled at the universities Latvians and minority representatives are equally represented...

Parents who oppose reform also criticise the lack of appropriate teaching aids and the complexities of the language. But there may be a solution to this problem. An extensive range of methodological bilingual materials has been published. If these are unavailable, the teacher or the person responsible for acquiring them should be to blame. On the other hand, we once again return to the issue of teaching quality – a professional teacher should be able to explain even the most complicated linguistic intricacies in a way comprehensible to students.

Those who view the education reform with scepticism might remember that the bilingual approach is closely related to modern changes in pedagogical standards, in which students are in the centre of the learning process. They learn languages together with the subject content, thus finding an opportunity to use it, not only to know it. It is of special importance in Rēzekne, since it lacks an ethnic Latvian environment and additional opportunities for creating a positive attitude towards mastering the state language.

Furthermore, the facts speak for themselves: for example, comparing the knowledge the students exhibited at the state language exam at grade 9, it can be concluded that the quality of the state language knowledge has not significantly decreased (see Figure 7).

Of course, one can always wish for better results. The number of students achieving average (fair) results con-

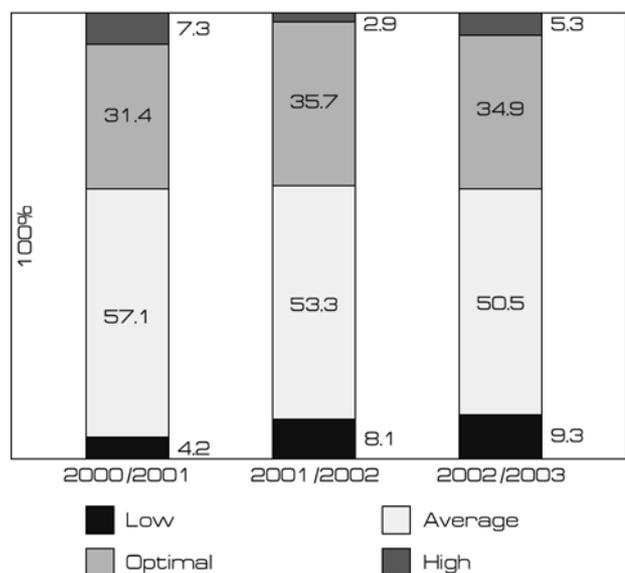


Figure 7. The comparison of the results of Rēzekne minority schools grade 9 state language exam results.

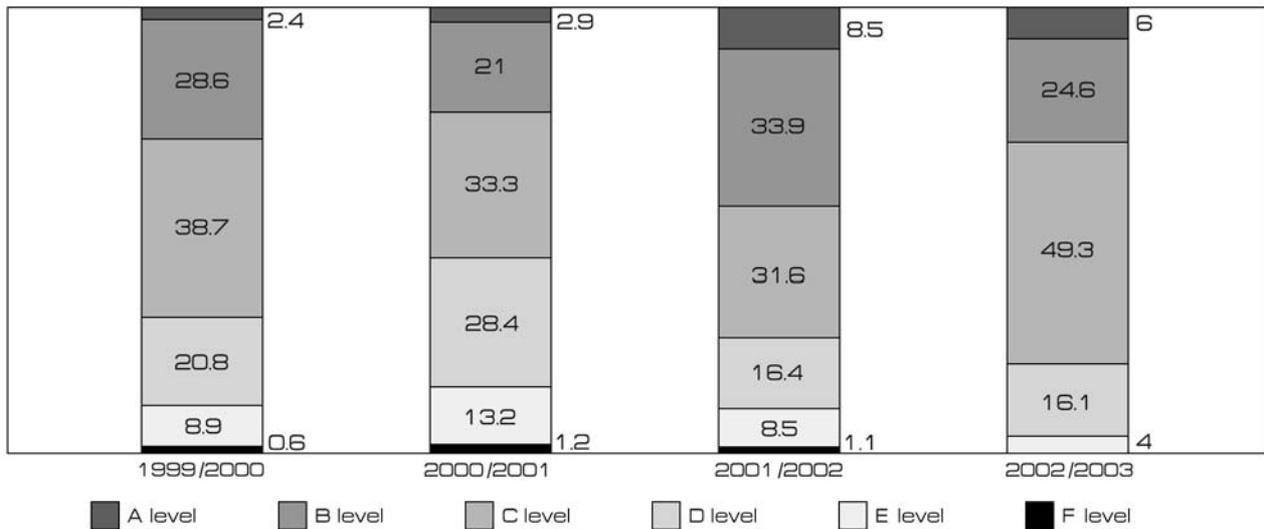


Figure 8. Comparison of the results of grade 12 standardized national test – the state language exam – in Rēzekne minority schools.

tinues to be high; however, it has a tendency to decrease from 57.1% in 2000/2001 to 50.5% in 2002/2003. Regrettably, in the period of 3 years, the number of students has increased whose state language knowledge has been evaluated as low (from 4.2% to 9.3%); compared to 2001/2002, in the last academic year there was a slight increase in the number of ninth graders whose exam results have been evaluated as high.

The situation with regard to the state language exam for grade 12 is quite stable.

It is clear that D level is quite stable, but there is a tendency for the C level (average) to increase in conjunction with a decrease of F level or the lowest level of mastery of the state language (in 2002/2003 it reached 0%). However, within a year the number of secondary school students with B and A levels in language skills has decreased, which means that the number of minority school students with good or excellent knowledge of the state language has decreased. It seems that this problem should be left to the competence of the teachers and students of secondary schools, since improvements to the situation can be achieved only with their cooperation.

The arguments put forward by opponents of the reform – that as the result of educational intensified teaching of the state language, the quality of native language knowledge deteriorated at minority educational institutions in Rēzekne – are contestable (see Figure 9).

Research shows an increase (almost double) within a year in the number of students whose knowledge of native (Russian) language has been assessed as low, no substantial changes are seen in the rates of average and

optimal level, but the number of students has tripled whose knowledge of native language and literature is assessed as high. The radical changes within the highest and the lowest evaluation groups may be explained by the general development trends in society, students' knowledge, self-assessment of their skills, as well as changes within the paradigm of attitudes and values. Students gain experience and thus their attitude towards studies change, considerations of future perspectives come into the foreground, and the motivation of the young people to study undergoes radical changes. Part of the students, being aware of the significance of

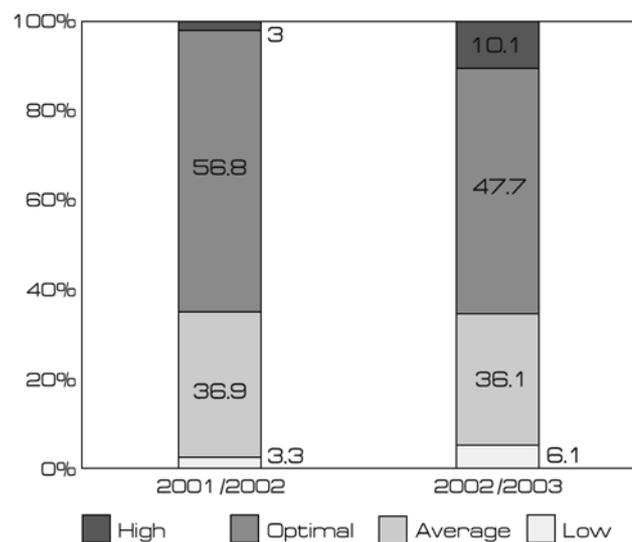


Figure 9. Comparison of the results of native language exam.

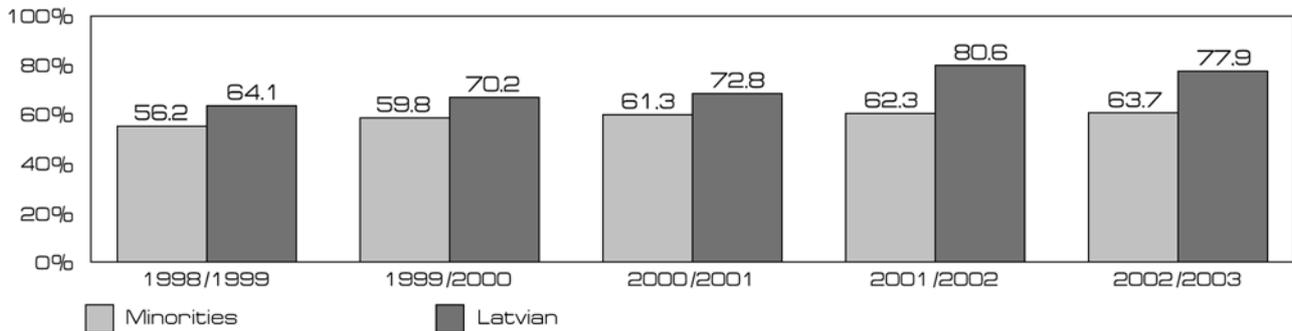


Figure 10. The continuation of studies at secondary schools by Rēzekne graduates from grade 9.

knowledge and skills for their future education and career development, try to achieve the best possible results. Others, failing to receive sufficient support from their teachers and parents, start lagging behind in their studies, receive low evaluations, become either indifferent to this situation or express an openly negative attitude to everything that is related to school. Furthermore, the opportunities for further education and their implementation for students of grade 9 are in no way determined by their affiliation to a school with one or another language of instruction. (These views are generally recognised; therefore it would not be appropriate to attribute the worsening of results in one study subject to excessive studies of the state language). Comparing the perspectives of future education of the graduates from Rēzekne city schools and their realisation, it can be concluded that the desire is increasing among the graduates of grade 9 (regardless of the language of instruction) to continue studies at the secondary school (see Figure 10).

The graduates of both Latvian and minority primary schools understand the role of secondary education in the process of acquiring higher education. Threats of the increase of the impact of the state language in secondary schools do not deter minority students from choos-

ing secondary education as the tool for implementing their long-term aims (within 5 years the number of minority students, graduates of grade 9, who have expressed this wish, has increased from 56.2% to 63.7%). In addition, within the last five years the number of students who continue studies at institutions of vocational education has rapidly increased (see Figure 11).

Comparing the situation reflected in Figures 10 and 11, more graduates from Latvian schools continue studies at secondary school, but more minority students are enrolled at institutions of vocational training. Is it possible that a large number of graduates may be the object of discrimination? Is it possible that those unable to study subjects in the state language or bilingually, are deliberately oriented towards education of lower quality and level? There are numerous counterarguments. Percentage-wise the difference between Latvian and minority school grade 9 graduates who are enrolled at secondary schools and the institutions of vocational education, is minimal (10–15%), moreover, there is a tendency that increasingly more minority representatives are studying at Latvian language schools, thus they have also been formally included in the “Latvian” group. Furthermore, the choice of higher academic education or vocational

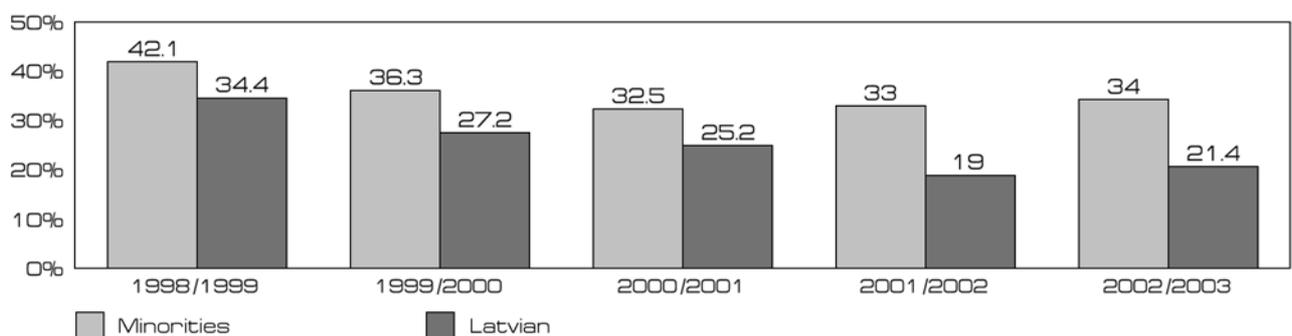


Figure 11. Continuation of studies at institutions of vocational training by Rēzekne grade 9 graduates.

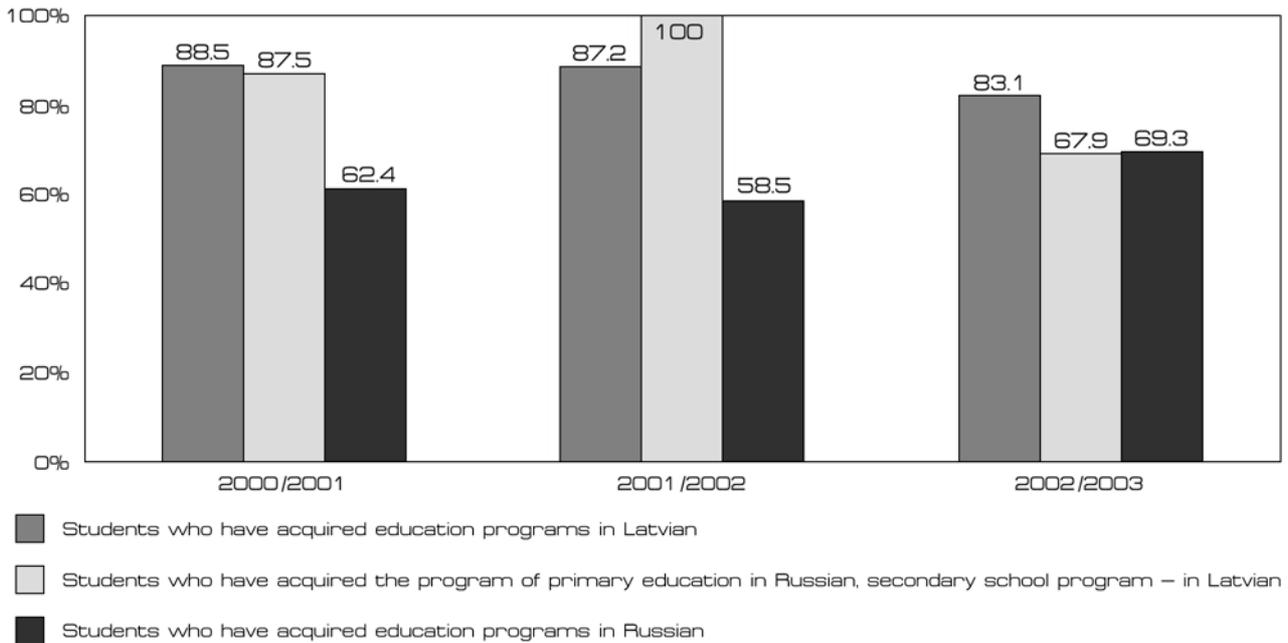


Figure 12. Studies at the institutions of higher education by graduates from Rēzekne schools with different languages of instruction.

education needed for self-realisation is an individual one. It would be not only shortsighted, but also foolish to point to knowledge or lack of knowledge of the state language in relation to this process.

In fact, the situation is even more contradictory. Students who received a bilingual high school education or continued studies after grade 9 at schools with Latvian as the language of instruction (67.9–100%) also continue studies at institutions of higher education with greater success (see Figure 12).

Opponents of reform are mistaken in declaring that bilingual education leaves a negative impact on the quality of knowledge. This process has successfully started in Latvia as a whole, as well as in Rēzekne and throughout the Latgale Region. Everyone should understand that neither political campaigns nor demonstrations will be able to stop the development of a modern education system.

Recommendations

The essence of the reform should be repeatedly explained in a professional manner revealing the advantages and benefits to minority students brought by its implementation.

Mass media should be used to inform society about achievements in the implementation of the reform and

about positive examples of specific schools and minority students.

Local authorities and non-governmental organisations should be utilized more in the implementation of the reform and to inform society, especially in regions where Russian is prevalent.

The advisory work started at schools should be continued. Seminars and courses should be organized for parents of minority students so that they will understand reform related issues and can objectively assess the new bilingual education policy.

Continuing education for teachers should be promoted, and the possibility to learn innovative approaches to organising subject lessons in the state language and usage of corresponding methods in grades 10–12 should be offered.

The process and procedure for evaluating the results of teacher continuing education should be improved.

Incentives for teachers should be improved, which would render financial and moral support to those achieving good results working with minority students.

The positive experience of these teachers should be publicized.

Subject content should remain a priority within the process of bilingual education, recognizing the individual approach to students and respecting their previous skills of the state language.

The possibility for teachers' cooperation should be improved by organising meetings and opportunities for sharing experience with teachers of the Latvian language and teachers from other schools.

The teachers' freedom of choice must be preserved in selecting subjects to be taught bilingually.

Teaching aids and methodological materials should be improved.

Resources should be found to hire teaching assistants in grades 10, starting with 2004. These aids would offer individual help to students who encounter difficulties in mastering the subject content.

Above all, minority schools should be allowed to work in a constructive way, without political pressure on teachers, students and parents, and without turning the quality of education into a weapon in the hands of political parties.

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II. Pre-School and Primary School Education Efficiency

Salary System and Motivation of Comprehensive School Teachers in Riga

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1. Should we expect more formal demands and strikes?

In 2004 Latvia experienced formal demands from schoolchildren, parents and teachers expressing dissatisfaction with the changes in law that would affect the education of the Russian-speaking minority. Public protest has not yet occurred over teacher salaries. While there may be room to debate the best way to deal with the language of instruction, the fact that schoolteachers are underpaid is more generally acknowledged. Just by selecting two out of many references for this discussion, we can conclude that the level of teachers' salaries in public schools in Latvia is inappropriate:

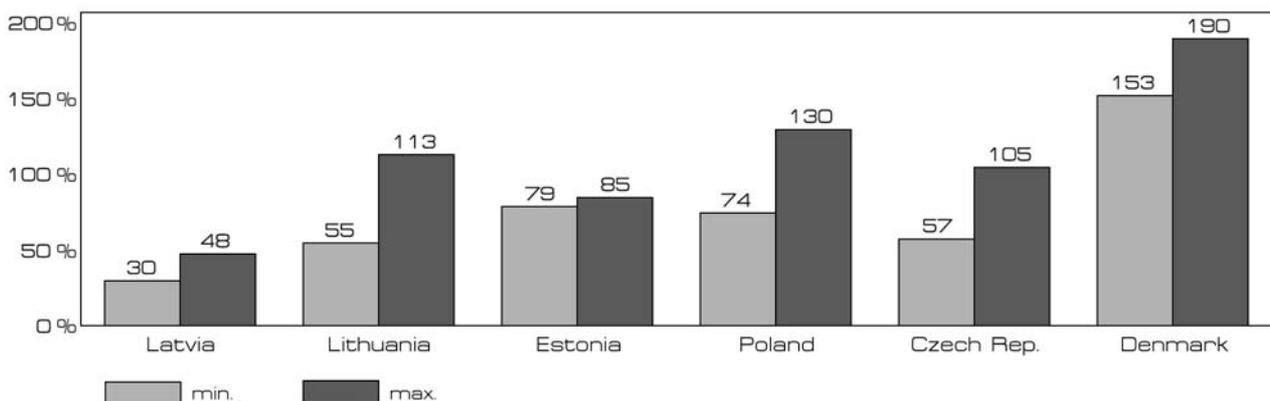
- Uldis Pāvuls has compared the remuneration and job appreciation of schoolteachers with that of bank clerks in 8 Latvian cities. On average, teachers receive 161 LVL and bank operators on average receive 302 LVL before taxes. However, according to a point system

based on the judgment of job-appreciation specialists of professional personnel companies, teachers should receive on average 667 LVL per month and bank operators should be paid on average 346 LVL before taxes per month (Pāvuls, 2003, 78);

- In Eurydice's annual report about the teaching profession in Europe, some idea of teachers' salary status is given (2003, 65). The minimum and the maximum basic gross salaries of teachers as a percentage of per capita gross domestic product (GDP) are shown in figure 1 below.

Germany reported the highest starting public primary (grades 1–9) schoolteacher salaries (2,475 USD or 1,336 LVL/per month) and Italy was said to be the country with the lowest initial teacher salary 1,599 USD or 864 LVL).

There are numerous other references worth examining when discussing this issue (please refer to L. Krūmale's Bachelor Thesis in SSE Riga library), but two issues need to be distinguished in particular.



Source: Eurydice, 2003, 65.

Figure 1. The Minimum and the maximum basic gross salaries as a percentage of per capita gross domestic product (GDP) for the academic year 2000/2001.

¹ Paper is based on Bachelor Thesis at Stockholm School of Economics in Riga in 2004. Supervisor Indra Dedze.

The gross salary level is inadequate

Since September 1, 2003, the lowest wage for a teacher with the lowest professional qualification must equal two minimum state salaries, which currently is 160 LVL (2 times 80 LVL). This may lead to one or a number of the following consequences: the best teachers might leave the country, look for another occupation, or organize protest strikes.

The system of compensation is inappropriate

The Expert Report of the Analysis of Country Education Policy in year 2000 mentions that in the case of Latvia, teacher salaries increase according to workload; there is no increase in the salary level itself (Seile, 2001, 57). Pedagogues are almost unable to influence the amount of their remuneration unless they increase their workload (Pāvuls, 2003, 78). Teachers in Latvia sometimes work up to two workloads. The increased workload makes teachers feel exhausted, unable to do their work as well as they can, and unmotivated. This is the closed circle, where comprehensive schoolteachers are becoming exhausted and unmotivated.

In the law it is stated that teacher salaries depend on seniority, professional qualification, and workload. Teachers who have spent more years in school receive higher salaries; young teachers receive low salaries. As a result, there is a tendency for new graduates from teacher training colleges to refuse to enter the teaching profession (Seile, 2001, 53). However, salary increases are also quite small with increases in seniority and job responsibility. The difference between the lowest and the highest teacher salary is only 25 LVL.

To enable policy makers to consider policy decisions related to teachers' salary system and motivation in Latvia, we present the results of the research:

- theoretical survey of pay schemes,
- survey of 6 secondary schools in Riga.

2. Theoretical analysis of pay schemes

Three dominant payment systems can be outlined – merit pay, career ladders, and clerk salary, i.e., a forty-hour working week.

Merit pay is a salary system that evaluates teacher performance and uses these evaluations in determining

salary (Sadker and Sadker, 1991, 618). These are the systems of measuring a teacher's contribution to learning. Merit pay system supporters state that this would create a more challenging work environment and stimulate teachers to work more efficiently, thus increasing the demand for the teaching profession and attracting more qualified staff. However, merit pay opponents argue that there is a lack of objective observers and objective criteria to evaluate a teacher's performance and that this kind of system could be used to discriminate some teachers (subjectivity).

All new pay systems require public education about the change process and the intended goals. According to Delisio, the authorities will increase the likelihood that a new pay system will achieve acceptance (2003, 4) if they:

- talk about commitment;
- take small enough steps to ensure the plan can move forward;
- develop a long-term goal;
- ensure there is ongoing funding for the plan;
- establish clear standards and objectives for teachers;
- make sure teachers are familiar with the standards and objectives.

In addition, merit pay advocates assure the public that such a salary system would increase the teacher's responsibility and that all new systems and changes have been the best performance plans when thoroughly interpreted and educated (Delisio, 2003, 5).

All the payment systems described later can be introduced in Latvia. However, each of these systems has different obstacles accompanying the introduction of the system. Sadker and Sadker have outlined the necessary guidelines for a merit pay system to be successfully introduced and managed (1991, 56):

- objectives based on clear and agreed-upon standards;
- thorough training for those who do any evaluating;
- appeal procedures for teachers who disagree with their evaluations;
- adequate incentives to teachers who meet merit standards;
- decent annual salaries for all teachers.

Merit pay based on student performance

This pay system is based on evaluating student performance on standardized tests, and teachers gain salary premiums if students have improved their overall per-



formance. This would be the best measure in the sense that teachers are working at school to help students succeed. However, there are many other interpersonal skills, like creativity, confidence, and self-esteem that teachers can teach pupils and that cannot be determined in standardized tests. In addition, this might lead to teachers competing for the brightest students, and students might punish some teachers by manipulating their test scores if they knew how teacher salaries are composed. This would also push teachers to prepare students for the test, rather than teach the knowledge necessary for the students' future life.

Merit pay based on teacher performance

For this system, outside observers would evaluate teacher performance in class. Some evaluation criteria could be (Sadker and Sadker, 1991, 54):

- personal qualifications;
- class management;
- teacher-pupil relationships;
- techniques of teaching;
- professional attitude.

The problem of creating objective criteria that would measure good teaching remains. In addition, less noticeable but quite proficient teachers might be at a disadvantage. Moreover, it is not possible to conclude that teacher performance will necessarily improve student performance.

Merit pay based on school-based performance

For this system, all professional staff in a school earns a bonus if students meet particular goals. This would be a satisfactory method to reduce competition among the teachers. However, the productive teachers would become unmotivated, as all the teachers receive benefits if at least one teacher succeeds.

Merit pay based on the nature of the teaching assignment

This pay system attaches higher salaries to subjects or teaching assignments considered more difficult, more important, or more in demand. The problem lies in

deciding the measures for determining which teacher should earn more. Difficulty could be measured by the qualification degrees required for the teacher to teach the subject. However, it is difficult to determine which subject is more difficult for students. For some it might be mathematics, for some it might be history. The same problem is with the assessment of subject importance. Concerning the demand for a certain post, several questions arise, like whether teachers at suburban schools should earn more or less.

Merit pay based on teacher knowledge and skill improvement

This system lets teachers earn permanent salary increases for acquiring new knowledge, skills and applying those new skills and knowledge in their work process. Merit pay based on improved knowledge and skills can be compared to the existing payment system in Latvia. This kind of system creates more objective evaluation than the previously described payment systems. It is easier to measure new knowledge and skills by evaluating received degrees or certificates. However, the degree or certificate is not evidence of real improvements in the teacher's knowledge and skills. Besides, this system does not account for the real knowledge and skills delivered to students.

Merit pay based on individualized productivity plans

This system allows a teacher to set forth his or her own goals and submit an individualized performance plan to an approved committee for verification. There is a danger that the individualized productivity plans might be built around frivolous and distinctive goals. The problem is that no uniform system of measurement can be attached to all the individualized plans; thus, a high risk of subjectivism exists.

Career ladders

Career ladder is a system designed to create different ranks for teachers by developing steps one can climb to receive pay increases through increased responsibility, experience, and status (Sadker and Sadker, 1991, 614). Research has suggested that teachers are more in favor of career ladder than merit pay (Sadker and Sadker, 1991, 56).

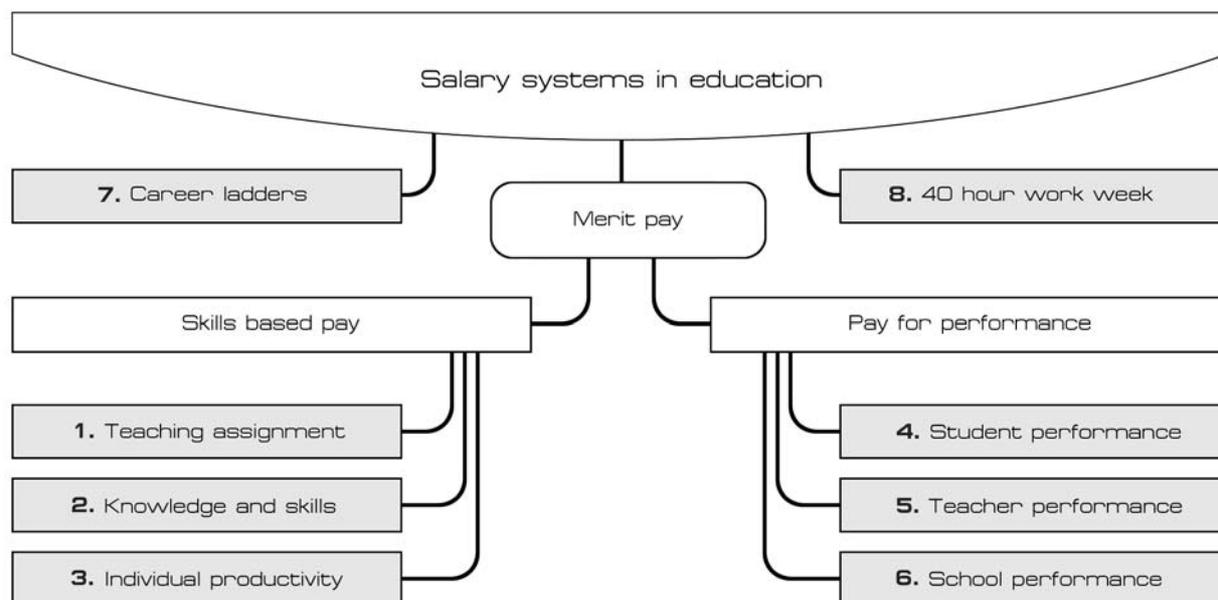


Figure 2. The eight payment systems.

The career ladder can be described by several steps, such as a career candidate and provisional teacher. The key issue of this kind of career development plan is a careful selection of the teacher's mentor to work with new teachers. Special classes are held to provide assistance and evaluation for new teachers by mentors.

Sadker and Sadker propose the following career plan for teachers in the career ladder system (1991, 56):

- intern teachers (new teachers that work under the guidance of mentors);
- resident teachers (completed intern year, permanent certification not yet earned);
- lead teachers (selected by a panel of teachers and administrators, at least 10 years of experience, make study plans for all the teachers).

The planned reform in September 2004 is based on the career ladder payment system. There are also problems of objectivity and measurability with the career ladder plan. However, if such a plan is introduced in the educational system, the whole society will have to change its views about teachers as modestly paid workers because the lead teachers or mentors will earn high salaries and will not have to leave the profession.

"Clerk's salary" - 40 hour work week

Several Western European countries, like France and Spain, have 40-hour workweek salary accounting for teachers (Eurydice, 2003, 2). This payment system becomes more popular as it creates a more satisfying salary level and working conditions for comprehensive schoolteachers. The Lithuanian government is also considering adopting the 40-hour workweek system for comprehensive schoolteachers. The clerk salary encompasses all teacher tasks that are currently accounted for when setting teacher salaries. However, pay for additional activities, such as meetings with parents, individual work with children, and teacher meetings, are also included in the salary. Figure 2 summarizes all the payment systems described above.

3. Survey of schools

To find out the opinions of teachers, a questionnaire survey was conducted. State daytime Latvian language comprehensive schools in Riga were chosen. The study included teachers with responsibilities from grade 5 to grade 9² based on the lower secondary education, that is, from grade 5 up to grade 9.

² The following six Riga schools were chosen, as these schools have less problems with attracting students and teachers: Riga State Gymnasium No. 1 (grades 7–9), Riga English Grammar School, Natālijas Draudziņas Gymnasium, Āgenskalns State Gymnasium, Riga Secondary School No. 3, Ziemeļvalstu Gymnasium. A sample of 150 comprehensive school secondary level teachers was considered in the 6 chosen Riga comprehensive schools. The response rate was 84%.



On average teachers teach approximately two subjects. More than half of the respondents, i.e., 57%, teach two subjects, and 7% of the respondents even teach three subjects. About 36% of respondents teach only one subject.

Seniority is between 5 and 10 years. Approximately 64% worked more than 10 years, and approximately 1.5% have been working for less than one year.

Almost 85% of respondents have not changed their work place recently. And the most frequently mentioned reason for changing jobs among the remaining respondents was the change of environment and school prestige. The possibility to earn more was also mentioned as one of the reasons, but only 8 respondents mentioned it.

The average workload for all six schools was found to be 31 hours, which is approximately 1.48 workloads. And approximately 13% of respondents worked two workloads, i.e., 42 and more hours of teaching. Only about 20% of respondents work up to one workload. In 98% of cases the reason for teaching more than one workload was mentioned as a possibility to earn more. Only in two response cases, teaching was said to be a hobby and the possibility to earn more was not mentioned at all.

27 teachers (about 18%) teach private lessons, mostly to earn more, but the ability to practice and help students was also mentioned as reasons.

All teachers answered that there is at least one activity done by them that is not included in the calculation of their wages. The most important activity is preparing and grading tests, which was mentioned by 80% of respondents. Preparations for lessons and writing evaluations and study plans were also mentioned as two important activities not taken into account, each mentioned by almost 70% of respondents.

When asked how salary increases would change the respondents' style of work, the main effect would be that it would be possible to prepare for lessons more and better. Teachers mentioned that a salary increase would help them increase the quality of teaching and widen their opportunities to attend courses and learn new teaching methods. However, more than half of the respondents, i.e., 54% marked that a salary increase would allow teachers to take less workload and to spend more time with their families. During the focus group interview there was a remark that the assumption that teachers can leave work at 3 p.m. and can spend the rest of the time at home with their relatives is not actually true for subject teachers, where extensive paper work is required. The particular subject teacher can leave

school relatively early compared to other professions; however, teachers always have to think about the next day, prepare for lessons and mark the written work of their pupils. It was also said that the main part of the weekend is also spent on preparations for the next working week. Thus, the real workload for teachers currently can be considered to be 12 hours per workday and 12 hours per weekend, i.e., a 72-hour workweek.

Table 1. The % of teachers supporting the idea of change in the working conditions and administration of the school

Kind of change	% of teachers supporting the idea
Introduce higher parent responsibility	86%
Individual working place	49%
Unite study plans and study materials for teachers	48%
Decreased paper work for study plans and student evaluation	43%
Individual computer for each teacher	28%
Individual classroom for each teacher	21%
Change the administration's careless attitude towards teachers	19%
Improved work of special teachers	14%
Separate dining room for teachers	6%

Almost 90% of respondents stressed that parental responsibility should be introduced and that they should take an interest in their child's performance (Table 1). As participants of the focus group have mentioned, sometimes it is extremely time and money consuming to contact pupils' parents and to keep them continuously informed. However, the situation should be the other way round; it should be the parent's responsibility to make sure that their children are able to graduate from school. The necessity for a common study program and reduced paper work for evaluation and study plans was mentioned by 43% of respondents. And concerning the working conditions, 49% of the respondents expressed their dissatisfaction about the lack of individual work places for each teacher, a place to leave their study materials and deal with paper work.

The average monthly salary before taxes in all six Riga schools was 209 LVL. The desired average pay for one workload was 371 LVL. This is considerably more than the minimum of 145 LVL in force from September 1,

Table 2. Comparison of the current situation among the schools

	Riga State Gymnasium No. 1	Riga English Grammar School	Natālijas Draudziņas Gymnasium	Āgenskalna State Gymnasium	Riga Secondary School No. 3	Ziemeļvalstu Gymnasium	Average results
Average workload (hours)	27	29	34	33	31	31	31
Average workload	1.29	1.38	1.62	1.57	1.48	1.48	1.48
Average current salary (LVL) ³	221	213	204	203	206	208	209
Average desired salary per workload (LVL) ⁴	416	394	358	328	354	373	371
Would not change workplace for any reason (%)	12	13	16	15	16	15	15
Would not go to work abroad for any reason (%)	22	26	34	35	34	23	29

2003 as stated in the Education Development Conception for period 2002–2005 (retrieved on 15 November 2003).

15% of respondents would not change their workplace for any reason. More than half, 67% of those willing to change their workplace would do it for a higher salary. However, about 40% would be willing to change their workplace for better working conditions and career possibilities.

Interestingly, almost 30% of respondents would not go to work abroad for any reason. However, the most important reasons for working abroad were the worthwhile experience and the high remuneration.

The comparison of the responses among the six Riga schools are shown in Table 2.

There is a slight difference among the schools

involved in the research in all the parameters. The lowest workload and the highest salaries are recorded in Riga State Gymnasium No. 1, probably because of the fact that the lower secondary level starts only with grade 7 and only gifted students are accepted there. In addition, the expected salary level for one workload is on average higher in Riga State Gymnasium No. 1.

As concerns changing the workplace, most of the teachers willing to leave their jobs, if given such an opportunity, are presently at schools where foreign languages are among the main subjects, like Riga State Gymnasium No. 1, Riga English Grammar School, or Natālijas Draudziņas Gymnasium.

The ranking of the eight payment systems in each of the schools separately is shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison of ranking of payment systems among the schools

	Riga State Gymnasium No. 1	Riga English Grammar School	Natālijas Draudziņas Gymnasium	Āgenskalna State Gymnasium	Riga Secondary School No. 3	Ziemeļvalstu Gymnasium	Average results
Knowledge and skills	4	1	4	1	2	1	2
Teaching assignment	3	4	3	7	5	5	5
Student performance	5	8	6	5	7	6	6
Teacher performance	6	3	2	2	3	4	3
Individual productivity	8	7	5	8	6	8	8
School performance	2	6	7	4	4	3	4
Career ladders	7	5	8	6	8	7	7
40 hour work week	1	2	1	3	1	2	1

³ Before taxes.

⁴ Before taxes.



The general trend of the eight-payment system ranking is similar in all the schools; however, there are only slight differences in ranking. On the whole, the clerk salary, i.e., the 40-hour workweek, and the new acquired knowledge and skills payment systems are the most preferred. Teachers mostly support the 40-hour workweek, as this could be the fairest way of compensating teachers for their contribution. However, the career ladders and the merit pay on individual productivity plans were the most unfavorable. As it was mentioned during the focus group interview, the merit pay based on teacher performance, student performance, and individualized achievement plans is considered to be too subjective and immeasurable. The school performance merit pay is believed to be unmotivating, as less productive teachers would capitalize on the effective ones.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

To ensure sustainability of high quality primary and secondary education in Latvia, there is a need to increase the overall level of teachers' remuneration and to improve the motivation system.

This report has summarized the main theories related to work remuneration in education and reflects the attitude of teachers of selected schools towards each of the proposed systems.

Although the study is not fully representative, it provides a valuable tool in helping policy makers to introduce the planned reforms. A number of main conclusions are summarized below:

Teachers in general agree that something must change in the teacher salary system, particularly in Riga and Latvia. There has been evidence that they would agree to remain with the existing pay system, only if the salary per workload is significantly increased.

Introducing higher salary levels without any change in the education system itself would be too costly today. Thus, it can be said that the government, by considering payment system changes, is looking in the correct direction, but many details of the reform should be thoroughly reconsidered.

As concerns the teacher evaluation commission, this probably should not be a state organization. It can also consist of foreign experts in the teaching profession. However, some might argue that foreigners might not be able to understand the local situation and problems.

Another problem discovered during the research that supports the findings of the previously written academic

paper is that many teachers do not really know how their salary is calculated. Thus, many of them have the opinion that they can increase their salary only by taking up more teaching responsibilities. The suggestion here could be to introduce clearly stated responsibilities and rights of the teachers as well as a clear description of the activities and qualifications that are paid for. An additional required action could be to attach teacher salaries to the minimal salary in the country. For example, a teacher's salary for the first level could be equal to 4 minimum state salaries. Thus, teacher salaries could increase automatically with the increase of the minimum salary in the country.

School administration work should also be improved. In the report of Eurydice it is shown that in Latvia there are no regulations that require support from administration for teachers in case of personal or teaching problems or in case of a conflict (2003, 129). And as it was already mentioned, almost 90% of the respondents expressed the opinion that higher parental responsibility for their own children should be introduced. In addition, to increase the teacher's motivation to stay working at schools, their working conditions should be notably improved. One suggestion could be to introduce individual working places for each teacher separately. The example of Sweden could be mentioned, where there is a separate desk in a large room for each teacher isolated with thin walls for teacher privacy. Teachers can leave their teaching materials and private belongings there, they can mark students' written works and prepare for lessons without disturbance. In addition, a separate room for meetings with parents could be introduced in every school. During the focus group interview teachers noted that most of the time they have to meet with parents in a noisy hallway and it is not an appropriate place to talk about sensitive issues. This also touches the issue that increased parental responsibility about their children should be introduced.

As concerns the motivation of students of teacher study courses to pursue their careers in schools, study fee exemptions for teachers and their children could be introduced. In addition, a certain amount of days annually should be allowed for further studies and upgrading teacher qualification. Participants of the focus group interview revealed the fact that teachers are very often forced to spend their weekends on learning new teaching methods.

Although teachers have summer holidays, several other fringe benefits could be considered, like health insurance (not present in all the schools) or free seminars and lectures for qualification improvement.

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Primary Education Opportunities for Children outside the Educational System

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Summary

Rapid social and economic change has generated a new problem in Latvia – not all children acquire primary education. If the problem is ignored, it may aggravate social exclusion of young persons, give rise to unemployment and threaten social cohesion.

This study identifies the reasons for and the requirement process that leads a student to leave schools. It refers to the experience of other countries and makes the following recommendations:

- a uniform registration system should be developed. This should be used as a source of reliable information to assess the actual size of the problem, i.e., to identify the number of children of compulsory school age who do not attend primary schools;
- an assessment should be designed and implemented of the ability of schools to provide compulsory primary education to children at risk;
- to provide primary education to children at risk, local governments should involve social partners and develop a common programme. In the framework of this programme alternative educational solutions and a supportive environment for all parties involved should be developed, and schools should receive assistance in providing social teachers.

The problem

Each year in Latvia there are pupils of compulsory schooling age who have been left outside the education system. They include those who do not start attending school; others who are discharged from schools; others who graduate from primary schools with grades that prevent them from continuing in school. This aggravates social exclusion of children, gives rise to youth unemployment and other related social problems.

It appears that local governments have neither analyzed this situation, nor provided alternative ways to obtain primary education. It is necessary to identify all available resources and come up with solutions enabling provision of primary education to all children.

Introduction

Education is a common priority in modern society. This is stated in the Universal Declaration On Education for All (1990), which, in its turn, is based on the Universal Declaration On Human Rights (1948). In 2000 the World Education Forum adopted the Dakar Action Plan, which forms the basis for UNESCO activities in the field of education for the next fifteen years. The main purpose of this document is to ensure provision of primary education by 2015 to all children, regardless of their sex, race, health condition, and social status.

In Latvia the Education Law (1998, Section 4) provides for compulsory primary education. In addition, the Law On Protection of the Rights of Children (1998, Section 11) stipulates that the state shall ensure equal rights and opportunities to all children to receive education corresponding to their abilities. Nevertheless, the number of young persons who drop out of school without finishing primary education is increasing year by year.

In order to describe the overall situation regarding acquisition of education, certain international indicators are applied. One such indicator is the number of students of primary school age (7–15) who attend primary schools (grades 1–9) against the total number of children and young persons in this age group. In other words, it shows the percentage of students against the total number of young persons who should be attending schools.

Compared to other European countries (see Table 2 in the Appendices), Latvia is lagging behind countries like

Table 1. Number of students in primary schools against the total number of young persons of primary school age in Latvia (%)

	2001/2002	2002/2003
Number of persons between 7 and 10 years of age who are acquiring the 1st stage of primary education (grades 1–4) against the total number of persons in this cohort (%)	84.8	85.5
Number of persons between 7 and 10 years of age who are acquiring the 2nd stage of primary education (grades 5–9) against the total number of persons in this cohort (%)	88.7	88.6

Source: CSB, 2002, p.18; CSB, 2003, p. 18.

Belgium, Finland, Estonia, France, Italy, Norway, Spain, Sweden, but is ahead of countries like Austria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary.

Another indicator of the problems in educational system is the high number of students discharged from schools (see Table 2 in the Annex). In the academic year 2001/2002 the total number of students discharged from full-time primary schools reached 7795, in 2002/2003 – 7053. The majority of students get expelled between grades 5 and 9 and most of them live in the large cities – Riga, Daugavpils, Jelgava. There can be various reasons for being discharged – emigration, death, imprisonment, deletion from the list of students at the age of 18, etc., therefore it is not possible to provide more specific comments on this issue.

However, not all the students who are registered at schools actually are acquiring primary education. Each year there are students who for unjustified or unknown reasons do not start attending schools. The reasons can include illness, irresponsibility by parents, financial situation of the family, etc. According to the data of the State Education Inspectorate, in 2001/2002 1343 children of the compulsory schooling age did not go to school in the beginning of the school year.

When studying the problem it became obvious that the information provided by various institutions on the number of children who do not attend schools is very different. Thus, for example, identification of the number of children who do not attend schools is based on the data of the Register of Citizens. But the percentage of the children who do attend schools against the total number of children in the corresponding age group is calculated on the basis of the population census. As these databases include different data, the calculated indicators are not compatible. This makes it more difficult to identify the magnitude of the problem or to carry out a comparative analysis. Improvement of the registration sys-

tem is one of the preconditions to enable better identification of the problem and development of solutions.

Students who have not obtained primary education cannot successfully acquire a trade and later compete in the labor market. In 2002, 85.5% of the students with uncompleted primary education who were admitted to vocational schools operating under the auspices of the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), had received an unsatisfactory assessment (grade 3 or lower) in two or more subject areas. According to the data of the State Employment Service, as of 1 May 2001 their register included 289 unemployed young persons between 15 and 18 years of age.

Dropping out of the educational system renders a precondition for social exclusion. Persons who have not received primary education have limited possibilities of finding a job and face a high risk of losing it. Losing a job means not only experiencing poverty, but also exclusion from active social contacts. Social exclusion fosters poverty, unemployment, crime, addiction and passing over social exclusion to the next generations. As long as these problems remain unaddressed, the resource requirements for the social budget will increase, as funds will be required to reintegrate young persons into society and to mitigate the effects of alcohol addiction, drug addiction, vagrancy, unemployment and crime. Thus, for example, in 2001, 825,917 LVL were spent for maintenance of corrective institutions with 100 inmates, i.e., 8259 LVL per inmate per annum.

Various activities are carried out to address the problem at the national, local and institutional level. However, no solutions have been found yet to provide reliable protection against dropping out of the educational system and social exclusion.

The research was carried out in Zemgale region, namely, in Jelgava city and Jelgava district, Jūrmala city, Ogre district, Tukums district, Aizkraukle district, Dobele



district. The region is representative, as it faces the same problem as any other area in the country.

The research drew on extended interviews with students who have left school and their class teachers, interviews with social teachers (school psychologists), inspectors for protection of the rights of the children, staff of educational and social boards, as well as other municipal institutions, representatives of interest education, administrators of general schools, evening schools and vocational schools; analysis of the legislation, data-bases and documents, as well as the experience of other countries.

How can a student drop out of the educational system?

The Latvian Education Law (1998) provides for compulsory primary education for all. The heads of educational institutions maintain that the Law is not violated. The Ministry of Education (MOES) provides no data on breaches of this legal provision. To explore the problem, it is necessary to understand how it becomes possible to not obtain primary education.

During the research it was determined that children who do not receive primary education are those who:

1. do not start attending primary schools when reaching the compulsory schooling age;
2. are excluded from schools at the age of 18, but have not completed their primary education by that time;

3. move to a vocational school without finishing their primary education and are discharged from there;
4. finish the school with a statement of academic achievement only and do not receive a certificate of completion of primary education.

1. Children who do not start attending schools when reaching the compulsory schooling age can be divided into 3 subgroups:

- children who are not registered at birth;
- children who cannot be located, because the data on their place of residence do not reflect the actual situation;
- children whose parents do not take them to school.

Under the Education Law (1998, Section 17.1) it is the responsibility of the municipality to provide access to primary education to all children within the respective administrative territory. The Law also stipulates the responsibility of the parents “to cooperate with the educational institution attended by the child and with the teachers of the child” (Section 58.1). The Civil Law states the general parental responsibility for their child, including the responsibility to take care of the life, health, welfare and development of the child (Section 179). But, overall, these laws and the procedure for their implementation cannot ensure sufficient enforcement of parental responsibility. According to the provisions of Section 17.11. of the Education Law (1998), municipalities shall coordinate the registration of children who have reached the compulsory schooling age pursuant to

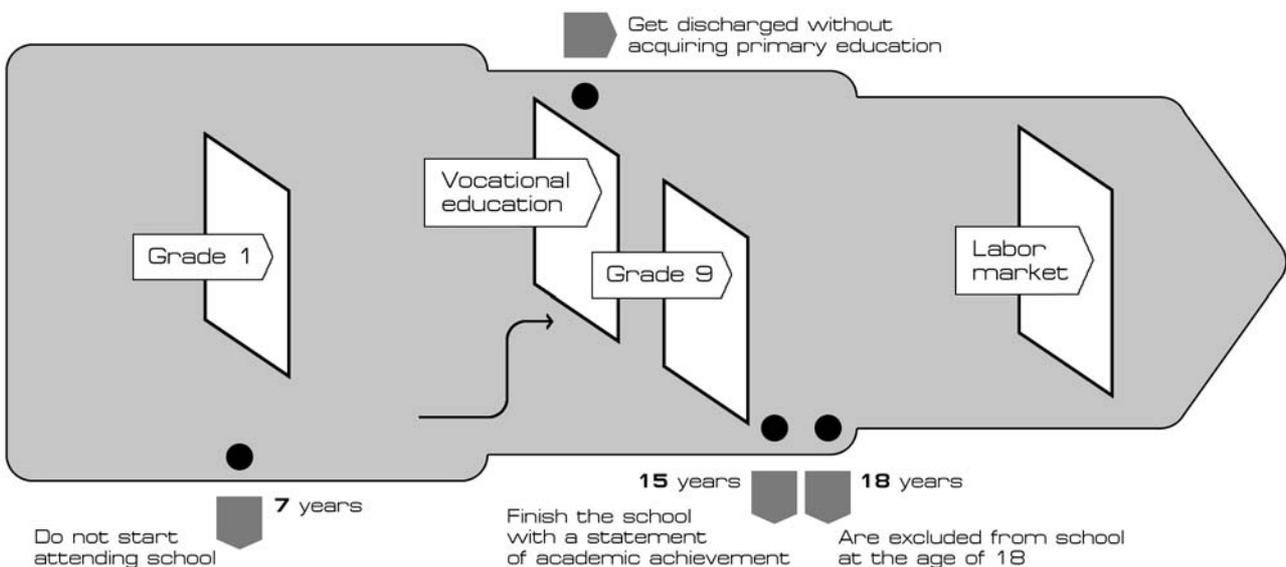


Figure 1. Ways to drop out of the educational system.

the procedure approved by the Cabinet. However, the children who have not been registered at birth remain outside the control of municipal institutions. The Civil Law (1937) obliges parents to have their child registered within 3 months following the birth of the child. If, due to certain reasons, the parents have failed to do so, the child is not registered and the parents are not called to account. According to the staff of social services, one of the reasons for such parental behavior is an attempt to evade paying increased public utility fees, which are calculated per family member. Problems related to the registration of children are caused by the lack of a uniform register. Maternity wards are not required to provide information on children born in the corresponding hospital.

If a child is registered at the Register of Citizens, but the parent do not enroll him/her to school, the municipal services try to locate the child. If the data on the place of residence of the child do not reflect the actual situation or if the family wanders from one place to another and seldom returns home, the location of the child is a difficult, time-consuming and often unsuccessful process. In addition, when municipal representatives meet the parents and invite them to take their child to school, the result is not always positive. The parents complain that the child would not listen to them or they refuse to take their child to school, as they see no need in it. Such parents are summoned to the municipal administrative commission, but its ability to have influence is very limited.

2. Students who are excluded from school at the age of 18

Under the Education Law students must continue to pursue primary education until the age of 18. Therefore, exclusion of students from schools on the grounds of becoming of age is not a breach of the Law. However, such students have not received primary education and their rights to education have not been executed. This is a legitimate possibility not to acquire primary education. The problem lies in the fact that it is not possible to identify in advance the number of children in this group. But when they become 18 years old, it is too late to deal with the problem – they are already discharged. Therefore early diagnostics of children in risk groups is of crucial importance. But the term “social risk” is a very general concept. Early diagnostics would require definition of more precise criteria.

No doubt, one such criterion is unjustified absenteeism from schools. According to data of the State Education Inspectorate, at the beginning of 2001/2002 1343 children of compulsory schooling age did not attend schools. In the 1st term 1107 were absent from school for more

than half of the study time, by the end of the academic year the number of such students reached 1526. There are students who are enrolled at schools but do not show up the entire study year. In the academic year 2001/2002 the number of such students was 742.

Table 2. Unjustified student absenteeism in Latvia, academic years 1998/1999 to 2001/2002

Academic year	Number of students absent from school the entire academic year	Number of students absent from school for more than half of the time	Total
2001/2002	742	1224	1966
2000/2001	632	974	1596
1999/2000	530	951	1481
1998/1999	639	1001	1640

Source: State Education Inspectorate, 2002.

Unjustified absenteeism from classes can be observed as early as in junior grades. Out of 1966 students who did not attend school in the academic year 2001/2002, 266 were junior students (grades 1 to 4). In fact, these are “dead souls” who are included in the student register of schools, but hardly ever show up for classes. Given the present registration system, it is impossible to identify the actual number of such students. This limits the possibilities of controlling the situation in the initial phase, when the process has not yet taken its course, and with more effective activities to achieve lower dropout rates. To improve the situation, it is necessary to develop a registration system to identify children in risk groups as early as possible and to design targeted programs to resolve problems related to these children.

3. Students who move to vocational training institutions and are discharged from there

Over the recent years we also see vocational training institutions offering programs that provide opportunities to acquire primary education starting from grade 8 or 9. An offer such as this is extremely important for students with learning difficulties or lack of motivation to go to general school. They move to a vocational school, but often realize that it is not much easier to study at such schools and, as a result, they get discharged. Thus, in the academic year 2000/2001, 291 students who had not completed primary education were discharged from vocational schools. Out of this number 123 students



were discharged for low academic achievement and absenteeism. The ratio of discharged students who have not completed primary education is 61% of the total number of such students admitted to vocational schools in the same year. In the academic year 2001/2002, 88 students who had not completed primary education were discharged from vocational schools, of which 47 students were discharged for low academic achievement and absenteeism.

The official statistics do not show whether the group of discharged students include those who are under 18 years of age. However, discussions with specialists employed by Orphans' Courts and students reveal that this kind of practice exists. The Education Law (1998) provides for compulsory primary education. The same provision is also included in the Law On General Education (1999, Section 32.1). The Law On Vocational Training (1999) has no mention of it. It only states that vocational training institutions must ensure that their activities comply with the Education Law (1998, Section 15.1).

4. Students who finish school with a statement of achievement only and do not receive a certificate of primary school completion

The failure to acquire primary education in its hidden form becomes apparent when students formally graduate from primary schools, but receive a statement of achievement only. As a result, such student may not advance to the next level of education nor can they find a job due to the lack of professional qualifications.

According to the data of the Central Statistics Bureau (2003), 894 of 27,993 primary school graduates (or 3.2%) in 2001 were issued a statement of achievement only. 655 students (2.3%) did not continue their studies after primary school. In 2002 there were 33,052 primary school graduates, of whom 834 (2.5%) finished with a statement. 1112 students (3.4%) did not continue their studies.

In this academic year the amendments to the Law On General Education (1999) will come into force stating that in case a learner has not received an assessment in any subject area or in a national exam at the end of the school year or has received a grade lower than 4 in more than two national exams, the learner may only be issued a statement of achievement rather than a certificate. Therefore, the MOES admits that the number of children who have not completed their primary education could increase.

The lack of a uniform registration system, insufficient cooperation among institutions, delayed identification of children in risks groups – all of that still makes it possible for children to drop out of primary education.

Reasons for leaving school

During interviews with students and their teachers, the following factors were identified that contribute to children leaving school:

Family is one of the most significant factors.

Children who have dropped out of schools come from two relative types of families. The first is explicitly unfavorable or high risk families. These are low-income families where the parents are often unemployed, are addicted to alcohol and show hardly any interest in their child. It is also possible that children in such families are subject to sexual or physical violence. In such families education does not play a particular role in the life-style of the parents, therefore it is not regarded as a value. The parents do not care whether or not their child will become educated. Often they do not know that their child does not attend school. When they find out, no action follows. Because of the difficult financial situation, children from low-income families experience discomfort among their classmates at school. Some children from such families live in the streets and wander from place to place. Others, on the contrary, try to find a job to support the family. Sometimes the parents tell their children to work to earn some income. Then the children have no possibility of going to school. When invited to school, the parents deny their fault, demonstrate a loyal attitude, promise to look after their children, but never fulfill their promises. Any assistance offered by the school – support by the psychologist, training sessions for the parents, a summer camp for the child – is rejected, as the parents see no need for it. The destructive life-style of the parents, their attitude towards education, lack of warmth and kindness in the family, neglecting the needs and interests of the child – the complex impact of all such factors creates the catalyst for leaving school.

The second type of family is one that appears to be favorable, i.e., families where both parents have a job and do care about their child's success at school. But the parents are either too busy at work or are focused on other interests, and, as a result, the children experience a lack of attention or the parents take only a formal interest in their child. Sometimes parents do not know how to establish good communication with their children, one based on mutual trust, and are not able to understand their needs. Children in such families may experience emotional abuse. The parents try to supervise the learning activities of their children, but they often apply administrative methods – harsh words, punishment. This only makes the situation worse. The parents fail to find

a common language with their children, to establish trust and ensure regular control over the learning obligations of their children.

In both types of families the children do not receive sufficient attention from their parents and become alienated.

When considering potential support, two different kinds of approaches must be developed. If the family of the child does not care about his/her education, certain ways must be found to provide material and moral support directly to the child, as any psychological or educational support to the parents may be rejected or not put to good use. But it is advisable to offer various forms of psychological and educational support to those families that are interested in the education of their child but whose experience so far has not been successful.

When analyzing the situation at school, during interviews it was identified that almost all interviewees had experienced learning difficulties related to different subject areas, therefore the objective content of some study areas cannot be suggested as the cause of this problem. The cause for having learning difficulties are various – mental handicaps, low capabilities, conflicts with adults and peers, lack of strong will to overcome difficulties at school. Consequently, such students have low motivation to learn. All interviewees had a high absenteeism rate. It is either the reaction to the learning and communication problems at school or in the family, or reveals a situation where a child is forced to earn income.

When analyzing the type of assistance normally offered by schools, it became apparent that usually the student is advised to attend additional classes in the subject area where he/she experiences difficulties. The student either rejects this type of assistance or achieves just temporary results. The reason for the failure is that the school, in fact, is dealing with its own problem – to increase the level of academic achievement by the student instead of focusing on the problem of the student. No proposed solutions can be effective unless they achieve a change in motivation.

Uncertainty in family relations is the cause for subsequent problems. The school can mitigate or aggravate this cause. The most important factors in this respect are: the personality of the teacher – is the teacher interested or indifferent towards the student; the professional ability of the teacher to deal with non-standard pedagogical cases; the value system of the school – what is more important – knowledge or the student and his/her feelings; and the type of relationships at the school – administrative or supportive.

Existing ways to deal with the problem

To analyze the possibilities of addressing the problem, it is necessary to examine the existing practice as to how schools and cities/districts identify the problem children and provide support.

Children start attending school at the age of 7. As of the academic year 2002/2003 it is compulsory to prepare 5 and 6 years old children for school at the kindergarten or special preparatory classes at school. Not all parents have accepted this provision as a norm. According to the data provided by school, each year in grade 1 there are 1 to 2 children who have not attended preparatory classes. In kindergarten, identification of children who might potentially have learning difficulties is not taking place. It is advisable that the identification of problems and cooperation between all interested parties begins already at the pre-school stage.

The content of education, which is still the subject of many discussions, affects the student's achievements and therefore also the results of the entire schooling process. The statistics available to the MOES (2004) show that during the period from 1997/1998 to 2000/2001 each year 4.6–5% of students remain for the second or third year in grade 1. Within the same period the average rate of students in all other grades who remain for the second or third year in the same grade is 1.2–1.4%. The failure rate among first-graders is approximately four times higher than among other students. The teachers maintain that the reason is insufficient preparation of children for the first year at school. Obviously, there is a gap between the content of education in primary school and the level of preparedness of children to learn this content. It is one of the factors contributes to the issue in question.

One standard solution for children with learning difficulties is to include them in a corrective pedagogical class. This is a special education program which can be implemented for grade 1 to grade 9 students, but for no longer than 3 years. The program uses the content of primary education, and it includes, among the main study areas, corrective pedagogical sessions (individual classes, values and communication skills). Specially trained teachers work with the children. For many students studies in the corrective classes provide improvements, and the children get used to regular work. To assess effectiveness of the program, it would be necessary to examine the content of the program and follow up further progress of the students.

The sooner the learning and socialization difficulties of students are identified, the higher the chances are of



reducing them. Identification of socialization difficulties and problems is one of the tasks of the social teacher. However, access to social teachers differs between various districts (see table 4 in the Annex), and there is an overall shortage of social teachers. An exception in this respect is Riga city, where almost all schools employ a social teacher. In Zemgale region there is one social teacher to 4–5 schools.

Table 3. Provision of social teachers in Zemgale region, according to the data by district education boards, at the beginning of academic year 2003/2004

District	Number of schools	Number of social teachers
Jelgava city	17	9
Jelgava district	25	3
Aizkraukle district	26	6
Jūrmala city	17	3
Bauska district	32	9
Tukums district	31	2
Ogre district	25	7
Dobele district	25	4
Total in Zemgale region	198	43
Riga city	147	138

Source: Telephone interviews of the local school boards.

In schools we often observe a lack of understanding about the limits of the social teacher. Transfer of responsibility from a class teacher to a social teacher, which sometimes is practiced, does not offer improvements. When working with children from risk groups, the results depend on team-work. Social teachers are professionals who possess knowledge about the development of the action plan, the principles for establishing and the functioning of the teams, as well as the organization of preventive measures. Social teachers can provide assistance to teachers in difficult situations and give them advice.

Interesting experience regarding the team-work is available at Dobele Secondary School No. 1, where a special class has been set up for unmotivated children with low academic achievement. The best teachers work with this class, they share the same approach and regularly exchange information. They have developed close cooperation with the parents to ensure a high attendance rate. The children become committed to learning, they are encouraged by the positive attitude of the teachers. In parallel to setting up school teams to

deal with the “difficult children,” a supportive environment is established for the teachers who care for these children. It is of no less importance, as the teachers who deal with the problems of the children often need psychological and methodological support themselves. In Dobele, town supervision is organized for educational specialists and social teachers. This enables colleagues supervised by a specialist to collectively deal with the problems and receive each other’s support.

During the interviews it was noted that a common practice among the schools is to persuade the parents of the “difficult children” to change schools. Changing schools changes the environment, and helps some children to “begin a new life.” For others however, the same problems may continue in the new place. Schools that are concerned about their status and high academic achievements by their students often encourage the at-risk students to leave. Other schools would leave the student who does not learn and is absent from classes for the second or the third year in the same grade, until the student becomes 18, when he/she can be discharged from school on the grounds of becoming of age.

Both these phrases “discharged on the grounds of changing the school” and “discharged on the grounds of becoming 18 years of age” present a legal opportunity to get rid of “undesired” students. And it is not possible to identify what contribution the school has made to improve the situation and how well the school has implemented the primary education standard. Under the Education Law (1998, Section 30.1) the principal is responsible for the activities and performance of the school he/she manages. The predetermined performance targets envisage compulsory primary education for all. At present it is possible to give only a formal assessment as to whether or not this requirement has been met, i.e., whether or not the school has discharged a student under the age of 18. No qualitative performance indicators have been developed and applied in the educational system to measure the contribution of schools in the provision of primary education to **each** student.

After the school has exhausted all available interventions, the student’s case can be considered at the municipal administrative commission or juvenile affairs commission. There the student can receive a warning, then – a reprimand, he/she can be taken under supervision, can be given the time to change his/her behavior or, in case of repeated violations, can be issued a fine. Administrative methods are applied that generally have a limited effect. Decisions may be taken to postpone action. The student’s case for the administrative commission is prepared when the situation has become criti-

cal – in grade 6, 7 or 8. But the nature of the problem becomes apparent much earlier – several years before reaching this critical stage. It is necessary to introduce a system that would localize the problem at an early stage to prevent its escalation. Neither of the involved institutions has a program that would enable a comprehensive approach to the family.

the problem the representatives of the “threatening” environment, i.e., the parents or the teachers can no longer provide motivation to the student. The child needs an alternative environment where he/she receives social rehabilitation: the child is prepared and helped to return to school. Unfortunately, the parents and the teachers find it difficult to accept this idea.

Table 4. Stages of the problem and solutions

Stage	Early stage	Crisis	Delayed stage
Characteristics of the stage	Unfavorable situation in the family. Alienation and resistance. Student experiences learning difficulties. It is not interesting at school.	Student experiences learning crisis. Stress and uncertainty. Smoking. Absenteeism. Discipline on the part of the parents. Regular reproaches by the teachers. Student undertakes to improve, but that does not last for long. Student is left for the second year in the same grade.	Student has lost belief in himself/herself. Frequent and continuous absenteeism. Relations with the teachers are discouraging. Teachers stop helping because the situation seems hopeless. Student is psychologically ready to leave school and thinks about the possibility of proving himself/herself in a self-reliant job.
Recommended type of solution	Problem identification. Support to the family and the child. Development of stress management and problem resolution skills of the family members, the child and the teacher.	It is necessary to achieve the breaking point in motivation and the change of attitude. A person whom the student trusts or an inspiring person can be of help. To develop an individual action plan and control its implementation. Regular cooperation between the teachers and the family.	Change of environment. Alternative educational options. Motivation for change, raising of self-esteem. Individual program. Acquisition of learning skills. Continuation of studies.

To provide support to students at risk, local governments should develop alternative educational opportunities. In Dobeles the day center of the social assistance service has been set up to provide schooling to students with learning difficulties. In Ogre the non-governmental organization “Duksis” gathered students who do not attend school to involve them in athletic activities and to establish contacts. Jaunpils Municipality in Tukums District is running a project to involve students in community work and enable them to earn some income. In Jelgava the children and youth center “Junda” established the club “Alone at Home” for social risk children from low-income and unfavorable families. Such experience can be regarded as a successful alternative option, as 2 children returned to school and continued their studies. This shows that in an advanced phase of

Carrying out the research, the authors have systematized the indications that illustrate the origin and development of the problem. The problem stages and their type of solutions are shown in Table 4. The purpose of the table is to provide landmarks for the stage of development of the problem and the criteria for making decisions about the appropriate solution. The preventative solution, which was suggested for the early phase, can be a useful supplement to other solutions.

Alternative solutions can be developed within the framework of adult education and training or interest education. The local government is responsible for these programs, but many do not carry them out because they feel that learning is each person’s individual choice and personal responsibility. Local governments should purposefully exercise their authority to order such alterna-



tive education options that would facilitate reintegration of young persons left outside the educational system. Interest education is still geared towards those young people who are well motivated and successful. The programs offered for adults are still based on traditional approaches that are not attractive for youth with problems.

from day schools with a certificate, and 179 – with a statement. For the evening schools these figures are 276 and 221 respectively. Diverting low achievers to the evening schools can be a good solution, if done on time and corresponding to the nature of the student’s problem. Mass-scale transfer of students to evening schools

Table 5. Breakdown of students by grades in evening schools

	Grades 1–4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 9	Total
Total in the country	18	24	41	171	479	1079	1812
In large cities	8	8	16	100	300	566	998

Source: MOES, 2004.

Evening schools are a traditional alternative solution. In the beginning of the academic year 2002/2003 there were 35 general evening schools in Latvia with 14 805 students, of which 1812 were following the primary education syllabus. To ensure better access to evening studies sometimes full-time or part-time evening departments are established at general secondary schools or in the form of part-time consultation centers in rural municipalities. Studies at evening schools are offered starting with grade 1. The statistics of the MOES shows the breakdown of students in evening schools by grades.

Evening schools are more available in the large cities – they have more than half of the total number of students in the primary education program. The majority of students are in grades 8 and 9. This definitely corresponds to the data on students in day schools in the country. The ratio of low achievers is the highest in grade 8. In grade 9 their number suddenly drops. If viewed separately, this fact would make us think of improving the situation in grade 9. However, viewed together with the statistics of the evening schools, these data give us good grounds to assume that the “hopeless” students are diverted to evening schools in large numbers in the last year at primary school. This is reflected in the graduation results at the end of grade 9.

According to the statistical bulletin of the Central Statistics Bureau (2002) in 2001/2002 of all grade 9 graduates at day schools, 30,556 finished primary school with a certificate, and 613 (or one fifth) – with a statement of academic achievement. In the same year 697 evening school students finished grade 9 with a certificate, and 221 (or one third) – with a statement of academic achievement. These extremes are even more obvious in Riga city where 9400 students graduated

in the last year of primary school reshuffles the school statistics, but provides a dubious contribution to solving the primary education problem.

Table 6. The number of students in general education (day) schools moved up to the next grade with assessment in some study areas between 1–3

Academic year	Grade 8	Grade 9
2000/2001	7113	4173
1999/2000	6239	4505
1998/1999	5922	4034

Source: MOES 2003, October.

Moving to the evening school is helpful for those children who need a change of environment. Given the high proportion of unmotivated students in evening schools, there is room for concern as to whether this kind of educational option is relevant, as it cannot ensure an individual approach to each student. It would be necessary to develop new alternative offers to young persons leaving school.

Students have another alternative – to obtain primary education at vocational schools. They can be enrolled in vocational training programs that also provide for corrective pedagogy. The vocational training catalogue for the year 2003 (see Table 7) shows the possibilities for students to acquire primary education at vocational schools. Overall, the offer is not particularly diverse in terms of vocational schools or occupations to be acquired. Equally, the students’ choice is not based on

Table 7. Vocational schools offering training to students who have not completed primary education

Vocational school	Minimum number or completed grades required	Specialization
Rīga State Technical School	7	Assistant carpenter
Cēsis Vocational School No. 4	7	Ironsmith
Ventspils Vocational School	8	Ironsmith
	8	Assistant cook
Vangaži Vocational School	7	Ironsmith
	8	Ironsmith
Liepāja Vocational School No. 31	7	Assistant carpenter
Aizkraukle Vocational School	7	Construction worker
Mežciems Vocational School in Daugavpils	7	Assistant carpenter
	7	Assistant seamstress
	8	Turner
Jelgava Technical Lyceum	7	Repairs worker
Barkava Vocational School	7	Construction worker
Skrunda Vocational School	8–9	Construction worker
Zilupe Vocational School	8–9	Construction worker
Training Center "Riman" (tuition-based)	Over 15 years of age	Cook

Source: Kur mācīties?: Profesionālā izglītība. – Rīga: N.I.M.S., 2003, p. 92.

their interest in a particular occupation, but on other reasons, such as unwillingness to continue their studies in the previous general school, limited choice, proximity of the school to their place of residence. Many students also drop out after some time from the vocational school and do not complete their primary education. The primary education offered by the vocational schools would be more effective if the professional interest of the students was higher. For that schools would need to provide state-of-the-art materials, which they currently cannot afford. There is no system in place to provide job placement for graduates of these programs. It would be advisable to review the existing regulations and norms with the purpose of encouraging involvement of companies in providing early career guidance and vocational training.

The existing alternative solutions – completion of primary education at evening schools and vocational training institutions – cannot be regarded as effective, as in the majority of the cases they are used when the problem has reached an advanced phase of development. Certain successful examples related to other types of experience makes us think of possibilities to develop comprehensive local government programs to deal with the problems by involving various resources.

Experience of other countries

Over the course of the last 15 years the problem of young persons who have not received education has been within the scope of attention of many developed countries of the world. Prevention is paramount in dealing with the problem. To reduce the threat of leaving school, two types of special measures are implemented. The first is structural, and it affects the conditions in which schools operate (for instance, the division of the academic year into semesters). This includes the organization of the study process (flexibility of curriculum, assessment of academic achievement, discussions and decision-making about the development of the school, etc.). Other measures concern specific factors of school life such as the school as an institution in terms of its autonomy, the position of the principal, the level of participation in decision-making). It may also include teachers (such as their education, terms of their contacts, extra-curricular responsibilities, and their methods of teaching and assessment). It can include their involvement in the education of their children or management of the school. And it can include students in terms of their learning incentives, individual learning achievements and assessment, and vocational practice.

However, the formal education resources of schools



are not always sufficiently flexible to ensure the corrections required. Therefore, alternative solutions may be useful that would involve a set of other resources (pertaining to the environment and to inter-personal relationships). In this way alternative options may be developed.

Alternative education can be offered by individual specialized educational establishments or it can be provided in cooperation with the school. Activities can focus on prevention – to reduce opportunities for dropping out of school (health oases in Sweden, development centers in Norway), or to help those young persons outside the formal education system. With respect to the young people who have left school, the purpose of alternative options is not necessarily to ensure the completion of primary education. Often the alternative programs only guide or prepare the young persons for achieving this target (literacy program and certificate of achievement in Ireland). Even if the young person does not complete compulsory education, the acquired skills will be helpful in future life. Alternative offers can also be developed by way of involving the existing educators and social partners (schools, vocational schools and companies in the second chance schools) in fulfillment of new objectives.

The European Commission has declared the fight against economic and social exclusion as one of its main priorities. This is defined in the White Paper on education and training of 1998 [4;53]. The Commission has expressed its support to the establishment of the second chance schools. European countries have implemented a range of measures to offer training alternatives to the weak segments of the population with the purpose of facilitating their economic and social inclusion. Based on the experience of countries participating in the project, a network of second chance schools was developed to provide new opportunities of social integration to young persons who have not acquired skills and qualifications relevant to the labor market.

Second chance schools are not yet another group of institutions offering training programs. They have applied an integrated approach in developing their programs. The majority of options combines the elements of formal, semi-formal and informal education.

Example: Hämmenlinna second chance school in Finland. Formal education can provide for individual training with the help of a learning consultant according to the needs and objectives of the individual. Some students aim at finalizing compulsory education and receiving a diploma certifying the completion of primary school. Vocational training can be offered in the

form of adult training modules. Trainees can acquire the qualification needed for a particular job by passing exams. Informal education offers courses to learn a particular trade. This is done to achieve social integration of the trainees and enable their entry into the labor market. The school issues a certificate of attendance. Another type of informal education is provided in the form of youth seminars and group training aimed at team-building, confidence-boosting, acquisition of life skills, and employment.

Foreign experience should be carefully analyzed before deciding on its adaptation and application in Latvia. Many countries have different target groups for alternative offers, such as the immigrants who have no knowledge of the local language and culture. In Latvia the problem of children dropping out of schools is quite recent, it has not become so acute as in other countries. This emphasizes the need for effective prevention, especially in the early stages of schooling.

Recommendations

At the national level:

1. To improve the existing registration system by developing a uniform coordinated data-base to obtain reliable information on the provision of education to children of the compulsory schooling age.
2. To amend legislation – include a new provision in the Law On Vocational Training stating that vocational training institutions that accept students who have not completed their primary education must ensure that in parallel to vocational training, primary education is also provided to these students until the age of 18.
3. To set education quality criteria that would enable the measurement of the contribution of schools in providing primary education to **each** student.
4. To provide knowledge and skills to students at pedagogical universities to deal with pedagogical problem situations and work with children from risk groups.

At the local government level:

1. To develop a uniform local government policy for the provision of primary education. It is advisable to include the following approaches:
 - focus on prevention of the problem;

- early identification of risk families with children (in kindergarten or during preparatory classes at school);
 - decision-making about at-risk children relevant to the phase of the problem;
 - gradual replacement of administrative policy with support policy;
 - extending the range of alternative education options.
2. To increase the responsibility of schools for the provision of compulsory education:
- school regulations should include requirements for the organization of the educational process which, when implemented would ensure the provision of compulsory education as prescribed by the Education Law;
 - to develop a uniform data-base of all schools on absenteeism. To design a procedure whereby the local government carries out preventative work to reduce unjustified absenteeism of students;
 - to assess the contribution of schools in dealing with risk group children: timely diagnostics and targeted action when taking care of the education of each child.
3. To create and develop a supportive environment for students, teachers, parents:
- to develop the required support methods for various target groups, to identify the providers of support in cooperation with local government services;
 - to include skills training in educational support programs for better decision-making in dealing with problems and stress management;
 - to achieve that all schools have social teachers (school psychologists) and to assess their performance each year;
 - to provide support to parents who are interested in resolving the problems of their children. Work with the parents should begin during the pre-school preparatory phase and should be maintained on a continuous basis;
 - to create a supportive environment for the teachers who care about the fate of the children at risk – support in the form of information, supervision, assessment of achievement, learning from successful experiences;
 - to develop a favorable environment for all children in schools, characterized by positive expectations by the teachers and their interest in student achievements;
- to use student self-assessment for identification of problems and effectiveness of solutions;
 - to devise and implement a program for development of learning skills of students starting from grade 1 in all schools;
 - to ensure timely career guidance, which should not take the form of stand-alone events, but, instead, as an integral part of the study process helping to link learning with real life.
4. To develop a network of alternative education options:
- within the framework of interest education and adult training, to launch project tenders for work with children from risk groups. To review the policy of interest education, to provide targeted funding for interest education for children at risk. To diversify the alternative education options depending on the objective. A preventative objective could be to reduce the chance of children dropping out of school. Another objective could be to provide help to children who have been left outside the formal education system;
 - to develop experience related to local alternative solutions, to study and adopt the successful experience of other local governments and foreign countries;
 - to prepare society (parents, teachers) to accept the alternative solutions.
5. To improve the cooperation network between the involved institutions (the Education Board, the Social Affairs Board, the Municipal Police, the Narcological Hospital, the Orphans' Court, etc.):
- to develop a uniform data-base and ensure the exchange of information;
 - to develop a common action plan and coordinate functions for its implementation.
- At the school level:**
1. To design uniform procedures at schools describing the ways for dealing with children and families at risk, assisting in the prevention of the causes of the problem rather than the mitigation of the consequences, and to assess the progress. It is necessary to develop a system that would enable early identification and localization of the problem before it gets out of hand.



2. Work with the staff:
 - to develop a positive attitude by teachers towards the at-risk children so that they are interested in the fate of the child and do not limit themselves to a formal approach;
 - to enhance the professional skills of the teachers to deal with non-standard pedagogical cases.
3. In the teaching work – to enhance the motivation to learn, to make classes interesting for the children and focused on their needs, to provide opportunities for all children to achieve some success. Teaching/learning should become more oriented towards the practical aspects of life.

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Introduction of Christianity and Ethics to Pupils of Grades 1–3: What is the Message?

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“This year we decided to postpone the education reform for one year; I have come to the conclusion that too little work has been done to explain the content of these reforms to society and teachers. Some of the necessary tasks related to approval of the model study plan, development of a plan for reform implementation and completion of standards, have not been completed. It is better to postpone the reform for one year and to implement it properly than to implement it, whatever the costs, and then try to correct the mistakes.” (Minister for Education and Science Kārlis Šadurskis on the decision to postpone the reform planned by the Project for the Development of the Education System).¹

“Carelessly crafted mechanisms of implementation or rushed terms create unnecessary confusion, discontent and inefficient use of all types of resources. In the long-term such actions may create a negative image of the education system.” (Māriete Seile, School Support Centre)²

Summary

Public administration institutions in Latvia have been gaining experience in introducing changes to the education system, including curricula. To ensure a qualitative reform process, a special project was implemented in Latvia with the support of the World Bank – Education Improvement Project (EIP). Within this project new standards were developed for different subjects, including

elaboration and introduction of the subject “Social Science” in elementary schools, the intention of which is to teach ethics within an integrated social science course. An initiative by the Ministry of Education and Science to introduce two new subjects – Ethics and Christianity – shows that the existing procedure for introducing new subjects to the curriculum allows for the execution of partisan political decisions, without paying enough attention to basic policy making principles.

By increasing the influence of religion to the study process, the public is not provided with complete information on anticipated changes or given the opportunity to influence the decision making process. Taking into consideration the fact that there is not enough time and material resources, we can conclude that in a certain sense the Ministry of Education and Science may be stimulating a conflict. In the most optimal scenario this might manifest itself as “non-violent resistance” from schools towards the reform. Unable to ensure quality, schools may even avoid implementing the proposed changes. In the worst-case scenario, religious conflict might arise (if proper control is lacking to maintain the spirit of an “inter-denominational study subject” and guarantee the rights of those who hold different opinions).

The results of a survey of parents and school representatives carried out in February/March³ show that only 34% of parents and 90% of school representatives are informed about the project to introduce a mandatory choice between Christianity and Ethics. If parents had to choose between Christianity and Ethics, 67% of parents

¹ Šadurskis, K. (2003). “Cīņa par kvalitāti nekad nav viegla”, Partijas “Jaunais laiks” avīze *Jaunie Laiki Latvijā*, December 15, 2003.

² Seile, M. (2003). Aspects on Teacher Professional Development System. Education in Latvia’s Transition: The Challenge of Management. *Report on Education in Latvia 2001/2002*. Riga: Centre for Public Policy Providus, the Soros Foundation – Latvia, 2003.

³ In this article results of the research initiated by Centre for Public Policy PROVIDUS are used, *Attitude towards teaching Christianity to the pupils of Grades 1–3. Survey of parents and school representatives. February/March 2004*. (in Latvian) www.politika.lv/index.php?id=109073&lang=lv



would choose Ethics, but 23% would choose Christianity. When characterising a school's possibilities to introduce new study subjects, it should be noted that only 32% of school representatives replied that their schools would not experience any problems with ensuring teaching of Ethics and Christianity, 38% indicated that this could create minor problems, but 24% replied that it could cause major problems. The main problems mentioned by school representatives are the lack of well-prepared teachers, problems with teaching aids, funding, methodology and study plans.

According to education experts and representatives of boards of education⁴ the main problems of this reform are lack of information and lack of discussion before decision-making. Also, the necessity to elaborate and introduce changes in a very short time period creates problems.

When analysing the example of policies implemented by the Ministry of Education and Science – changes in standards for elementary education that envisage introducing a mandatory choice between Christianity and Ethics for pupils of grades 1–3, – we can conclude that the Ministry appears to be ignoring two essential issues. One is the question whether expansion of the influence of religion on the process of education is in the interests of society. The second is whether the quality of the study process is ensured after political decisions are made about changes to the contents of the study process (i.e., the ability to teach these subjects well enough).

The problem

May 2004 may be too early to draw conclusions about initiatives that appeared suddenly in the summer of 2003, pronouncing that a mandatory choice between Ethics and Christianity will be included in the curriculum for grades 1–3 in the academic year 2004/2005; in any case, problems have already emerged that raise serious concerns.

There is reason to doubt whether the Ministry of Education and Science is abiding by the principles of conformity, public participation, coordination, purposefulness, continuity, ensuring of resources and control as

defined in “Concept of Education Development 2002–2005.”⁵ The decision was made despite protests by public representatives, and the objections and assessments of several representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science and educational institutions who expressed concern over the feasibility of implementation. The decision also ignored the previous work on ethics by the Education Improvement Project (EIP). The public had no access to information on the contents of the planned subjects and, thus, had little possibility to influence decision-making.

This is of special significance because the proposed option introduces changes to the relationship between the school and the Church. Starting with the academic year 2004/2005, in order to meet demands set by the Ministry of Education and Science – to ensure the option guaranteed by the law to choose freely between Ethics and Christianity – the school must employ teachers who have received authorization from the Church.

Introduction

In the summer of 2003 the Minister for Education and Science Kārlis Šadurskis proposed that the launch of the reform of education content be postponed, arguing that this reform had not been adequately prepared, at the same time proposing that the mandatory choice between the subjects of Christianity and Ethics be introduced for grades 1–3 starting with the academic year 2004/2005. On October 14, 2003, amendments were made to the regulations on the national standards of basic education, stipulating that the mandatory choice between the Ethics and Christianity shall be introduced⁶ beginning with the academic year 2004/2005.

The decision to introduce these subjects in grades 1–3 provoked two kinds of discussions – whether religious subjects should be taught in schools at all, and also whether it will be possible to introduce Ethics and Christianity at the prescribed time in schools, and still ensure high-quality teaching of these subjects.

The aim of this article is to analyse the decision making process leading to the decision to introduce

⁴ Interviews with representatives of ISEC, IZM and ISAP, as well as interviews with five randomly chosen representatives of the district's or municipal boards of education.

⁵ IZM (2002). *Izglītības attīstības koncepcija 2002.–2005. gadam*. <http://www.izm.gov.lv/default.aspx?tabID=22&id=103> (Retrieved on June 15, 2004.)

⁶ MK (2003). Ministru kabineta noteikumi nr. 570 *Grozījumi Ministru kabineta 2000. gada 5. decembra noteikumos nr. 462 “Noteikumi par valsts pamatizglītības standartu”* (October 14, 2003). *Latvijas vēstnesis*, October 22, 2003.

Christianity and Ethics in grades 1–3, and to characterise the problems that have been identified thus far in the process of implementing this decision. The authors of this article see it as a problem that the decision on introducing these new subjects in grades 1–3 was made without prior public debate, without finding out the views of parents, schools and education experts, furthermore, despite the fact that the time allocated for its implementation (development of the contents of the subject, program, training of teachers, etc.) was less than a year. Statements by education experts are especially worrisome, i.e., even though they indicated that it was impossible to introduce a new subject within such a short period of time, their view was ignored.

The analysis uses the results of the survey *“Attitude towards teaching Christianity to pupils of grades 1–3”* (February/March, 2004, SKDS), interviews with education experts (representatives of Ministry of Education and Science, Centre for Curriculum Development and Examination (CCDE) and Education Improvement Project (EIP), interviews with representatives of the boards of education, as well as press materials and regulatory enactments.

An insight into the history of taking this decision

On July 17, 2003, the Ministry of Education and Science proposed to introduce amendments to the national standard of basic education, removing ethics from the block of social subjects and linking it with Christianity: the parents would have to choose whether the child would learn Ethics or Christianity.

On October 14, 2003, the amendments were introduced to the regulations on the national standard of basic education, envisaging the teaching of Christianity and/or ethics in elementary school.

The reasons for postponing the introduction of the study contents, developed by EIP, in elementary schools in the academic year 2005/2006, were given by the Minister for Education and Science Kārlis Šadurskis – the reform had not been sufficiently prepared, a model study plan had not been developed. At the same time a decision is taken on introducing two new subjects, allowing less than a year to prepare, during which time the standards and programs of the subjects have to be

developed and approved, and the teachers trained. The Minister substantiates the removal of ethics from the course of social sciences and linking it with Christianity with the fact that the standard of the block of social subjects has not been developed in adequate quality, since the authors of the standard *“have manifested an openly atheistic approach to the understanding of man and social contexts”* (Kārlis Šadurskis in the TV program *“Kas notiek Latvijā?”* [What is Going on in Latvia?] 27.08.2003.).

On March 9, 2004, an order was passed *“On the Introduction of Standards of Subjects in the academic years 2004/2005, 2005/2006 and 2006/2007,”*⁷ which prescribes the following order for introducing the standards of subjects in Christianity and/or Ethics:

- academic year 2004/2005 – grade 1;
- academic year 2005/2006 – grades 1 and 2;
- academic year 2006/2007 – grades 1, 2 and 3.

The order stipulates that parents shall choose between Christianity and Ethics and will indicate their choice in an application addressed to the school director. If some parents choose Christianity and others choose Ethics, the class is to be divided into groups.

On May 24, 2004, the developed draft standards of the subjects of Christianity and Ethics were made available to the public for the first time. Prior to this date, as the authors of this article repeatedly found out, there was no chance of seeing the content of draft standards even when approaching the members of the working group in the Ministry.

At the end of May 2004, the Minister for Education and Science Juris Radzēvičs confirmed that, notwithstanding the concern that it could be impossible to ensure the quality of the study process, the decision on starting to teach these subjects with the academic year 2004/2005 would not be changed.

1. Attitude towards the introduction of the mandatory choice between the subjects of Christianity and Ethics

Education experts surveyed admitted that this reform revealed a very important drawback in education policy making. The initiators of change in the system of education or in the contents of education are not required to

⁷ IZM (2004). Izglītības un zinātnes ministrijas rīkojums nr. 144 *Par mācību priekšmetu standartu ieviešanu 2004./2005., 2005./2006. un 2006./2007. mācību gadā*, March 9, 2004. www.izm.gov.lv/lv/VID/direktorijam/IZMrik_kristiga.doc (Retrieved on May 18, 2004.)



substantiate the necessity of such a reform. There is no discussion on these ideas and there is a risk of implementing poorly designed reforms or of spending resources for preparing reforms of dubious usefulness.

Several education experts surveyed characterised the decision to introduce the mandatory choice between Christianity and Ethics as being a political, authoritarian decision, taken by Minister Kārlis Šadurskis, without listening to education experts and ignoring the resources invested into the development of the social sciences course prepared by EIP. Experts substantiate their views with the fact that prior to making this proposal, no public debates were held on the necessity of such a decision and no studies were carried out in order to identify the attitude of schools, pupils, parents or the general public. It is seen as a political decision, initiated by Minister of Education and Science Kārlis Šadurskis (party “New Era”).

The authors of the idea themselves admit that the decision had been taken without assessing the attitude of society. Advisor to the Minister Artis Jurkevics admitted that no studies had been made on how many parents wanted their children to be taught Christianity or what their vision of the subject might be⁸.

The questions related to the attitude of school representatives and parents of future first-graders were included in the survey carried out by the Public Opinion Research Centre SKDS in February/March 2004. The results show that the project was evaluated as generally positive. 57% of the parents and 53% of school representatives rated the mandatory choice between Christianity and Ethics as “*very positive*” or “*rather positive*.” In both groups the answer “*very positive*” was chosen by less than 20%. On the other hand, the project was judged as being “*very negative*” or “*rather negative*” by 14% of the parents and 27% of school representatives. When making conclusions about these results, the conditions of making the survey should be mentioned. On the one hand, discussions about this initiative had already taken place in the mass media, on the other hand – detailed information on the proposed reform was not available.

This lack of information left a certain impact upon the arguments that were chosen to justify the support or criticism of the reform. The positive evaluations are linked to the belief that “something should be done” to curb the moral degradation of society. Hopes are expressed that the knowledge gained at school will help to instil

good manners, culture, and a value system to the children. Some parents gave high ratings to the possibility of studying only one of the mentioned subjects (Christianity or Ethics), but the attitude towards the other subject is rather dubious or even negative. Several respondents positively evaluated the possibility of choice.

One of the main arguments for a critical opinion of Christianity and/or Ethics in grades 1–3 is linked to the idea that these subjects should not be mandatory, but optional. Some point out that children in grade 1 are too young for these subjects. There are also concerns about concrete subjects. Objections to ethics are related to the idea that the subject could be too complicated for young children, or that it should be taught as part of other subjects. Concerns about religion were linked also to the opinion that this subject should not be taught at comprehensive schools, these issues should be left to the discretion of families, or studied at Sunday schools.

This rather guarded attitude towards the changes was also related to problems linked to implementation issues. Parents and school representatives worried about the ability to prepare teachers by the beginning of the study year. There are also concerns that the workload for children would increase or that the more important classes would be reduced. School representatives raised concerns about monetary and infrastructural resources and the vague principles for splitting the pupils into sub-groups.

Parents were asked whether they would choose Christianity or Ethics if they had to make a mandatory choice between the two subjects. 67% of parents would choose Ethics, 23% would choose Christianity, but 10% answered that they did not know. In fact, the reform would not increase the number of pupils studying Christianity. Among parents whose children already “regularly” attend events organised by Christian denominations for children, 74% would choose Christianity, of those whose children “occasionally” attend such events, 51% would choose the subject of Christianity, but among those whose children presently do not attend such events, only 16% would prefer the subject of Christianity.

When parents were also offered to choose a course of ethics, integrated into the block of social subjects, most often parents made this choice (40%), while 27% would prefer Ethics as a separate subject, 20% – the subject of Christianity, but 6% indicated that they did not want their children to study such subjects.

The description of what the parents and school representatives expect to be the contents of Ethics and

⁸ Kluinis, A. (2004). Kā pirmklasniekus pievērsīs kristietībai. *Rīgas Balss*, January 13, 2004.

Christianity is worthy of attention. 50% of the parents and 26% of the school representatives have been unable to formulate what should be taught in Christianity class. The most frequent answers relate to the basic principles of the faith, but the diversity of religions and the history of religion are also mentioned as subjects to be taught. Some mentioned issues that are not directly linked with religion – attitude towards oneself and others, tolerance, good behaviour, etc. When answering the question what should be taught on the subject of ethics, 37% of the parents and 13% of the school representatives could not offer any suggestions. The suggestions most frequently cited are relationships with others, communication culture, good behaviour, manners, politeness, the basic principles of ethics, and norms of ethics. Such issues as the core values of society, health education, attitude towards environment, nature, etc., are also mentioned.

Two sets of problems emerged: should religious subjects be taught at schools at all and is it possible within the allocated period of time to ensure teaching of Ethics and Christianity on high level?

2. Problems related to the teaching of the subjects of Ethics and Christianity

The quality of the teaching process is a matter of concern both for those who support the teaching of Christianity at school and the critics of this initiative. 32% of the school representatives in February/March, 2004, admitted that their schools should not experience any problem with ensuring the teaching of Ethics and Christianity. The majority of school representatives were cautious in evaluating the ability of their schools to ensure the teaching of these subjects. 38% answered that this could create minor problems, but 24% indicated that it could cause major problems. Both critics and supporters admit that a large part of the problem is related to the hasty pace of implementing the policy. The minimum period of time needed to introduce changes to the standards of education is 3–4 years. In this case the allocated time period was one year. Other objections associated with the lack of time included insufficient information provided to society on the proposed reforms and insuf-

ficient involvement in the decision making, haste in developing a study program, untested study standards, insufficient communication between the various stakeholders, and problems in management and control.

2.1. Insufficient information and communication

Education experts, journalists writing about this subject, parents, and school representatives all identified the lack of information as one of the main drawbacks. No discussions were held prior to making this decision. The views of parents and school representatives were not solicited. The decision to give up the standards developed by Ministry-sponsored EIP, to teach ethics within the framework of social studies, came as a surprise even for education experts.

After the decision to introduce the choice between Christianity and Ethics starting academic year 2004/2005 was already taken, very fragmented, at times even contradictory information was available as to how the study process would be ensured.

Even when making special inquiries about this process with working group members developing these standards, it was difficult to obtain information. Statements made by representatives of parents' organisations also confirm insufficient transparency of the process. They point out that they had no opportunity to participate in the decision making process. In addition, the public discussions that were held did not ensure the participation of various stakeholders and the chance to influence the decision. The atmosphere in which this decision was made is reflected in the composition of the advisory council on the contents of value education. Legislation provides that "*researchers, university teachers, representatives of teachers' associations and artists' unions, teachers and methodology experts from urban and rural areas, as well as representatives of the Department of Comprehensive Education of the Ministry of Education and Science*"⁹ should be involved; however, apart from the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, this Council predominantly consisted of people connected to religious organisations.¹⁰

⁹ ISEC (2002). *Mācību priekšmeta konsultatīvās padomes nolikums*. <http://isec.gov.lv/normdok/i020644.htm> (Retrieved on May 15, 2004.)

¹⁰ IZM (2003). Rīkojums Nr. 96 *Par Izglītības un zinātnes ministrijas konsultatīvās padomes vērtīborientējoša izglītības satura jautājumus izveidi*, February 28, 2003.



To the question *“Do you know (have you been informed/have you heard) that starting with the academic year 2004/2005 first graders from comprehensive schools will have to make a mandatory choice between two subjects – Christianity or Ethics?”* only 1/3 of the parents (34%) noted that they were informed, but almost 2/3 of those surveyed (64%) indicated that they had not been informed. Among the school representatives (directors, managers of the study process) 90% were informed about the reform, but almost 1/10 of the respondents (9%) indicated that they had not been informed.

Representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science and CCDE admitted that, partly to accommodate for the lack of time, several essential things related to the introduction of new study standards in schools were left in the competence of the school boards and school itself. One of the unresolved issues was the number of classes allocated for different subjects. Since the limit for the number of classes per week in grade 1 must not exceed 20, adding another subject meant that classes would be taken away from another subject.

Concerns were also expressed about leaving the choice up to the schools. It was felt that they might not ensure fairness as provided for by the law. It is not clear what should be done if only one student chooses a certain subject. Suspicions were voiced that some Russian-language schools might not ensure the right to choose. It was indicated that *“solutions will have to be found,”* if by autumn it becomes clear that the number of teachers is insufficient. Furthermore, the task of the school administration is further complicated by the fact that the number of pupils choosing one or another subject is not known, thus rendering it impossible to assess the potential workload of the teachers.

2.2. The process of implementing the reform

Problems are also related to the fact that there was a demand to develop the necessary changes and implement them within a very short period of time. The surveyed education experts admitted that the minimum period of time needed to introduce quality changes into the contents of a subject is 3–4 years. Within such a period of time it is possible to develop a program of adequate

quality, discuss it with stakeholders, then test this subject and prepare teachers.

In this case the process took approximately one year, which caused violations of the procedure prescribed by the regulations (regulated by Instruction No. 5 of the Ministry of Education and Science *“On the Procedure for developing standards of subjects, their approbation and testing.”*¹¹)

Experts state that one of the most crucial problems is the lack of pilot testing and experimentation – i.e., in contrast to other cases, in this case the quality of the developed study program initially will not be tested in a few select schools so that afterwards, when the appropriate changes are introduced, it can be implemented in all schools. In this case the new study subjects are to be introduced throughout the country starting with the academic year 2004/2005. It must be added that, when questioned about the conformity of the implementation of this study program to regulations, the interviewed officials of the Ministry of Education and Science and CCDE provided differing answers: some indicated that the first year would be treated as the testing period, others – that the testing had already taken place (discussions with teachers, consulting specialists).

In February/March 2004, 42% of surveyed school representatives expressed concern over the possible lack of well-prepared teachers. Other concerns included: problems with teaching aids (22%), funding, (15%), methodology and study plans (12%), parent support (8%) and finding adequate premises (7%). Some school representatives have also indicated problems related to the possibility of ensuring teachers with a full workload. When asked about whether teachers are available, 73% of school representatives answered that they had a teacher in their school that would be able to teach ethics if it were integrated into the social studies block. 63% said there was a teacher available for pupils of grades 1–3 if ethics were a separate subject, but only 37% said that there was an available teacher for Christianity.

Also, representatives of the boards of education surveyed at the end of May admit that in the majority of cases, first graders will be taught ethics by the classroom teacher, but Christianity teachers are being searched for. One of the problems is caused by the fact that parents will have to make their choice only on September 1, and only then it will become clear whether both the teachers or only one is necessary.

¹¹ IZM (2001). Instrukcija Nr. 5 *Mācību priekšmetu standartu izstrādes, saskaņošanas, aprobācijas un ieviešanas kārtība*, April 24, 2001. <http://isec.gov.lv/normdok/minstr5.htm> (Retrieved on July 12, 2004.)

School and board representatives were also worried that it is not clear which subjects would suffer “at the expense” of the choice between Ethics and Christianity. The model subject plan does not include time for these subjects.¹²

Despite the introduction of Christianity and Ethics, the model subject plan is not being amended. Each school and its pedagogical council are instructed to decide which subjects would suffer “at the expense” of the introduction of these new subjects. Interviews with representatives of the boards of education revealed different situations. Some admitted that they did not perceive this as a problem. Others were waiting for the model plan to be sent from Riga and were not aware that the model plan will not be provided; they said that this is just folly. Still others mentioned that teachers were quarrelling about whose subject will experience the decrease in the number of classes and which teachers, subsequently, will take a reduced work-load and salary so that the new subject can be introduced.

There were also concerns about the requirements set or not set towards the teachers of Christianity¹³. Even though it could be accepted that the teacher of this subject should be “a good Christian,” the fact itself that religious organisations start influencing the work of schools meets resistance (i.e., to meet the requirements set by the Ministry of Education and Science, only a person who has received the approval of one of the 5 Christian denominations shall be employed). At the same time no requirement has been set that the teacher who is going to teach Christianity to the pupils of grades 1–3 should have any experience in working with pupils of this age group. During the Christianity teacher’s forum on November 22, 2003, it was clarified that there were approximately 850 teachers who would be able to teach Christianity in schools¹⁴. However, problems may arise related with their territorial location and lack of experience in working with pupils of grades 1–3.

The emphasis of the requirements set by legislation for teachers of Christianity to a certain extent differ from the views of school representatives and parents. 64% of the parents and 77% of the school representatives consider it “*absolutely necessary*” that teachers of Christi-

anity in grades 1–3 should have experience in working with the pupils of grades 1–3. Pedagogical education is mentioned as “*absolutely necessary*” almost as frequently (parents: 59%; school representatives: 81%). Special training for teaching Christianity and the fact that the teacher himself or herself should be a Christian was considered to be “*absolutely necessary*” by 45% – 57% of the respondents, the authorization of the Church for the said person to teach this subject was considered to be absolutely necessary less frequently (parents: 35%; school representatives: 38%). With regard to the qualification of teachers, certain concerns were expressed that the short, few-day courses that would be offered to the teachers will not be sufficient to ensure the adequate qualification.

The authors of this reform stress that the subject of Christianity shall be interdenominational, so no problems should arise in teaching it to pupils of different denominations. However, the survey data show that only a relatively small portion of parents consider the denomination to which the teacher of Christianity belongs as an insignificant factor; in fact, their attitude towards the representatives of other large Christian confessions as teachers of Christianity is rather cautious.

3. Problems related to the views on the relationship between education and religion

The second set of problems is connected to the relationship between schools and religion. An overview of legislation will serve to characterise the *legal* background.

Defining the relationship between the school and religion, **The Law on Education**¹⁵ states:

Article 10. Education and Religion.

(1) *The system of education shall ensure freedom of consciousness. The pupils, according to their choice, shall study Christianity or ethics or Christianity and ethics simultaneously.*

(2) *The relationship between the institution of education and religious organisation shall be governed by the Law on Religious Organisations.*

¹² There was an attempt to have amendments passed by the Parliament to Law on Education, increasing the workload in the first grade from 20 to 22 classes, but this attempt failed. It is worth recalling that the lack of a model plan was one of the reasons why in 2003 the implementation of the reform on the contents of education, developed by ISAP, was postponed for a year.

¹³ Information about the requirements set towards the teachers of Christianity see in Annex.

¹⁴ Kluinis, A. Kā pirmklasniekus pievērsis kristietībai, *Rīgas Balss*, January 13, 2004.

¹⁵ Law on Education (29.10.1998, with amendments until 13.02.2004.). www.politika.lv/index.php?id=101723&lang=lv (Retrieved on July 14, 2004.)



Table 1. The answer of the parents of future pupils – Catholics, Lutherans, Orthodox, and those not belonging to denominations and groups that do not consider themselves to be believers, – to the question “Which denomination representing the teacher of Christianity to your child would you not object to?”

	Parents of the future pupils, n=616	To which denomination do you consider yourself belonging? To which denomination/religion do you belong?				
		Catholic	Lutheran	Orthodox	I consider myself to be a believer, but cannot consider myself as a member of a certain denomination	Do not consider myself to be a believer
Which denomination representing the teacher of Christianity to your child would you not object to?	Catholic	82.0%	29.1%	26.0%	20.8%	26.2%
	Lutheran	31.7%	76.9%	15.6%	30.2%	27.9%
	Orthodox	16.1%	12.7%	85.7%	18.9%	19.7%
	Baptist	5.6%	11.2%	6.5%	13.2%	6.6%
	Old Believers	1.9%	2.2%	7.8%	3.8%	6.6%
	Other	3.7%	8.2%	4.5%	17.0%	9.8%
	The denominational affiliation is not important	8.1%	16.4%	9.7%	34.0%	18.0%
	Hard to tell	3.7%	3.7%	2.6%	13.2%	32.8%
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	

However, the **Law on Religious Organisations**¹⁶ provides for the following:

Article 6. Religious Organisations and Education.

(1) Everyone shall have the right to study religion both individually and together with others in institutions of education of religious organisations.

(2) State and local government schools may teach the subject of Christianity to persons, who have expressed in written form the desire to learn it. Underaged persons submitting the petition requesting Christianity to be provided must do so with the written consent of a parent or guardian. If an underaged person is younger than 14 years, the petition is to be submitted directly by the parent or guardian.

(3) Christianity is taught by Evangelical Lutheran, Roman Catholic, Orthodox, Old Believer and Baptist teachers according to curricula approved by MOES and if there are at least 10 students who wish to learn the teachings of the particular faith. Teachers are promoted by the leadership of the religious denomination and licenced by the MOES.

(4) In response to the wishes of pupils and their parents or guardians, state and local government ethnic minority schools may teach the faith of the corresponding ethnic minority if they abide by the regulations set by the Ministry of Education and Science.

(5) The State budget finances the teaching of Christianity and ethics.

However, it should be added that the Law on Religious Organisations includes also the following provisions:

Article 4. The equality of people regardless of their attitude towards religion.

(1) Directly or indirectly restricting the rights of people or creating special privileges for people, as well as insulting or inciting hatred based on religion shall be prohibited. Persons guilty of this violation shall become liable in accordance with the procedure stipulated by the law.

(3) No records shall be made concerning the attitude towards religion or denominational affiliation in personal documents issued by the state.

¹⁶ Law on Religious Organisations (07.09.1995, with amendmends until 26.09.2002). www.politika.lv/index.php?id=103565&lang=lv (Retrieved on July 14, 2004.)

(4) The state and municipal institutions, public organisations, as well as companies and enterprises shall be prohibited from requesting information from their employees or other persons on their attitude towards religion or denominational affiliation.

It must be added that only those teachers who have received the mandate of a specific denomination (Lutheran, Catholic, Baptist, Orthodox or Old Believers) will be allowed to teach the subject of Christianity¹⁷.

Opponents of the introduction of mandatory choice between Ethics and Christianity quote the constitutional provision that the Church shall be separated from the State, and that the Law already provides for the opportunity to study Christianity not only at Sunday schools in churches, but also as an optional subject at comprehensive schools. Assessing the reform from a human rights perspective, there is criticism not only about the lack of consensus among the legal community, the officials, and the government regarding the provision that the church and the state should be separate, but also about support being provided to teach to any one denominational group.

Supporters of the reform substantiate their views with the necessity to fight against the moral crisis in society and believe that this step will promote spiritual values in society; in addition, the standards of social subjects offered by EIP *“had the aim or the intended effect to oust everything Christian from education, and the experts funded by the World Bank and the Soros Foundation are trying to push the foundation stone from the arc of our European identity, without knowing what to replace it with”* (Jānis Vanags in the interview to *“Lauku Avīze”* 21.08.2003.)

However, others object to the argument that Christianity is going to enhance the moral and spiritual values of the nation, stating it Has not been confirmed in global studies; for example, the researcher of religions of the Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at the University of Latvia Agita Misāne asks, *“Has the Ministry of Education and Science tried to identify the true correlation between the teaching of Christianity at schools and the improvement of the moral climate in society? Its impact upon alcohol and drug abuse among young people, upon crime? The basic answer is: there is no correlation.”*¹⁸

Public attitude towards the Church has been positive. According to the data of SKDS, in December 2003, 68% of Latvia's population surveyed noted that they trust the

Church. Among these 27% said they have *“complete trust.”* However, when assessing their attitude towards the statement *“Religion has an important role in my life,”* 49% of respondents agreed with it, among these 18% – *“totally agreed”*, but 48% disagreed, among these 20% *“totally disagreed”* (data of the survey of Latvia's population carried out by SKDS in May 2004).

The survey of parents of future first graders and school representatives also included several questions concerning the views on the relationship between the Church and the State. One question called for them to answer:

- whether it would be better if the influence of the church in schools increased;
- whether the church should become completely separated;
- or whether they considered the existing (pre-reform) relationship between the school and the church to be optimal.

32% of the parents and 57% of school representatives felt that the current relationship was optimal. 21% of the parents and 16% of the school representatives expressed the opinion that *“it would be better if the school and the Church would become completely separated,”* but 18% of the parents and 14% of the school representatives indicated that *“it would be better if the influence of the Church increased.”*

The results show that the attitude of the parents and school representatives towards the involvement of school in teaching Christianity is not unequivocal. 47% of the parents and 43% of the school representatives considered that the assistance provided by the school in teaching Christianity would only be beneficial to the child. The opposite view that religion is a personal and family matter and that the school should not interfere with it was expressed by 45% of parents and 51% of school representatives.

However, in assessing the capacity of the schools to ensure qualitative teaching of Christianity, the school representatives gave a more positive assessment than parents. Nevertheless, both parents and school representatives have more often noted, *“only the congregation is able to ensure qualitative teaching of Christianity”* (parents: 44%, school representatives: 41%), then that *“the school is able to provide qualitative teaching of Christianity”* (parents: 26%, school representatives:

¹⁷ Information about the requirements set towards the teachers of Christianity see in Annex.

¹⁸ BNS (2003). *Laikraksts: jaunā izglītības politika apdraud valsts un baznīcas nošķirtību*, November 27, 2003.



37%). A comparatively large portion of the respondents abstained from assessing the capacity of the school to ensure qualitative teaching of Christianity (parents: 30%, school representatives: 22%).

Conclusions

The reform, which was initiated in the summer of 2003 and calls for the introduction of a mandatory choice between the subject of Ethics and Christianity in the program of grades 1–3, and that these subjects shall be taught in comprehensive schools starting with the academic year 2004/2005, was done in haste.

The content of the proposed changes touch on a very sensitive issue, the relationship between religion and education and in a wider sense between religion and the state. The haste in which these amendments were approved precluded proper discussions prior to making this decision. The authors of the decision have not involved society in discussions, which is contradictory both to the declarations of Indulis Emsis' and Einars Repše's governments, which presupposed attempts to involve society in the decision making process¹⁹.

Problems appeared also during the process of implementing the decision – the groups that are directly affected by this decision – the school representatives and the parents – were not informed about the proposed changes, and insufficient resources is an obstacle for schools to ensure a study process of high quality, which is predominantly manifested by the lack of teachers.

Recommendations

When introducing changes to the content of education, a minimum implementation time should be expected for each stage. As the testing of subjects, preparing of teachers and other tasks related to the introduction of changes are time-consuming, there should be a mechanism that prevents the possibility that any of those stages is badly and hastily implemented.

When introducing changes in the education policy process, the necessity of these changes should be substantiated. The Ministry of the Education and Science

should provide the public with timely information on and justification for planned changes.

When implementing changes to the content of education, public discussions should be held and the interests of the stakeholders should be taken into consideration.

The information flow between the Ministry of Education and Science, education boards, schools, and parents should be improved to ensure that all stakeholders are informed about plans and critical issues.

When planning changes in education content, the availability of resources should be assessed in advance in order to avoid situations when reforms are scheduled to be implemented without the necessary resources.

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¹⁹ *Deklarācija par Induļa Emša vadītā Ministru kabineta iecerēto darbību* (08.03.2004.), www.mk.gov.lv/index.php/lv/9591 (retrieved on July 15, 2004) and *Deklarācija par Einara Repšes vadītā Ministru kabineta iecerēto darbību* (07.11.2002), www.mk.gov.lv/index.php/lv/6775 (retrieved on July 15, 2004).

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Annex

Requirements for teachers of Christianity

are traditional in Latvia by issuing a certificate that shall include the following information:

1. Professional higher pedagogical education

2. Church mandate

“Teachers of Christianity as an interdenominational subject at the institution of education shall be nominated by the leadership of the Christian denominations that

Traditional Christian denominations:

1) Lutheran, 2) Catholic, 3) Orthodox, 4) Baptist, 5) Old Believers.

Each Church has established its own procedure and requirements for receiving its mandate.

3. Adequate professional qualification

Department of Theology, University of Latvia	Professional study program of religion and ethics (4 terms of studies)	+ professional further training
Department of Pedagogy, University of Latvia	The professional study program for the teacher of Christian morality and ethics (until 1999, 50 people)	(B1)
1) Academy of Luther – Latvian Evangelic Lutheran Church 2) Riga Highest Institute of Religious Scholarship – Catholic Church 3) Theology Seminar of Latvian Association of Baptist Congregations – Latvian Association of Baptist Congregations 4) The Spiritual Seminary of the Synod of the Orthodox Church – Orthodox Church 5) Other (Latvian Academy of Christianity, Christian Mission of Latvia and other)	The Church’s approval of the theological education that is obtained	Mandatory B1 and till 01.09.2006. B2

Program B1 (36 hours) will introduce the teachers to the contents of the new subject – “Christianity” (the project of standards for grades 1–3, the program for grade 1) and the methods (planning, methodology, evaluation, and teaching aids).

Program B1 shall be implemented by the Department of Theology of the University of Latvia; it will also issue a continuing education certificate to the teachers.

Program B1 shall be completed in 3 days (Riga and regions) + 1 day – (The Forum of Christian teachers in Riga, 18.08, 2004).

Pre-School Institutions in Latvia

Mārīte Seile and Jana Lejiņa (School Support Centre)

Summary

The amendments to the Education Law of 5 July 2001 provide for compulsory preparation of 5 and 6-year old children for school; similar provisions also exist in many other European countries. The above amendments came into force on 1 September 2002. Local governments are responsible for implementing the new provisions. The implementation of the legal change has drawn additional attention to local government success at preparing students for regular school as well as the functioning of pre-school institutions in general.

The key problem among the preschools participating in the study is that they **mainly serve as a provider of physical supervision and security and less as a place of intellectual, emotional, and moral growth. Indeed, children are looked after and their safety is guaranteed. But it is not a place where children's intellectual, emotional and moral growth is ensured. In the final phase of pre-school**

education children are supposed to be prepared for school, however, this is subject to free interpretation of each individual educational establishment, as there are no clearly defined criteria on the expected results.

This article offers insight into some aspects of pre-school educational establishments by underlining the strengths, as well as by identifying problems and proposing potential solutions.

This article draws on the data collected within the project "Education Policy in Local Governments" supported by the Soros Foundation – Latvia and PROVIDUS.

Introduction

Under the Education Law, pre-school education is one of the stages of education defined as "the stage where the multi-faceted development of a child's per-

Table 1. Pre-school institutions in Latvia

	2002	2001	2000	1999
Number of pre-school educational institutions	551	552	561	573
State and local government institutions	529	540	540	561
Institutions owned by legal or natural persons	22	12	12	12
Number of children at pre-school educational institutions	59 540	61 451	61 759	65 097
State and local government institutions	58 150	60 578	60 901	64 461
Institutions owned by legal or natural persons	1390	873	858	636
Break-down of children at pre-school educational institutions by language of instruction (%)				
Latvian	71.5	72.5	72.5	72.4
Latvian and Russian	4.6	4.5	4.5	4.0
Russian	23.7	22.7	22.8	23.4
Polish	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2
Teaching staff at pre-school educational institutions	7788	8157	8245	8460

Source: MOES, 2004.



sonality takes place, their health is strengthened, and they prepare for the acquisition of primary education.” In the year 2000, almost 60 000 children attended pre-school institutions (see Table 1).

The amendments to the Education Law of 5 July 2001 state that 5- and 6-year olds must undergo preparation for acquiring general education. These amendments came into force on 1 September 2002.

The Law assigns responsibility for primary school education to the local government. Local government is to provide primary school education to all children who reside in their administrative territory. In coordination with the Ministry of Education and Science, local governments are authorized to establish, reorganize and close pre-school educational institutions (hereafter kindergartens), appoint and dismiss the manager of the kindergarten, set the procedure whereby educational institutions are financed from the local government budget, and are responsible for the maintenance of such institutions.¹

Because of the new legislation, we were interested in observing how kindergartens function and are operated. We carried out a survey of education services in the local government, and within that survey we studied kindergartens. The larger project covered 44 school managers, 910 teachers, and 2381 parents in 3 municipalities. Of those participating in the survey, 16 managers, 185 teachers and 643 parents worked in pre-school institutions. For the purpose of the survey questionnaires were developed for all groups involved. Reports were prepared on each school and kindergarten located in the municipalities participating in the research, as well as a report on the status of the educational system in each respective municipality.

Results

1. Adaptation process in kindergartens

The majority of parents and teachers believe that kindergartens help children adapt to the new environment of the kindergarten:

- through discussions with parents, teachers learn about the specific characteristics of each child;

- through teachers' particular attention to and encouragement of new students;
- through individual sessions with the children;
- by enrolling children gradually – with 2–3 new children per week;
- by allowing new parents to take part in the sessions and also take their children home early;
- by allowing new children to spend only half a day in the kindergarten;
- by allowing children to bring their favorite toys from home;
- by showing children around the new premises and introducing them to the staff and other children;
- by providing emotionally pleasing surprises;
- by showing children interesting new toys and games.

2. Identification of knowledge, skills and abilities of the children

In kindergarten, a child's knowledge, skills and abilities are partially monitored based on predetermined criteria. This is usually done twice a year:

- “In December and May diagnostics are carried out in one subject area according to the annual plan.”²
- “Assessment takes place twice a year by organizing test sessions and presenting reports at teacher meetings.”
- “In the beginning of the school year special forms are completed, identifying the skills and abilities of the children. At the end of the school year additional information is entered in the forms. Based on the results, the development of skills and abilities of the children is analyzed.”

When the time approaches for children to start school, more attention is paid in kindergarten to the children's level of preparedness:

- “The degree of preparedness of children for school is identified through game-oriented sessions, individual and group work and their self-servicing skills.”
- “5 and 6-year old children are observed throughout the year. The analysis is carried out pursuant to

¹ The implementation of the legal change has drawn additional attention not only to the final stage of pre-school education, but also to the functioning of pre-school institutions in general. This article analyses some aspects of functioning of pre-school educational establishments by underlining the strengths, but also identifying the problems and proposing potential solutions.

This article draws on the data collected within the project “Education Policy in Local Governments,” which was financially supported by the Soros Foundation – Latvia and PROVIDUS.

² Here and further in the article: quotations from study interviewees.

the criteria set by the Ministry of Education and Science (MOES). In addition, the personal characteristics of the children and their communication skills with peers and adults are also analyzed.”

- “Preparedness of children for school is identified twice a year by means of psychological tests.”
- “In cooperation with grade 1 and grade 2 teachers from primary schools, preparedness of children for school is examined – their skills, abilities and the level of development are identified, as well as their ability to integrate in a group.”
- “By means of various tests and psychologist’s support the level of preparedness of children for primary school is identified.”
- “To assess preparedness of children for school, intellectual games are played at the end of the school year.”

Staff are focused mainly on preparation of children for school. It should be noted that, although teachers from several kindergartens refer to the criteria set by the MOES, so far (i.e., by 22 January 2004) no such criteria have been adopted. The MOES has only prepared and approved (on 25 May 2002) “The Model Program for Compulsory Preparation of 5 and 6-Year Old Children for School,” which defines the following intended results of the implementation of the program:

- 1) the child is prepared psychologically and practically to start acquisition of primary education;
- 2) the child is aware of himself/herself, is able to explore the external environment (nature, objects, phenomena), societal processes and develop the initial civic awareness of being a part of society of Latvia.

Thus, it remains up to the discretion and experience of the kindergarten teacher to understand the intended results of preparing the child for school, and to determine and develop each child’s potential. No kindergartens have developed strategies or substantiated methodologies for comprehensive identification and development of the abilities of the children.

In response to the question “What should be the priority issues in kindergarten?”, teachers in all kindergartens seemed more concerned about preparing the child for school than the parents. The parents expressed the need for:

- taste and manners,
- hygiene skills,
- independence,
- mutual assistance and tolerance,
- self-confidence and skills development.

From all the surveyed kindergartens the Catholic kindergarten is less concerned about preparing children for school. Only 20% of teachers and 28% of parents state that more attention should be paid to this aspect. This differs from other kindergartens, where 50–100% of teachers and 40–64% of parents attach importance to this aspect.

Kindergartens reflect a general trend of the educational system in Latvia, namely, children with specific learning difficulties can expect particular attention from teachers:

- “The psychologist tests the children who preschool teachers believe are not psychologically and socially ready for school. The results are processed, the parents are informed of the results and advised to continue consultations with the psychologist and, if required, to postpone the beginning of schooling of their child.”

Typically, such consultations are not offered to children who comply with the *norm*. In specialized kindergartens attended by children with health problems or learning difficulties, close cooperation takes place between the teachers, speech therapists and parents. Unfortunately, only 20% of non-specialized kindergartens refer to this kind of practice. However, there are no integrated cooperation plans to facilitate the resolution of a specific problem or development of the child.

Only 20–50% of parents believe that the information they receive about their children is complete. On average, 50% of the parents feel informed about successes and achievements of their children.

3. Teaching and upbringing work in kindergartens

In 67% of kindergartens teachers conduct classes in accordance with the **Model Programs** approved by the MOES. In the remaining kindergartens about 2/3 of teachers conduct classes according to modified programs. The implementation of the educational program is evaluated at staff meetings and meetings between the teacher and the parents. 10% of kindergartens also invite local politicians from the municipal culture committee to such meetings.

75% of kindergartens involved in the research have not carried out any **experimental** or innovative programs over the last two years. In the remaining 25% of kindergartens innovations basically have been related to attempts to integrate children with special needs, to include environment education and Christian upbringing.



In 12% of the surveyed kindergartens, **individualization of learning** takes place in group sessions organized in the form of learning centers. In all other kindergartens the teachers “ensure individualization of learning according to individual characteristics and learning styles of the children.” Separate sessions are organized for children with learning difficulties. Teachers work with such children on an individual basis.

- “In the afternoon there are additional sessions for children who experience difficulties in acquiring skills.”
- “Separate sessions for children with learning difficulties – group work or individual work.”

No kindergarten has introduced a system for working with talented children. Instead:

- teachers assign additional work to them;
- they are nominated for competitions and perform leading roles at festivals.

24% of kindergartens are attended by children with **special needs** – suffering from celiac disease, vision impairment, speech impairment, as well as mentally handicapped children. However, about a half of the managers of kindergartens state that their institution is not equipped for such children because of the lack of trained staff and appropriate facilities.

To deal with upbringing problems continuous follow-up strategies interchange with periodic measures:

- “The upbringing work is carried out with children at all times – teachers observe how well the children have learned norms of behavior.”
- “Discipline problems in kindergartens are dealt with by way of discussion and positive examples against which the children evaluate their own actions.”
- “The kindergarten tries to ensure application of uniform requirements at home and at kindergarten. Seminars and role plays are organized for the parents.”
- “Theme weeks are organized at the kindergarten – development of an interactive culture, proper behavior and hygiene norms.”
- “Teacher meetings are conducted at the kindergarten and information stands are set up.”
- “Once a year parents meet the psychologist; in addition, individual consultations with the psychologist and speech therapist can be organized.”
- “Problems related to upbringing of children are discussed at meetings between the parents and the teachers, which sometimes are organized upon request of the parents.”

Psychologists are not always available at kindergartens. Their involvement usually deals with the consequences of a problem rather than its prevention. This is illustrated by a kindergarten manager, who reports, “There are no major problems related to upbringing of children. In case a problem emerges we would ask for assistance by a psychologist or the Orphan’s Court.”

Despite the fact that 40–75% of teachers from different kindergartens refer to aggression by children, no respondents mentioned this as a problem when speaking of project themes or operational objectives.

In all kindergartens involved in the survey, on average the parents cited aggression by other children as a threat to their children by 30% less frequently than the teachers.

The lowest number of respondents who had observed aggression was from the Catholic kindergarten – 40% of the teachers and 16% of the parents. On the opposite extreme was the specialized kindergarten attended by children with health problems – 75% of the teachers and 30% of the parents.

The majority of the parents believe that the kindergarten supports them in the upbringing of their children.

The range of **events** organized in kindergartens is quite similar. The most typical examples include:

- young soloist’s contest “Chicken”;
- recitation contests;
- song contests;
- “Olga’s disco”;
- drawing competitions;
- children’s drama festival;
- competitions related to seasonal holidays;
- hat festival;
- toy competition;
- sports days, etc.

Only one kindergarten was involved in a socially active project different from the traditional talent development activities – the municipal project “Ecological education and information on waste-related problems.”

When asked “Do all children have an opportunity to perform in events organized by the kindergarten?”, 78–100% of the teachers and only 41–69% of the parents reply in the affirmative. One parent observed that “in events attended by the parents usually the same children give performances, and this damages the self-confidence of other children.”

A greater unanimity of views can be observed regarding the question as to whether or not the number of events organized for children is sufficient. In one third of the kindergartens the views of the teachers and the parents, in fact, are identical. However, in the remaining

kindergartens almost all the teachers state that the number of events is sufficient, but only 58–79% of the parents are of the same opinion. The position of this part of parents is best described by the following response: “Children could visit theatres, museums, go on excursions. Unfortunately, I have not noticed the management organizing such events or discussing them with the parents.”

The views of the teachers and parents differ greatly regarding the question as to whether or not the number of field trips organized by the kindergarten is sufficient. 44–83% of the teachers and only 5–38% of the parents give a positive answer to this question. In some kindergartens the difference of opinion amounts to 25–50%.

If **additional activities** in kindergartens are financed by the state or the local government (38% of local governments finance some additional activities), they are attended by 90–100% of the children. Such activities include Latvian language classes, folklore studies, corrective gymnastics and massage in specialized kindergartens.

Other additional activities – English classes, ballroom dancing, folk dancing, visual arts, speech therapy sessions are financed by the parents, and such activities are attended, on average, by 11–30% of children.

47–66% of the parents are satisfied with the offer of additional activities. The rest would like to have a larger variety of possible activities, among which they would prefer foreign language classes, drawing lessons and psychologist’s consultations.

The views of the parents and teachers differ on the question as to whether or not more attention should be paid in kindergartens to developing interests and hobbies. In one third of the kindergartens, half of the teachers and half of the parents give a positive answer; also in one third of the kindergartens about 83% of the teachers and 39% of the parents give a positive answer, and in the last third of the kindergartens about 30% of the teachers and 50% of the parents answer in the affirmative.

To facilitate **social and ethical development** of the children, students from senior groups participate in charity events and social undertakings. They give concerts to low-income families and pensioners. They also make drawings for exhibitions in hospitals and prepare gifts for children in hospitals. Children from one kindergarten have participated in cleaning the banks of the local river.

4. Pre-school educational institution as a place where children are looked after

In 80% of the kindergartens the internal regulations are developed by the administration only, i.e. without the participation of teachers, parents or others. Only in 20% of the kindergartens the internal regulations are aimed not only at ensuring optimum work, but also at consolidating the interested parties. In these cases teachers, parents and local politicians jointly set the internal rules of procedure.

The kindergartens, within the limits of their possibilities, try to promote a healthy life-style by:

- creating conditions for outdoor physical activities for children,
- teaching children to look after their oral hygiene,
- encouraging general fitness and improved immunity of the children,
- issuing fluoride pills,
- signing catering agreements with local farmers,
- making sure that there are no smokers among the teachers.

Almost all the teachers state that the children spend sufficient time outdoors. However, only 40% of the parents share this opinion.

According to the teachers and parents, lunches are well organized and take place in a pleasant atmosphere. Teachers make sure that the children are not hungry. They can always have a drink. However, the quality of food is a controversial topic. In the same kindergarten the views on the quality of food can be extremely opposite.

5. Cooperation with the parents

In 80% of the kindergartens, representative bodies of the parents are established. Their responsibilities include the following:

- supplementing material resources for the classes,
- organizing festivals for the children,
- dealing with economic issues of the kindergarten,
- organizing excursions,
- organizing meetings, open house days,
- participating in the development of regulations and annual plans of the kindergarten.

Unfortunately, only 50% of the parents, on average, know about the existence of these representative bodies.

It is interesting to note that in the kindergartens that



do not have a representative body of the parents, the attitude of the parents towards the kindergarten is about the same as in those kindergartens that have such bodies. Therefore it seems that parents are only formal, not actual, cooperation partners.

In all kindergartens parental meetings are organized 2–5 times a year, as well as individual consultations for parents, if requested by the parent or teacher. In 20% of the kindergartens these are the only activities involving the parents. In all other kindergartens it is a tradition to celebrate the following festivals with the participation of the parents:

- Mother's Day,
- Granny's Day,
- National Day,
- Christmas,
- theatre day,
- sports days,
- poetry days, and others.

25% of the kindergartens also mention open door days. Only 10% of the kindergartens organize seminars for the parents.

Although both teachers and parents mention cooperation and exchange of views with the parents, and open sessions with the children and the parents among the positive aspects, in reality the parents are mostly used as *labor* for renovation and cleaning and the *source* of financial and material *resources* rather than equal cooperation partners and a source of intellectual input and experience.

The perceptions of the parents and the teachers about the influence of parents on life in the kindergarten differ from place to place. A common feature observed in all kindergartens is that, irrespectively of the nominal figures, 25% more teachers than the parents themselves state that parents have a large influence on the kindergarten.

Similarly, a large diversity of views can be observed in responses to the question "Should the parents be more involved in the life of the kindergarten?" In all kindergartens the views of the parents and the teachers differ by 30%. In about a half of the kindergartens the teachers rather than the parents expect higher participation.

Unfortunately, many facts were identified during the survey pointing at insufficient communication between parents and the kindergarten. For example, in one kindergarten the responses of the parents to the question "May the parents bring the children to the kindergarten at any time?" were divided as follows: 50% – "yes", 27% – "no", and 23% – "in exceptional cases." Similar examples can also be observed in all other kindergartens.

6. Pre-school educational institution as a social environment

Among the positive features of the kindergartens the parents state the following:

- pleasant, friendly environment,
- attitude towards the children,
- attitude towards the parents,
- arrangement of premises,
- attitude by the staff and the management towards the children.

80% of parents believe that the teachers understand the problems of the children fully or partially.

The relations between the teachers and parents are mostly regarded as good and very good. Overall, the parents have a more positive view on these relations. Almost all the parents rank the relations with the class teacher of their child as very good.

The majority of the parents (83%) are satisfied with the kindergarten attended by their child.

Parents most often state the following reasons for choosing the particular kindergarten:

- the kindergarten is located close to the place of residence,
- they have heard good feedback about the kindergarten,
- there are convenient transportation connections.

17% of the parents state that for them the possibility to leave the child for the night at the kindergarten is of utmost importance.

On average, 90% of the parents confirm that their child likes to go to the kindergarten.

7. Pre-school educational institution as a work-place

All **managers** in the surveyed kindergartens are women. The managers have completed university education specialized in pedagogy, they have 17–43 years of work experience as teachers and 4–18 years as managers. The list of seminars attended by the managers over the course of the last few years include the following:

- "Educational management";
- "Program development principles and practical implementation";
- "Regional seminar for methodologists of pre-school educational institutions";
- "Role and activities of the manager in a team";

“Effective organization and management of the teaching process”;

“Project planning and management in practice”;

“Safety at work”;

“Managing a bilingual educational institution”;

“Pedagogical corrective work with children who have special needs.”

60–90% of the teachers state that they can rely on support by the manager. There is only one kindergarten where the ratio of the teachers sharing this view is only 40%.

The majority of the **teachers** meet the job requirements set by the MOES. The teachers who have not completed university education are now pursuing it. No significant turnover of staff can be observed in the kindergartens.

Only in one kindergarten have the majority of the teachers (80%) been working there for less than 10 years. In all other kindergartens 73–100% of the teachers have been working there for more than 10 years.

88% of the kindergartens have prepared medium term (3–5 years) **development plans**. In all kindergartens the administration and the teachers’ council or all teachers were involved in the development of the plan. In one third of the kindergartens the parents also participated in the planning process. The development goals are clearly defined in those kindergartens that have been set up for a specific purpose (to serve children with speech defects or those suffering from a particular disease), that present the views of specific religious groups or that have identified an overarching goal, for example, environment protection. In all other kindergartens the defined long-term objectives are very broad and general and do not leave an impression that they can serve as a genuine motivator of purposeful activities.

Only 30% of the kindergartens note that they monitor the implementation of the development plan.

The kindergartens use the following forms of **in-service training** for teachers:

- seminars,
- practical workshops,
- exchange of experience,
- meetings of methodology commissions,
- open classes,
- observation of classes,
- compiling experiences into materials.

The forms the teachers appreciate most are the meetings of methodology commissions, observation of classes, open classes and discussions with their colleagues. On

average, more than 70% of the teachers regard meetings of methodology commissions and observation of classes as useful for their work. On the other hand, 90–100% of the teachers appreciate discussions with their colleagues and open classes. 70–78% of the teachers state that they feel they can rely on their colleagues for support.

The assessment of the performance of the teachers is used to plan for continuing education for teachers and to offer relevant **courses and seminars**. In a half of the kindergartens 67%–75% of the teachers state that participation in the courses has been useful for their work. In 17% of the kindergartens all teachers state that the courses have been useful for their work. In the remaining 33% of the kindergartens less than a half of the teachers share this opinion.

About one third of the teachers express the view that the university studies to obtain a **bachelor degree or professional qualification** have been of little use for their work.

38% of the kindergartens neither participate in **projects** nor coordinate them.

In the remaining 62% of kindergartens the teachers either prepare projects themselves or participate in projects coordinated at the national level. The most important project themes identified by the respondents include the following:

- “Impact of one’s disposition on the development of the personality of the child”;
- “Opportunities for Christian upbringing for children between 3 and 10 years of age”;
- “Mutual relations between the child and the parents”;
- “Psychological preparation of 5 and 6-year old children for school”;
- “Perceptions of the image of a teacher among various social groups”;
- “The impact of artistic activities on the emotional experience of pre-school age children”;
- “Speech development and factors influencing it”;
- “Aesthetic value of nature in developing cognitive skills of the pre-school student”;
- “Development of proper behavior in pre-school age children.”

Only one kindergarten participates in an international project.

In 60% of the kindergartens 50–80% of the teachers regard participation in projects ineffective and not useful for their work.

Managers of kindergartens use the following incentives **to motivate the teachers**:



- annual financial bonuses,
- salary supplements financed by the municipality,
- certificates of merit,
- praise,
- highlighting achievements of the teachers on the information board,
- publishing information in the local press.

In 88% of the kindergartens the criteria for performance assessment of teachers have been set up to provide for a 10% pay supplement. The following factors are considered:

- teaching process,
- preparation of children for school,
- participation in projects,
- development of methodology materials,
- continuing education,
- feedback from parents.

33–66% of kindergarten teachers believe that they know the criteria against which their performance is assessed. In 66% of the kindergartens less than one third of the teachers accept such criteria. In the remaining 34% of the kindergartens more than half of the teachers accept such criteria.

In 83% of the kindergartens almost all teachers believe that the pay supplements are awarded fairly. In 16% of the kindergartens less than a quarter of the teachers share this opinion.

Teacher satisfaction with their pay level varies among kindergartens. It fluctuates within the range from 0% to 67%. Therefore, it is clear why 33–100% of the teachers in different kindergartens have stated that they are never or only sometimes satisfied with their pay.

In 57% of the kindergartens all teachers confirm that they feel responsibility for their work. In 29% of the kindergartens on average 87% of the teachers feel responsible for their work. And in 14% of the kindergartens only 40% of the teachers feel responsible for what they do.

40–100% of the teachers are satisfied with the institution at which they are employed.

8. Material provisions and financing of pre-school educational institutions

In all kindergartens the work conditions in terms of the number of children per square meter, lighting, safety of surrounding environment, hygiene and aesthetics comply with the standards. All kindergartens have classrooms, a kitchen, a doctor's office, and a playground.

70% of the kindergartens have a gym-hall, 57% – a sports ground, 29% – showers. Only 14% of the kindergartens have facilities enabling access for children with special needs. In 40% of the kindergartens the sanitary facilities have been assessed as being in good condition, in the rest – as satisfactory.

As regards technical equipment, all kindergartens have audio and video-players, a telephone, a book collection and access to the specialized press. 86% of the kindergartens have a Xerox machine and 1–2 computers. No kindergartens have access to the Internet.

Only 5% of teachers and 4% of parents assess the provisions in the kindergarten as very good, on average 24% of the teachers and 31% of the parents regard it as sufficient, 58% of the teachers and 50% of the parents – as satisfactory, and 12% of the teachers and 9% of the parents – as bad.

The main deficiencies identified by the respondents:

- lack of toys,
- old furniture,
- lack of newspapers and magazines.

In 70% of the kindergartens the only revenue sources are contributions by the state or municipality. In the remaining 30% of the kindergartens about 15% of revenue is generated from project activities, donations, economic activities (rent of premises, provision of catering services for camps), and parent contributions for catering.

Regarding the expenditure, about 54–73% of the budget is spent on salaries, 15–24% – for maintenance of buildings and premises, 9–22% – for purchases (food, hygiene products, cleaning).

The costs per child vary between 408 LVL and 1064 LVL per annum. The highest costs per child have been identified in those pre-school educational institutions that serve children with health problems or learning difficulties, therefore, it is obvious that they generate additional costs to hire additional specialists, provide rehabilitation services and purchase inventory. Speaking of non-specialized kindergartens, the costs per child increase sharply if the number of children in the kindergarten is low (see Figure 1). Moreover, in the smaller kindergartens participating in the survey, the relations between the manager and the teachers were not as good as in the large kindergartens, and parent satisfaction with the kindergarten was lower.

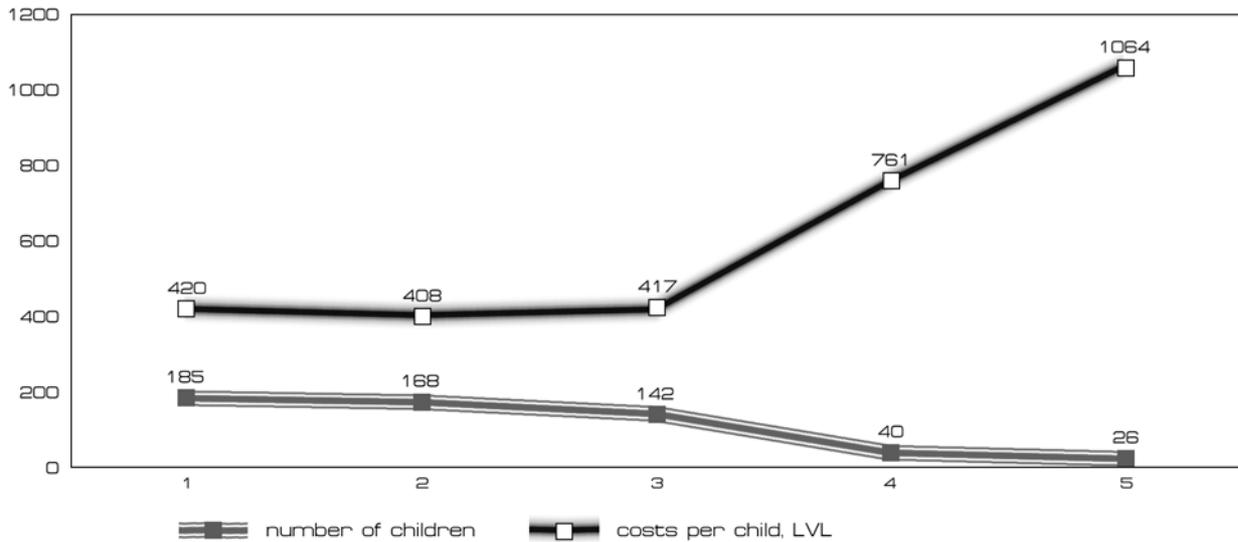


Figure 1. Relation between the number of children in the kindergarten and costs per child.

Conclusions

The following **positive features** have been observed in the kindergartens:

- overall, kindergartens manage to create a positive atmosphere appreciated by almost all parents (sections 1, 6);³
- almost all teachers feel responsible for their work (section 7);
- kindergarten is a safe place for a child, where he/she can spend a day in warmth, have meals and be looked after (sections 4, 8);
- talented children have opportunities to express their creativity (section 3);
- parents perceive the kindergarten as supportive in the upbringing process. (sections 3,6)
- almost all children go to kindergarten with pleasure (section 6).

Consequently, kindergartens work well as safe havens where parents can leave their children and know that they will be safe, will have meals and will be looked after.

The failure by the MOES to develop uniform criteria for the preparation of children for school presents difficulties for the kindergartens. As a result, teachers and parents in various kindergartens have different interpretations of the requirements regarding preparation of children for school (section 2).

The kindergartens insufficiently focus on identification and development of intellectual, emotional and moral characteristics of each and every child. The reasons for that include insufficient professional qualifications of the teachers and the lack of material resources hindering the development of a modern, developmental environment, professional growth of the teachers and the purposeful development of the organization (sections 2, 3).

Improvements are required in the following areas:

- insufficient focus on identification and purposeful development of the potential of all children (including talented children and children experiencing learning, physical, emotional and social difficulties) (sections 2, 3);
- insufficient communication between the manager of the kindergarten and the teachers (sections 4, 7);
- insufficient communication between parents and teachers (sections 2, 3, 4, 5);
- insufficient involvement of various parties – teachers, parents, the municipality – in decision-making (sections 4, 5, 7);
- parents are mostly used as *labor* for renovation and cleaning and the *source* of financial and material *resources* rather than equal cooperation partners and a source of intellectual input and experience (section 5);
- insufficient material and technical basis – worn-

³ In brackets, number of section in the final report on which given conclusions are based.



- out sanitary facilities, lack of gym-halls, worn-out inventory (section 8);
- kindergartens have no access to the Internet (section 8);
- ageing of the teaching staff (section 7);
- lack of male teachers in kindergartens (section 7);
- continuing education measures have not been selected purposefully and according to the needs of the kindergartens (section 7);
- lack of positive experience in project writing and implementation (section 7);
- in small kindergartens the consumption of resources is considerably higher than in large kindergartens (section 8).

Recommendations

The law calls for pre-school education to develop a child's multi-faceted personality, improve his/her health, and prepare the child to effectively enter school. To fully implement these objectives, the following is required:

- the MOES should define the criteria regarding preparation of children for school;
- each kindergarten should design a realistic and well-considered development plan by involving the kindergarten staff, parents and local government representatives; the implementation of the plan should be monitored, and adjustments made, where required;
- more attention should be paid to identification and development of the potential of each child, in addition to the provision of care and teaching of skills and knowledge required for school;
- the focus should be on the timely prevention of problems rather than the mitigation of consequences, therefore timely and regular cooperation

- among teachers, parents, psychologists and doctors or speech therapists, based on jointly developed action plan, should be required;
- new incentives should be introduced to attract young teachers;
- better communication between all involved parties;
- ways should be identified to improve the material and technical basis and the financial position of the kindergartens;
- kindergartens should be better supplied and provided with access to state-of-the-art information and communication technologies;
- professional growth of the teachers must be facilitated;
- to deal with the problem of overspending in the small kindergartens, cooperation projects between several municipalities could be considered.

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III. Higher Education and Life-Long Learning

Study Agreement

Andris Millers

The present situation

Quality education is a precondition for the successful development of contemporary society. Therefore, the acquisition of higher education not only benefits the individual, but also the public, and it should be protected by regulations set by the state. The relationship between the student and the institution of higher education should be developed in such a way as to ensure availability of the conditions needed for the acquisition of quality higher education. Such conditions would make it possible for the student to honestly abide by the demands set forth by the institution of higher education. As a result, the organisation of the study process would become equitable and manageable.

The content of the relationship between the student and the institution of higher education follows from the rights and obligations of both parties. The form of this relationship may be regulated in two ways:

- 1) by legislation¹,
- 2) by mutual agreement of the parties – an agreement.

This study will discuss the relationship between the institution of higher education and the student as defined by mutual agreement – the study agreement – with the aim to develop practical recommendations to achieve a high quality agreement. The requirements for the study agreement have been defined based on an analysis of the various standard forms of agreements offered by the majority of Latvian institutions of higher education².

The study programs offered by the institutions of higher education could be thought of as a type of service, with institutions of higher education as the service provider, and the student – the recipient of the service. The result of the provided service is the completed program of the institution of higher education, validated by a document of acknowledgement issued by the particular institution.

Fulfilment of the formal provisions of the study agreement is not limited simply to the payment of the tuition fee and issuing of the diploma, because the study process itself is a much higher priority to both the student and the state. Having a higher quality study process is in the public's interest. Thus, this study examines higher education in accordance with the level of quality required to provide the service.

The quality of the service has a broad definition in legal relationships, and is encountered in all spheres of life – the quality of cable TV service, the quality of the transportation service of goods, the quality of English language training courses, etc. The issue of whether the studies adequately meet the content of the service is under debate in Latvia, and therefore the legal regulation of the service should be examined.

Within Latvian legal framework, a service is defined as an order placed by a consumer, fulfilled for remuneration or without, as part of the business or professional activity of a natural or legal person, or as the fulfilment of an agreement concluded with the consumer that provides for the renting of an object, production of a new product, improvement or modification of an already existing object or part of it, the performance of work is

¹ The most important among these are the Law on Education and the Law on the Institutions of Higher Education.

² The agreements of the following institutions of higher education were examined: the University of Latvia, University of Banks, Business School "Turība," Ventspils University, University of Information Systems, Latvian University of Agriculture, Riga Stradiņš University, Latvian Academy of Sports Pedagogy, Liepāja Academy of Pedagogy, Riga School of Economics, Rēzekne University, Riga University of Pedagogy and Education Administration, Latvian Academy of Arts, Riga Graduate School of Law.



received, or an intangible result of work is obtained³. The consumer is a natural or legal person who expresses an interest in acquiring, acquires, or might acquire a commodity or use a service for a purpose that is not directly related to his or her entrepreneurial activities⁴.

As part of its professional activities, an institution of higher education provides a study program. This is the intangible result of work and is implemented as part of an order placed by the consumer⁵. Even though a student studies at an institution of higher education for his or her own personal gain, including to benefit his or her potential business activities, this link is not direct – the causal link between the education obtained and the business activities is indirect because it is not mandatory for a person to continue his or her professional activities. Therefore the agreement concluded by the student and the institution of higher education not only pertains to the quality of higher education but also to the general criteria for service quality included in acts of legislation.

The quality of higher education is characterised not only by the special requirements set by the state with regard to higher education, but also the general requirements set for services. In order to determine how well higher education service meets the expected quality requirements, the legal basis of the relationship between the student and the institution of higher education should be analysed, including the requirements for study fees and the study program of higher education to be completed.

Unfortunately, in practice study agreements between the institution of higher education and the student are widely perceived as a formal, signed document and not as an instrument to ensure that the rights and obligations of the parties are adhered to consistently. There are cases when institutions of higher education change the requirements of the accredited study program without sufficient consultation, increase the tuition fees without timely, prior notice and do not fulfil other essential responsibilities related to the contents and the scope of the study program to be completed.

On the other hand, the student can be expelled if he or she is not fulfilling his or her obligations towards the

institution of higher education. In accordance with Article 49 of the Law on Institutions of Higher Education, a person can be expelled, if the person so wishes, based on the fact that the principle of equality of candidates was violated during the enrolment process; a test or other academic assignment was not passed or completed within the set term; or the student violated the internal regulations of the institution of higher education.

The Law on Institutions of Higher Education defines the liability of the student *vis-à-vis* the institution of higher education in case the provisions of the agreement are not abided by, but does not regulate the issues that are related to the consequences of low quality service provided for within the framework of the study agreement. This situation in the context of equality of the contracting parties creates the ground for assessing the correspondence of tuition fees to the service received.

Enrolment at the institution of higher education and concluding of agreement

Enrolment at a study program is regulated by special regulations of enrolment, developed by the Ministry of Education and Science and the institutions of higher education⁶. Enrolment at a study program is done on the basis of a competition, using the results of centralised national exams. The contents and procedure of the centralised exams are developed by the Ministry of Education and Science, co-ordinated with the Council of Higher Education and with the approval of the Cabinet of Ministers⁷.

Presently the legislation does not include a provision that a written agreement should be concluded between the student and the institute of higher education. The analyses of the study agreements offered by the institution of higher education attempt to define the responsibilities of the student with regard to the institution of education according to the internal regulatory acts adopted by the institution, which allows them to unilaterally change the requirements set for students. The

³ Article 3.1, the Law on Consumer Protection.

⁴ Article 1.3, the Law on Consumer Protection.

⁵ The functioning of an institution of higher education is directly dependant upon the orders placed by the students, as there are demands set for the minimum number of students needed to open an institution of higher education. See: Cabinet of Ministers Regulation No. 67, February 3, 2004, *On Criteria for the Start of the Activities of the Institution of Higher Education*, paragraph 2.1.

⁶ Article 46, second and third paragraph, the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.

⁷ The procedure of enrolment is defined by the Instruction No. 8 of the Ministry of Education and Science, November 27, 2003, *The Terms of Enrolment into Institutions of Higher Education in Latvia*.

responsibilities of the institution of higher education with regard to the student are defined formally – the provisions of the law are copied, which either way are already binding. This situation causes frequent disputes and misunderstandings. Students tend to believe that the procedures for dealing with certain situations are unfair and arbitrary, and this creates administrative problems. While students feel that the rules are arbitrary and unfair, administrators tend to believe that students have not acquainted themselves with the rules and have thus violated them. As a result, administrative resources are overburdened, and the level of misunderstanding and conflict becomes an obstacle to the management of higher education.

The agreements offered by various institutions of higher education differ significantly. Some institutions do not offer to sign such agreements at all, considering that all the legal relationships needed for the realisation of studies goes into force automatically upon the addition of the person to the list of students – matriculation.

Thus, in the present situation the contents of the study agreement concluded between the institution of higher education and the student is completely in the competence of the institution of higher education. The student has no real possibility to influence the contents of the agreement, which goes against the principle of equality of the contracting parties. Therefore some of the agreements contain clauses that are not favourable to the students and that even violate their rights. The solution is to draft regulations on study agreements that are binding to the institutions of higher education.

The legal characteristics of the study agreement

The study agreement is a *civil law* agreement, concluded between a natural person – the student, and a legal person – the institution of higher education. Furthermore, the student is considered a consumer and the institution of higher education establishment as the service provider based on the definition of consumer rights protection. Out of all the types of agreement envisaged by the *Civil Law* the study agreement corresponds to the greatest extent to the agreement of undertaking. By concluding an agreement on undertaking, one party undertakes to provide a certain product to or

complete a certain event with the other party, for specified remuneration, using its own tools and equipment.⁸

In fact, the study agreement regulates the relationship between the institution of higher education and the student, which is a result of the expression of mutual will:

- 1) the student agrees to register for studies,
- 2) the institution of higher education – to matriculate the person into the list of students.

Thus the relationship between the two parties is created through mutual understanding – an agreement. The study agreement should define the scope of the rights and responsibilities of the two parties.

The study agreement is an agreement through which the institution of higher education undertakes to ensure the studies of the student within a specified study program, but the student – to pay the specified tuition fee, unless the student's position is financed by the state or local authority budget, and to abide by the internal regulations of the institution of higher education and requirements with regard to mastery of the study program. The provisions of the study agreement should correspond to the demands set in legislation; therefore a certain link exists between the requirements of the acts of legislation and the study agreement.

The institutions of higher education are autonomous⁹; therefore certain amendments should be introduced to the *Law on Institutions of Higher Education* that stipulate that the legal relationship between the institution of higher education and the student shall be regulated by a written study agreement. The requirements for the study agreement should be defined by acts of legislation, for example, a regulation of the Cabinet of Ministers, which would ensure the general binding character of the requirements.

Improved study agreement:
greater clarity, openness, balance
between the rights and obligations
of the parties

The interests of the parties
to be included in the study agreement

The aim of the study agreement is to have a clear definition of the rights and responsibilities of the parties – the institution of higher education and the student. The

⁸ Civil Law, paragraph one, Article 2212.

⁹ Article 4, the Law on Institutions of Higher Education.



rights of each party follow from its interests in ensuring a successful mutual relationship. The institution of higher education has the following interests:

- 1) the student should pay tuition fees on time,
- 2) the student shall fulfil the academic requirements set by the institution of higher education,
- 3) the student shall abide by the safety requirements set by the institution of higher education,
- 4) the student shall abide by the requirements of internal regulations set by the institution of higher education (hours of operation).

On the other hand, the student has the following interests:

- 1) completion of the chosen study program and receipt of the corresponding diploma upon completion of the program,
- 2) a sense of convenience during studies (timely information on the decisions of the administration, information on changes, a healthy and safe environment, etc.),
- 3) equal treatment of students,
- 4) objective evaluation – no other factors but knowledge are assessed.

Ensuring these interests and the liability for failing to ensure them define the specific contents of the study agreement. The responsibility of each party has a counterpart – the rights of the other party, subordinated to the specific interest, in order to reach the aim of the concluded agreement. The agreement should be drawn up according to the principle of the legal equality of the parties.

The legal equality of the parties

The agreement should abide by the principle of legal equality of the parties, which envisages that the mutual rights and responsibilities of the parties are distributed in a balanced way and that the interests of the parties are taken into account. A balanced distribution of the interests means that the mutual rights and responsibilities of the institution of higher education and the student are defined:

- 1) without violating the law,
- 2) taking into consideration the possibilities of the other party,
- 3) in accordance with the principle of good faith.

In turn, the responsibilities are defined following the principle that the action demanded from the other party

is the most possible, but the restrictions – the least possible, for successfully reaching the aim of the contract. The provisions of the agreement are contrary to the principle of the legal equality of the parties if they reduce the liability of the parties provided by the law and envisage that one of the parties might waive its legal rights, or are contrary to the principle of good faith.

The form

The acts of legislation that are presently in force (*The Law on Institutions of Higher Education, the Law on Education and the Law on Vocational Education*) do not specifically obligate the institution of higher education to conclude a written study agreement with the student. This situation does not contradict the principle of the freedom to conclude legal transactions as defined by the *Civil Law* (CL, Article 1473). However, the majority of institutions of higher education do conclude a written agreement with the students. Even though the chosen form of the agreement does not define the legal force of the agreement, with a written agreement, compared to oral, the responsibilities of the parties are nevertheless easier defined, are easier to prove, and are more obvious. Therefore it is advisable to conclude written agreements. The agreement should be drawn up in several copies, at least one of which should be kept by the institution of higher education and one by the student.

The terms

When enrolling at an institution of higher education, the aim of the student is to master a specific study program and to receive a diploma upon completion of the program. The aim of the university is to be able to protect itself from unanticipated claims against sudden fluctuations in public finance or cases of academic inadequacy on the part of individual students. The majority of higher education institutions conclude agreements for one academic year, not for the full term of study.

The solution might be for the institutions of higher education to conclude the agreement for the full period of the study program. However, this would pose a risk to the economic interests of the institution of higher education, since it is very difficult to forecast the future, therefore the tuition fees would probably be increased to cover the increase in the risk that the institution of higher education undertakes.

The distribution of risk is also associated with the

choice between a fluctuating or fixed interest rate in loans. The student should be offered a choice between a longer term for the study agreement with greater guarantees but higher tuition fees, and a study agreement with a shorter period, but smaller payment.

The institution of higher education that invests in development and has made a viable, sustainable strategy for development will reduce the risk of possible failure and will consequently benefit from the increase in the study fee. The student, on the other hand, will make a choice and clearly understand that the institution of higher education has also taken on additional risk.

Using the resources of the institution of higher education

The resources of the institution of higher education consist of material assets (computers, laboratory equipment, libraries, furniture, etc.), as well as rights (the right to use the premises, parking spaces, etc.), the usage of which ensures a successful and comfortable study process. The procedure of using these resources is usually defined in the internal regulations of the institution. However, these terms should also be included in the agreement, underlining the liability of the parties:

- 1) the liability of the student for violating regulations on the use of the resources and compensation for damages caused;
- 2) the liability of the institution of higher education on the safety of these resources with regard to the life, health and property of the student.

Protection of the student's personal data

The institution of higher education must ensure the protection of the student's personal data. Since approval by the subject of the data is mandatory in order to process personal data used by the institution of higher education on a daily basis¹⁰, the provisions concerning the use of the student's personal data by the institution should be included in the agreement. The responsibility of the institution of higher education would be to ensure a certain level of data protection, but the student would have the obligation to submit the data and inform of

changes in data over time. The agreement should also include provisions concerning the use of data created in relation to the student by the institution of higher education – test results, academic debts, payment details, participation in various projects, etc., and it is very important to indicate when such data may be made publicly available. At present it is often the case that institutions of higher education make public a student's test results, payment information, etc.

Copyright protection

As part of the study program the student produces, but the institution of higher education offers the use of different types of work. In both the cases the copyright of these works should be protected. The study agreement should contain clauses defining copyright protection:

The owner of the economic rights of the work should be indicated with regard to works produced by the student as part of the study process – the institution of higher education or the student. The role of the teacher-supervisor of the work and the resources offered by the institution of higher education in creating the product should be assessed. Thus far the copyright of the work created by the student has not been paid due attention, since the view prevails that these products have almost no practical value. This attitude is mistaken. The dispute regarding the economic rights of work created by the student may take on a special relevance, for example, with regard to software programs, sociological research, or a work of art.

If the student and the institution of higher education are co-owners of the copyright, then the procedure of agreeing upon the future use of such work should be provided for. It is common knowledge that there is a practice to put reports, course papers, etc. on the Internet, for example, the Internet portal www.atlants.lv.

As part of the study program, materials owned by the institution of higher education and materials created by faculty are used, which are all materials that are under copyright protection. The agreement should define the procedure and the terms for the use of such works – whether or not it is allowed to copy and distribute the lecture material, software program codes, etc., as well as the procedures for referencing the materials of study courses, etc.

¹⁰ Article 7.1, the Law on the Protection of Personal Data of Natural Persons.



An issue that is not yet perceived as topical in Latvia, but deserves attention is the question of paying a copyright remuneration for making copies of the copyright protected works at the libraries of institutions of higher education. Perhaps the terms of paying the copyright remuneration should be defined in the study agreement.

Dispute resolution

One mechanism for ensuring a successful equal relationship between the institution of higher education and the student is the possibility of appealing a decision passed by the administration of the institution that is not favourable to the student, as well as to appeal the assessment made of a test or mandatory assignment. It is important that the person judging the dispute be objective – unbiased as to the result and judging in accordance with acts of legislation and regulations that are in force.

At present, the Court of Arbitration examines claims submitted by the student with regard to restrictions or violations of academic freedoms, as well as rights provided for by the constitution of the institution of higher education¹¹. Each institution of higher education may provide for a special procedure of dispute resolution, for example, defining the procedure that the student may use to appeal the evaluation of his or her knowledge. Unfortunately, in practice the Court of Arbitration does not review cases, which is partly due to the complex operating characteristics of the Court of Arbitration, as well as to a lack of trust in its impartiality (this is especially typical of small institutions of higher education where the academic staff know each other well, or in private institutions where students feel convinced that the opinion of the founders of the institution will prevail). For a judgement to be executed by the administration, it must receive the approval of the Senate,¹² which means that in practice the dispute will be examined by the Senate, thus further complicating the dispute resolution procedure.

It is clear that the procedure of dispute resolution defined by the law is ineffective, so it should be improved by signing a study agreement. The institution of higher education should develop a mechanism for dispute resolution that could be trusted by the claimants, thus the study agreements should define the

establishment of such a mechanism, the procedure for starting a case, its examination and passing of a judgement.

The ethical aspects of the relationship between the student and the institution of higher education

The study agreement is an instrument ensuring that both parties are abiding by certain ethical criteria. In the case that the demands are not met, sanctions as defined by the agreement will be implemented; for example, with regard to the student it could be expulsion from the institution of higher education.

The most significant ethical violations committed by the student are the following:

- 1) plagiarism (to be examined in the context of abiding by copyright law provisions at the institution of higher education),
- 2) cheating during tests and examinations (covering the unsanctioned use of materials and tactics, as well as another person taking the test instead of the student),
- 3) unjustified absence from a test,
- 4) another person authoring the student's work,
- 5) a piece of work is submitted repeatedly (in this case a special provision should be included stating that, with prior agreement of the lecturer, a previously completed work can be re-submitted if it is improved and developed further).

The institution of higher education, in its turn, must ensure good and fair governance. A requirement of good governance includes the obligation to ensure the provision of the study program with the full use of available resources and ensuring the maximum possibilities for acquiring knowledge. Quality management has an important role to play, which includes the academic staff of the institution, administration, provision of the study process and the academic environment in general, whereby a graduate of the institution, able to compete in the labour market or to develop a successful academic career, is an indicator of the quality.

Fair governance of the institution of higher education means that the decisions passed by the administration of the institution correspond to the interests of the institution,

¹¹ Article 19.1, the Law on the Institutions of Higher Education.

¹² Article 19.2, the Law on the Institutions of Higher Education.

and are open and “transparent” – the formal content of decisions correspond to the factual content. Fair governance of the institution of higher education excludes bribery.

The relationships between the academic staff, administration of the institution of higher education, and the student should be based on cooperation and mutual respect. The student’s behaviour should not bring disrepute upon the institution, or discredit it. The institution, on its part, must ensure confidentiality in those spheres of management that are concerned with the academic, health, behavioural, financial and personal data of the student (see section on the protection of student’s personal data).

Self-governance of the student body

The standard form of study agreement offered by institutions of higher education may also provide for other regulations, therefore a mechanism should be developed that would ensure the correspondence of

these regulations to the interests of the students. Students have a right to self-governance, but the task of the self-governing body is to represent the student body and protect their interests. Thus, the standard study agreement of the institutions of higher education should be co-ordinated with the self-governing body of the students.

Recommendation

The Law on Institutions of Higher Education should be supplemented with the following provision: “the student shall conclude a study agreement with the institution of higher education. The requirements set for the study agreements shall be developed by the Cabinet of Ministers.” Following from the delegation of the task as defined by *the Law on Institutions of Higher Education*, the Cabinet of Ministers should draft the standard requirements for study agreements, define the form of the agreement, terms, and the mandatory terms and conditions to be included into such an agreement.



Bridging the Gap to Higher Education for Low-Income Youth

Rita Kaša

Abstract

The principle of equity in tuition-sponsored higher education cannot be implemented without a sound student aid policy. In particular this policy should be aimed at reducing inequalities in access to higher education for low-income students. Numerous studies on enrolment in higher education in the United States show that student aid is a crucial element in low-income students' decision on entering higher education. Along with extensive student loan programs, the United States has a means-tested federal student aid policy in the form of grants. Since 1991 the share of tuition sponsored higher education in Latvia has been increasing. However, little has been done to find out how many perspective students would be eligible for means-tested student aid. The absence of this information is an obstacle for developing a student aid policy that would facilitate low-income students entering higher education. This paper will draw on the research from the United States and other countries to illustrate the importance of student aid policies and the ability of low-income youth to enrol in postsecondary education.

Problem

The absence of information on low-income prospective students in Latvia may lead to serious shortcomings in designing student aid policy. This can result in the lack of low-income youth participation in higher educa-

tion and reduce their social mobility, which may lead to further social stratification.

Introduction

Families differ in their ability to pay for higher education. A few have the resources to pay the full price of college, while others lack sufficient discretionary income to pay any of it (Lee, 1999).¹ There are several approaches to student aid policies. It can be provided on the basis of merit or need, and in the form of loans or/and grants. Aid policies differ from country to country, but all have to decide among these four (need/merit/grant/loan) choices. The amount and character of aid a student may receive and need is influenced by a number of factors. Those include the amount of tuition in public or private colleges and universities.

In Latvia and many other countries, student tuition and aid is divided into two tracks. Those who score the best on entrance exams in public higher education institutions are accepted to study at the public expense. Their tuition is covered by the state and they receive a small stipend, and are eligible for a student loan. Those who score lower are accepted in higher education but must pay tuition. They are eligible for a state guaranteed student loan to cover tuition and daily expenses.

The dual track tuition system has existed in Latvia since the introduction of tuition fees in 1991. There have been some, as yet, unsuccessful attempts by the government to initiate universal tuition fees for everyone.² Recently a plan was debated that would have

¹ The costs of education typically fall into two categories. The opportunity cost is the expense of not working while studying. The direct cost is the expense of tuition, fees, books, and transportation.

² An attempt to abolish state financed slots at public universities by the government of Prime Minister Andris Šķēle (from 16.07.1999. till 05.05.2000.) in the year 2000.

abolished the dual track tuition system and introduced fees for everyone (Grinbergs, 2004; Grinuma, 2004).³ However, the debates have not included a discussion on student aid that would encourage low-income youth in Latvia to enter postsecondary education.⁴

Aims of federal student aid policy in the U.S.

The sector of higher education in the United States is very diverse and includes a wide range of public and private higher educational institutions. All of them charge tuition. At the same time there is an explicit financial aid system for students in the United States designed to increase access to higher education. Shaping educational policies, including student aid policies, is the responsibility of individual states. However, federal government also plays an important role in subsidising students. Federal student aid is provided in the form of need based grants and loans that are generally available to all students with some financial need (Johnstone, 2001).⁵

The primary goal of federal student financial aid, especially grant assistance, is to provide access to some type of postsecondary education for students from the lowest-income families. Most federal grants provide aid to lowest-income students. Other aid providers, such as states and higher educational institutions, award grants also to reward merit or to increase enrolment. A second goal of federal student aid is to provide choice to help students afford a college that meets their needs and abilities. Simply providing access to the lowest-priced institutions does not necessarily allow low-income students to choose the most appropriate institution for their needs. Middle-income students, too, would have limited institutional choice without student financial aid,

often in the form of loans. Unlike federal grants, federal loans are awarded with less consideration of family income. This allows a middle-income student who attends an expensive institution but is ineligible for a federal grant to meet the costs of attendance with a loan (Lee, 1999).

The impact of student aid on low-income youth enrolment

Extensive research on the impact of student aid policies on different income groups of students in the United States reveal a strong correlation between the enrolment of low-income students and student aid available (Mortenson, 1989; St. John, 1991).

The decision high school graduates make about whether or not to attend college (and where to attend) is grounded in the human capital theory of microeconomics. Individuals seek to increase their amount of human capital in order to earn higher returns in labour markets. Individuals do this primarily through investing in education, seeking to acquire skills or credentials that increase their productivity and lead to greater labour market rewards. Since the potential price of return on an investment in human capital depends on its initial price, the decision to attend college is also constrained by price. Thus, price theory in microeconomics helps explain the role of financial aid in college access and choice. Aid acts to lower the net price paid by the student, increasing the likelihood she or he will be able and willing to invest in postsecondary education. Research on the college choice process shows that financial aid is particularly effective at increasing the probability that a student from a lower-income family will enrol in college, and much less effective for students from higher-income families (Heller & Rasmussen, 2001). Studies generally

³ Nevertheless, the Minister of Education Kārlis Šadurskis (from 07.11.02 till 09.03.04) suggested maintaining some state sponsored slots for very gifted students, winners of national academic competitions (Grinuma, 2004).

⁴ The social role of education increases. It is easier for educated people to find a job and obtain a good wage or salary for it. In Latvia, there is still a rather high level of education. 39% of the population at the age of 18 years and over have secondary vocational or higher education. According to survey data, persons aged 25 to 49 years currently have the highest level of education, and they are the most demanded in the labour market. Every third representative of this age group had general secondary education, but 51% had secondary vocational or higher education. Rather high level of education is still in the age group of 50 to 64 years, where slightly over one third (39%) of respondents had secondary vocational or higher education, and 23% secondary education. Unfortunately, 23% of young people aged 18 to 24 had only basic education, 3% primary or even lower education. They may face serious difficulties in the labour market (CSB, 2000).

⁵ There is a growing interest in the implementation of merit based grants system through federal policy. There is a proposal by Republicans to introduce a bill that would provide increased grants for first and second year low-income college students (Pell Grant) whose grade point average would not be lower than 3.0 (Klein, 2004).



show that children from higher income families are more likely to obtain postsecondary education anyway (Christofides et al, 2001).

There are a number of arguments in the debate over need-based versus merit-based grants, why need-based grants are more effective than merit-based grants in enhancing low-income student enrolment. Studies show a strong correlation between the high school student's socio-economic status and performance on standardised tests (Heller & Rasmussen, 2001). Researchers have found that high school students from lower socio-economic status on average tend to have lower academic achievements than students coming from high socio-economic status families⁶ (Heller & Rasmussen, 2001). This is attributed to differences in the student's family's economic, social, and cultural capital (Ishida, 1993). "Economic capital" refers to the total amount of property and wealth that a family can utilise to help its children secure a better education. "Social capital" includes the social circumstances surrounding childhood development. Parents' social networks and contacts sometimes help the educational advancement of their children (Ishida, 1993, pp. 52–53). Finally, "cultural capital" is a characteristic that people inherit from varying cultural backgrounds. This includes linguistic and cultural competence (Ishida, 1993, p. 54). Children from lower socio-economic strata share less amount of capital than their peers from wealthier and culturally advanced backgrounds. Lack of capital does not contribute to academic achievement of high school students. Thus students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are disadvantaged before their more privileged peers in terms of their chances to benefit from merit scholarships.

In the United States financial aid to students is awarded in packages, which might include grants, loans, work-study, and tuition waivers.⁷ Financial aid packages might come in several forms, but the most typical are "grants and loans", "grants, loans, and work study", and "loans only" (Redd, 1999, p. 91). However, studies show that much of aid-stretching benefit of loans compared to grants is lost when loans are included in the aid package for low-income applicants. This occurs both because loans are notably less effective than grants in influencing enrolment behaviour of low-income people,

and because the default/collection cost of loans made to low-income people is higher than average (Mortenson, 1989).

Needs analysis

Baum (1999) suggests that any formula measuring the ability to pay in order to determine a student's need for financial assistance must begin by defining the family's income and assets. However, determining and verifying the amount that a family can reasonably be expected to contribute toward the higher education of their children is difficult.

Most targeted schemes use income as the main barometer to identify the disadvantaged population (Tekleselassie & Johnstone, 2004). In theory, income-tested transfers function well if there is a well functioning income tax system in the country, a culture to declare personal incomes, and an administrative capacity to verify individuals' income information as well. However, research indicates that irregularities and distortions of income information will inevitably allow some individuals in income-tested transfer schemes to gain targeted benefits they do not deserve, and may similarly exclude some deserving recipients from obtaining the benefit at all (Tekleselassie & Johnstone, 2004).

Assets, or wealth (over and above current income), whether in the form of savings and investments or in the ownership of a home, business, or farm, contribute to parents' and/or student's financial strength and to their presumed ability to contribute toward the costs of higher education and thus are frequently part of means test for the targeting of subsidies. However, the correlation between income and assets is far from perfect, and the inclusion of assets in the determination of means, and thus in the consideration of how much the parent or student should be expected to contribute toward college costs, can be slightly controversial (Tekleselassie & Johnstone, 2004).

Fortunately, income is not the only indicator for determining need. There are other indicators that may serve as supplements in order to maximise the social objective for which the student aid scheme is designed.

⁶ In the United States, race and socio-economic status are highly correlated (Heller & Rasmussen, 2001). African Americans and Hispanics on average have lower incomes than Whites (Spring, 2000).

⁷ Work-study programs provide part time jobs to postsecondary education students. The major work-study program, the federal work-study program, provided USD 764 million in employment earnings to undergraduate and graduate/first-professional students in 1995–96 (Redd, 1999).

These indicators, for example, might include occupation, type of housing, region of residence, automobile ownership, family size, age of children, and other characteristics. Namely, those are attributes the government has chosen to assist (Tekleselassie & Johnstone, 2004).

In sum, there are a number of dilemmas to be solved in developing need-based student aid policies. However, a successful need-based student aid program is one of the tools to improve the distribution of benefits from public services among disadvantaged groups of society.

Student debt repayment and safety net

Student loan repayment can be designed as a mortgage type (certain sum repaid every month) or income contingent repayment type.

The income contingent repayment form links the amount of money an individual will have to repay every month to his or her income. Thus the length of repayment (unlike in the case of mortgage type loan) is not definite. Generally it lasts until the loan is repaid at the contractual rate of interest or until the borrower has repaid for a maximum number of years. The borrower who has repaid the maximum number of years without paying off his or her loan at the contractual rate of interest is released from further obligations and thus granted a subsidy, or an *effective grant* (Johnstone, 2003).

A version of the income contingent loan is the graduate tax, whereby the student (sometimes only graduate student), in return for government subsidisation of higher education in the form of low or no tuition (and possibly of an additional student maintenance grant), becomes obligated to an *income surtax*, generally for the rest of his or her earning lifetime (Johnstone, 2003).

Income contingent loans (or sometimes called *contributions*) are often used as an alternative to the so-called *up front* payment of tuition (Johnstone, 2003). Thus a student does not have to pay tuition in advance, but he or she has to contribute to the higher education budget after graduation. Australia is an example where such a policy is being implemented through the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS). The amount of money a student has to repay is income related. There is an argument that such deferred payment for higher education should not deter low-income students from enrolling in higher educational institutions since there is no requirement for students to come up with funds up front.

However, the evidence in different countries on whether necessity to acquire student debt is deterring certain (usually underrepresented in higher education) groups of society from enrolling into higher educational institutions is contradictory. For example, according to research in Great Britain, prospective higher education students with attitudes averse to debt are more likely to opt out of university than those with similar abilities and characteristics, but with more relaxed attitudes towards debt (Callender, 2003). Thus an underlying argument is against the explicit use of student loans in favour of more publicly subsidised higher education. In contrast, a research on Australia concludes that there is no strong ground for arguing that the introduction of HECS (which is effectively an income contingent student loan program) has been a major deterrent for individuals to enrol (Chapman & Ryan, 2003). Research finds that the introduction of HECS in Australia “did not result in decreases in the participation of prospective students from relatively poor families, although the absolute increases were higher for relatively advantaged students” (LaRocque, 2003, p. 31).

In order to mitigate insecurity of borrowers in future, a government may stipulate safety net features for students under the program of a mortgage type of loan, as well as an income contingent loan. For instance, in the UK students may be relieved of their student loan debt in case of unemployment. There is an income contingent loan repayment system in the UK. A student is only required to make repayments on a student loan if his or her annual income exceeds an income threshold set by the Parliament. If a student’s income falls below this level, repayments will cease and will not start again until income is above the certain threshold.

Special attention is paid to disabled students in the UK. They can receive additional funding to help with extra costs they have as a result of attending the course. These students do not have to repay this help they receive (DfES, 2003).

In case of Latvia the government has stipulated that debt for students who become disabled is forgiven.

Estimation of costs and debt forgiveness as considerations for college choices

After graduating from college, if a Latvian student chooses to work in the public sector according to the government’s request, the student debt may be forgiven. This policy works in the interest of both public and indi-



vidual needs, but does not address the question of encouraging low-income students to pursue higher education and undertake long-term financial liabilities. It would be worth knowing whether opportunities to have debt forgiven would push low-income students who may be on the margin to enrol in postsecondary institutions.

It is also important that a student and his family have as precise information as possible on actual college costs. There are studies that show that the ability of a student and his or her family to correctly estimate college costs is an important issue in the decision to enrol in higher education. A recent study in the U.S. found that for both students and parents, the likelihood of understanding the college process increased with household income and parent's education (US Department of Education, 2003). The study found that overall both parents and students overestimated tuition amounts especially for public institutions. However, those individuals who were potentially the least able to afford college were also most likely to lack information about the costs of attending.

There is no research in Latvia on how closely prospective students and their parents estimate college costs, or how their perception of costs influence their decisions to attend. The number of students enrolled in higher education continues to rise. In the academic year 2003/2004 the number of students increased from 118,845 to 126,756 (MOES, 2003). According to the Latvian Ministry of Education there was an increase in the percentage of high-school graduates enrolling in higher education from 65% in the academic year 2002/2003 to 70% in the year 2003/2004. Although this number indicates a positive trend, it should not be used as the only point of reference in assessing access to higher education. The number of those graduating from high schools and entering higher education should be assessed in connection with the number of students graduating from ninth grade and continuing their education in high school.⁸ In both cases it is necessary to find out what factors determined the educational choices of students.

The influence of socio-economic circumstances in regard to educational choices of youth must be taken into consideration. Poverty is a problem in Latvia.⁹ In addition, inequality in the distribution of income increases, revealing an insignificant growth or even decrease in the earnings of low-income groups (CSB, 2001a). At the same time possibilities for students to enrol in state financed slots at public higher educational institutions are declining and ever more students are enrolled for tuition. Therefore, there is an increasing number of people lacking savings or earnings big enough to sponsor higher education and having to acquire student debt. In order to see how the necessity to borrow influences educational choices of low-income students in Latvia, the attitudes of low-income prospective students and their families towards educational borrowing should be researched.

Summary

The criteria for student aid usually fall into two broad categories: merit-based and need-based. In employing either, policy makers must consider the goals of the aid program; the kinds of students they want to assist, the reasons they want to assist, and how much and what kind of student aid they want to provide? (Creech & Davis, 1999, p. 120.)

Looking at the current student aid policy in Latvia, it appears that policy makers may not have answers to some of these questions. There is a student aid system in place to help students in acquiring higher education. However, there is not much information as to what socio-economic characteristics this student body has.

Government student aid in Latvia is provided in two ways. First, it is merit-based enrolment, where the best scoring students enjoy free higher education and receive a very small stipend. Second, it is a state guaranteed student loan for covering living expenses and tuition fees. In some cases the student loan may be forgiven if the graduate works in an institution and position that serves public needs. However, there is no information how

⁸ Only 3.5 % of young people in rural areas aged 21 to 25 acquire higher education, compared to 13.7% of urban youth (CSB, 2001b).

⁹ Although there is no official poverty line in Latvia, studies reveal that a wide variety of social groups are at risk of poverty (Grinspun et al, 2001). According to the data, 11% of households are not able to pay for the education of their children. 16% of households cannot cover urgent medical services, 20% cannot eat meat, poultry or fish at least three times a month, 21% cannot visit a dentist once a year, 38% cannot go to the movies, visit a theatre or a concert, 38% cannot welcome guests once a month, 65% cannot purchase new/modern clothes, 77% cannot replace worn furniture, but 82% of the total number of surveyed households do not have enough money to pay for a holiday week abroad (CSB, 2001).

existing student aid policy influences the behaviour of prospective low-income students. Studies from the U.S. show that student aid has a strong influence on college related behaviour of low-income youth. The same could be presumed in the case of Latvia.

At the moment government subsidies to students (free higher education and a small monthly stipend) are provided on the basis of merit. Need-based student aid does not seem to be on the political agenda. Nevertheless, there is a need to address the issue of accessibility of higher education for low-income youth through research on low-income prospective students. Reliable data on who benefits from higher education in Latvia (and at whose expense) should be obtained and used as the basis for developing student aid policies that benefit low-income students as well.

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Financing of Adult Education in Latvia

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1. Shall we ask for money from the government?

Adult education leads to greater economic adaptability and flexibility, stronger and quicker responses to market opportunities, and more efficient public sector management. It also leads to greater social cohesion, makes for easier integration with the norms and values of the EU, and helps reduce internal tensions as well as tensions with Latvia's political neighbors.

This article is an attempt to offer a potential methodological approach to state policy makers, as well as to report on the results of specific studies in the field of adult education. The aim of this article is not to prove to the government that greater resources should be invested into adult education, but to analyse the potential funding sources of adult education and to recommend government management tools to improve the funding of adult education.

2. What are the possible types of adult education and the potential financing sources?

It seems self-evident that a successful accountant who does not want to change his or her profession, but wants to spend a vacation in France should pay for the French language classes himself or herself. Similarly it seems self-evident that a *McDonald's* restaurant shall provide training to its employees on how to operate the equipment for making French fries. But who should fund learning skills such as computer skills? What to do with learning such absolutely necessary languages as Latvian, Russian and English? Is it profitable for a company to invest money in teaching such skills to employees if in a month's time they might start using the newly acquired skills to the advantage of the competitor?

The answers to these relevant questions are offered in Table 1.

Table 1. The possible types of adult education and the potential financing sources

Skills	Financing source
Activities specific to one company <i>(specific skills that are necessary for working in a specific company, but cannot be used elsewhere)</i>	Company
Activities specific to the sector <i>(skills that are necessary to the professionals working in the sector, but could be used in competing companies)</i>	Sector (professional unions, associations)
Skills needed across the economy <i>(essential skills necessary to participate in the labour market and can be used in several sectors and many companies)</i>	State budget
Skills that are not needed in the economy <i>(skills that people want to master in their leisure time and are not related to their present or future profession)</i>	Private persons

Source: personal communication with Prof. Heinemann, translated and edited by the editor.



We suggest that state policy makers complete this chart enumerating the specific skills related to the situation in Latvia, and assessing which skills are needed across the economy and should therefore receive state budget support to acquire. When developing political strategy documents and developing public relations with companies, the role of the state would be to promote adequate investments by employers and professional associations into the training of skills specific to the activities of the companies and the sectors.

This discussion leads one to consider the necessity of having an integrated approach to funding adult education, since several problems related to the funding of education could be solved by enhancing the general understanding and harmonisation of views among the government, NGOs and companies. In an ideal case the company would demand that the state fund computer-skill courses, but the state would demand that the traders' association fund courses on client service skills.

After the skills that are useful and needed by the state are identified on the basis of the priorities of the national economy, a cost-benefit analysis should be carried out to determine the specific amount of funding, the target audience and the most professional service providers.

At present Article 46.6 of the Law on Education of the Republic of Latvia defines the sources of funding for adult education: "Adult Education may be funded by: state and local authorities' budgets; resources of the employers, resources of the students; donations and sponsorships; other sources."

However, the development of a sector is not determined only by the wording of the law; the available financial resources are of very great importance. In order to compliantly and more effectively develop state policy, in 2000 the State Chancellery established the Department for Policy Coordination (DPC) with the basic task of improving policy development in the state. The DPC carried out an analysis of the policy making process in Latvia, which resulted in a publication¹. The section on recommendations of this publication underlines that "the linking of state policy priorities to the state budget, ensuring of state financial stability are the basis of all aims of government activities. In order to ensure the implementation of the priority goals of the government, an agreement should be reached as to how to link government approved programs and plans with

the process of developing the annual state budget, so that the work invested in policy formulation and development would yield the necessary results and the intended policy plans would not remain in the status of good intentions without their further development and implementation.

The resources available to the government in mid-term should be related to policy decisions by determining expenditures in priority programs. Settling these issues would be an important step towards linking the budget with the decision making process, which are quite frequently separated." Notwithstanding these recommendations, even now various strategic documents in the field of adult education do not include a plan for corresponding funding.

It must also be noted that the wording with regard to the funding sources for adult education is rather vague: "Adult education **may** be funded." Such wording allows not only for the possibility to fund, but the opposite – not to fund adult education. Such wording of this article in the Law does not impose the obligation to provide financial support to adult education neither to the state and municipalities, nor to employers.

3. The summary of the study results

3.1. Analysis of strategic documents of state policy

The attitude towards education as a relevant factor in determining the quality of human life, and the awareness of its importance has changed throughout the world, including Europe. The working document of the European Commission "Memorandum on Life-Long Education" sets new ideas of a knowledge-based society, the importance of knowledge in contemporary society and within a social economic situation that demands constant learning on the part of the individual, as well as new policy directions and measures to ensure the successful transition to such a society.

"I have always stressed that education is needed not only for the ability to compete in the labour market in order to earn the means of subsistence. Education is the factor ensuring the rights and abilities of a person to become a part of civilised society," these words of the

¹ Politikas lēmumu pieņemšanas process Latvijā. Rīga: VK Politikas koordinācijas departaments, 2001 [The process of making policy decisions in Latvia. State Chancellery, Department for Policy Coordination, Rīga, 2001].

President of the State Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga at the 56th Conference of the Latvian Intelligentsia Association on August 22, 2003, underline the importance of education in the life of each individual.

Even though similar statements and expressions are undisputable and generally recognised, unfortunately, in several strategy documents of national development these are included as declarations, in the form of wishful thinking, not followed by specific programs and funding. In addition, references to the proposals of the EU with regard to the development of adult education are declarative.

Discussions on adult education and its importance in Latvia began in the early 90s. Latvian society in general is becoming more convinced of the importance of education in ensuring a more successful life and career development. The general development trends in education within the EU and the world also leave an impact upon the development of education policy in Latvia and upon the general vision of development in Latvia. More often the role and significance of education as a means of ensuring prosperity and increasing competitiveness is mentioned in various policy-making documents.

The analysis of policy planning documents in Latvia² allowed for the identification of several problems that will be mentioned in the following text of this sub-section. On the basis of this critique, a series of recommendations are included in the conclusion of this article.

The acts of legislation that are currently in force in Latvia define the responsibility of the employer on the development of adult education in the form of recommendations (for example, to coordinate, to extend the range of possibilities, to develop proposals).

Recommendations made by OECD experts on developing an integrated approach to the system of life-long education, on life-long education as the basic premise for a general policy on education and training in Latvia, on the development of a national policy on continuous education, that would include the coordination of activities and cooperation between institutions providing formal and informal education, have not been taken into account.

At present the local authorities are not obligated to support adult education in general, including providing financial support.

In a situation where the role of informal adult education is constantly growing, the strategic documents emphasize professional continuing education and vocational education, but not adult education as a whole.

Since the dawn of the new century, a plan exists to develop an action plan for the development of life-long education and to define the quality indicators of life-long education; however, nothing has been done thus far.

Of course, the analysis of the strategic documents led to numerous positive conclusions, especially in view of the fact that co-funding from the EU Social Fund is expected soon. This will help to develop the life-long education policy (strategy and implementation mechanism) and define the basic strategic premises with regard to life-long education. The terms "life-long education" and "adult education" are used more frequently in Latvian policy planning documents, which shows that life-long education is entering this society as a generally accepted and necessary phenomenon, albeit at present in only a rather declarative way.

3.2. Previous studies, and available financial and statistical data

Several studies in the funding of adult education have been carried out in Latvia – both general, national, and region and sector specific studies. An analysis of several of these studies follows.

In 1999–2000 the Latvian Association of Adult Education, in co-operation with Nordic Folk Academy (NFA, Sweden) and the German Institute of Adult Education (DIE), within the framework of the EU program "Socrates" implemented a project "The Development of a Regional Strategic Model of Adult Education," and its expected result was the development of the model in question. Madona region was chosen as the place for implementing the project, and in the spring of 2000 the Latvian Association of Adult Education and the Council of Ma-

² The following strategic documents that influence the policy on adult education were examined as part of this research: The Policy on Education, the Law on Education of the Republic of Latvia, the Draft Law on Adult Education (rejected), the Law on Local Authorities, the Strategic Program of Education Development, 1998–2003, the Policy for the Development of Education 2002–2005, public annual reports of the Ministry of Education and Science of 2001 and 2002, the Government Declaration of E. Repše's Government (2003–2004), the Government Declaration of I. Emsis' Government, (2004–), Analysis of Latvian Education Strategy from the OECD Strategy, Latvian Development Plan, Basic Postulates of Latvian Industrial Development for Years 2004–2013, Latvian National Employment Plan for 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004, "Memorandum of Life-Long Education" of the European Commission, notification of the European Commission "Making European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality."



dona Region carried out a study of the possibilities of continuous education and the needs among the population of Madona region.³ The study identified several problems in the development of adult education, their causes and consequences, and one of these was inadequate public control on the way state funding is spent on adult education.

In carrying out this study the researchers made a variety of conclusions, among those:

- education is a factor closely related to professional continuing education;
- a higher level of education leaves an impact upon the frequency of possibilities for using education opportunities;
- the lack of funding is an obstacle to education for people;
- the level of income is a crucial factor, and a definite trend can be identified – the number of people attending courses grows with the increase of income.

the lack of money is hindering them from using the training opportunities.

In 2001 the Institute of Economy of the Latvian Academy of Sciences, commissioned by the Ministry of Education and Science, carried out a study “Funding of Education in Latvia.”⁴ The aim of this study was to identify the mechanisms for financing education in Latvia in different types and levels of education, adult education as one among them. The authors of the study identified the following sources of financing for education in Latvia: state funding (budget and special purpose subsidies), funding from local authorities, payments by the student and money given by sponsors and donors (including employers), resources earned by the institutions of education, and resources from international organisations for the implementation of projects of various kinds and levels that meet the provisions set by the Law on Education of the Republic of Latvia. The authors of the study provided data on the funding of the institutions of education engaged in adult education in the

Table 2. The funding of institutions of education engaged in adult education (including the training of unemployed and civil servants) (thousands of LVL)

	1999/2000	2000/2001	Change (in absolute numbers)	Change %
Total annual funding	11568.9	10629.4	-939.5	-8.1
Including				
State budget	5545.2	4763.7	-781.5	-14.0
Local authority's budget	393.5	415.9	22.4	5.4
Payments by adult students	2633.3	2659.4	26.1	1.0
Payments by companies, organisations for the training of employees	2836.9	2581.8	-255.1	-9.0
Other sources	160.0	208.6	48.6	23.3

Source: Data of the Central Statistics Bureau of the Republic of Latvia, 2001.

The calculations of the Institute of Economy of the Latvian Academy of Sciences. On the basis of Table No. 72 from the study “Funding of Education in Latvia” of the IE, LAS.

Almost two thirds of the respondents – inhabitants of Madona region – stated that they would be willing to continue their education, but are unable to allocate money for this purpose. The data revealed a correlation between the level of income of the respondents and the lack of money as an obstacle to education – the lower the level of income, the more respondents admitted that

academic years of 1999/2000 and 2000/2001 (see Table 2) as well as a break-down of the funding sources.

Annual state budget allocations to adult education do not give a clear picture of the policy regarding their allocation and use. An examination of the state budgets of 2002, 2003 and 2004 allows one to conclude that the state is taking special care and providing special financial

³ Izglītība cilvēka nākotnei (1., 2. daļa), Rīga, 2000, <http://www.laea.from.lv>

⁴ LZA EI pētījums *Izglītības finansēšana Latvijā*, 2001, <http://www.politika.lv>

support to adult education in the field of educating civil servants, vocational training for the unemployed and their continuous education, the National Program for Latvian Language Training and continuing education for teachers (see Table 3).

The laws on the state budget also show that each ministry has its own concerns related to adult education, without links to other ministries in this regard. For example, the Ministry of Education and Science is engaged only in continuing education for teachers and the National Program for Latvian Language Training.

The existing budget explication does not provide complete and clear information on its allocation (for whom, in which fields within a specific sector, for how many people) in adult education; for example, the section "Subsidy," which provides no detailed explanations in its sub-sections. Furthermore, other sections do not provide a clear understanding of the purposes this funding will go towards, whether for the education of civil servants (not including the School of Public Administration) or the people working in the given sector.

According to the data of the Central Statistics Bureau (See Annex No.4) in 2001 total funding for adult education in the state was 12 987 319 LVL; in 2002 total funding for adult education was 10 563 196 LVL. The total amount of adult education funding is decreasing, especially support provided by the state and by foreign countries, but contributions from the trainees themselves and the fees covered by companies and organisations increase.

The information provided by the Central Statistics Bureau allows one to conclude that the average cost of one student in the country is very different.

In the majority of the regions (except Aizkraukle, Alūksne, Jēkabpils, Liepāja, Ogre, Preiļi, Rēzekne, Rīga, Valmiera and Ventspils regions) and in all the cities (except Rīga, Jelgava, Jūrmala), comparisons of the years 2002 and 2001 reveal that the number of adults trained has increased (national total – by 5885 persons), and in general the funding provided by local authorities (by 2 444 430 LVL) has slightly increased, but at the same time state support (by 2 444 430 LVL) and support coming from other sources, predominantly foreign, (by 934 940 LVL) has decreased, the average cost of one adult student has also decreased (by 13.28 LVL). We are of the opinion that in the largest mentioned regions (except Jēkabpils, Ogre, Rēzekne, Rīga and Valmiera regions) and cities (except Jelgava) the number of adult students has decreased because the financial support provided by the state, local authorities and foreign countries decreased.

Disregarding the highest and the lowest costs, it appears that the average training cost in the state per one student in 2001 was 62.87 LVL and 50.02 LVL in 2002, which does not significantly differ from the general calculated costs of adult education.

However, the average cost of training the unemployed⁵ in 2001 was 434 LVL, in 2002 – 306 LVL, and in 2003 – 268 LVL, which is significantly more (by 7 times in 2001; 6.12 times in 2002) than the average costs of adult education.

The comparison of costs in these two segments shows that it would be more beneficial for the state to delegate part of its resources to adult education programs (in which inhabitants could participate either free of charge or pay a small tuition fee), educating inhabitants before

Table 3. The funding of the training of civil servants, support for Latvian language and continuous education of teachers (LVL)

Addressee of the Funding	2002	2003	2004	Change (in absolute numbers)
Training of civil servants	170 318	161 539	136 581	-8 779/-24 958
Professional training and continuous professional training of the unemployed	1 730 965	1 813 692	3 728 390	+82 727/+1 914 698
Continuous training of teachers	370 379	369 430	196 505	-949/-172 925
Support to the National Programme for Latvian Language Training	573 932	1 115 453	819 433	+541 521/-296 020
State language development	38 423	157 867	167 629	+119 444/+9 762

Source: the Law On the State Budget, years 2002, 2003, 2004.

⁵Annual Reports of the National Employment Agency of 2002 and 2003.



they have lost their employment, thus making them more competitive and also maintaining their psychological health.

An assessment of the information provided by the Central Statistics Bureau of the Republic of Latvia on the level of education of trainees involved in adult education programs shows a correlation – the higher the level of education, the more often people get involved in various education programs (see Figure 1). To compare – in 2002 (210 741 trainees) the number of people involved in adult education programs increased by 5885 persons or 2.79% in comparison to 2001 (204 856 trainees). However, the number of trainees with the higher education increased by 13 977 (16.69%), compared to the trainees with higher education in 2002 (83 721) with the trainees with higher education of 2001 (69 744 students).

Figure 1 clearly shows that better educated people are more willing to participate in continuous education. The state might be interested in supporting possibilities for the population to participate in formal and informal programs of adult education.

4. Recommendations

State policy-makers should:

1. Classify various skills as to their economic significance and recommend corresponding sources of funding. Determine the necessary funding amount, the target audiences, and the most professional service providers.
2. Promote co-operation between the state and other funders of adult education (for example, companies or associations) to find co-financing for adult education on the basis of the methodology set forth in this article.
3. In the Law “On Local Authorities,” include provisions that set the general obligation to provide adult education, including the obligation to provide financial support for this purpose.
4. Develop plans for life-long education and develop quality indicators for life-long education, involving adult educators in this work.

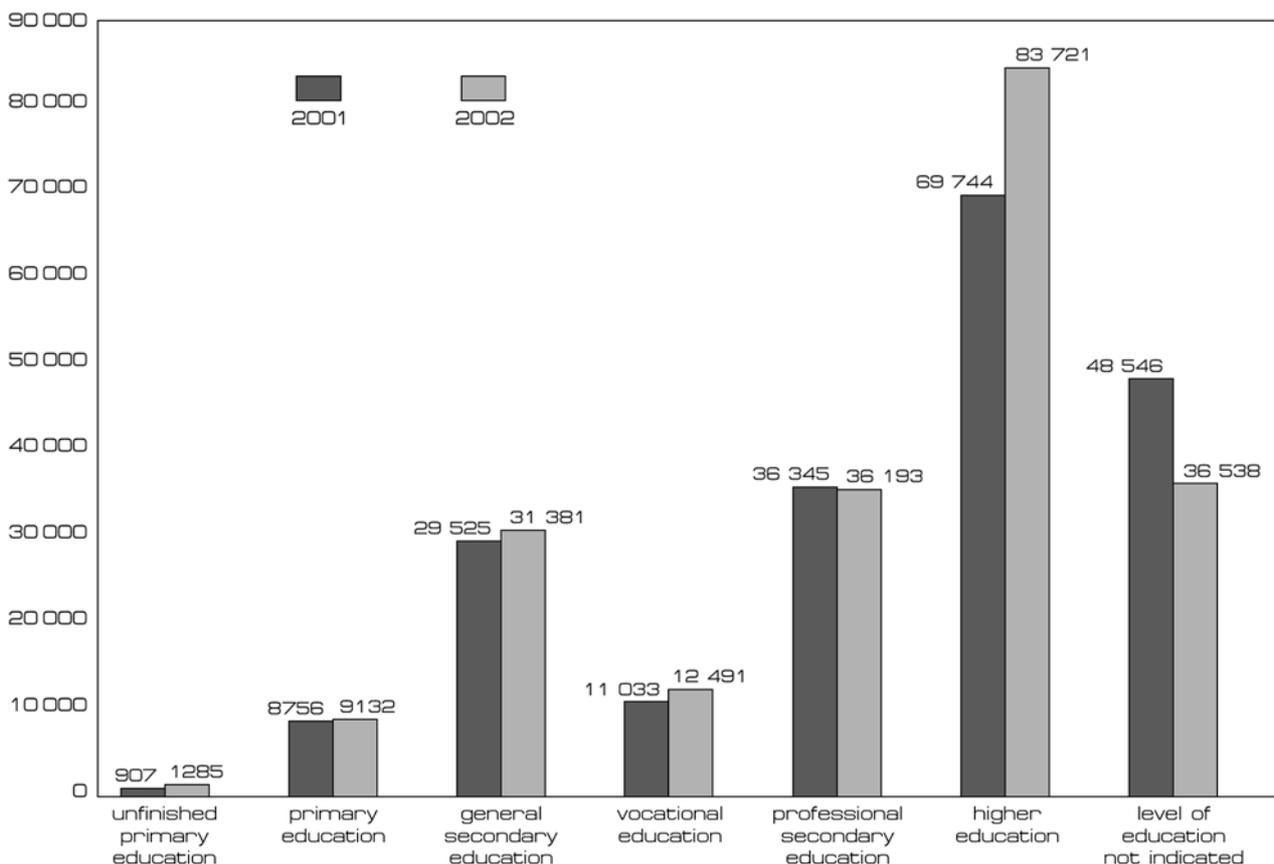


Figure 1. The level of education of the students involved in adult education programs.

5. Take into consideration already existing studies on the development of adult education in Latvia and its needs, as well as the conclusions and recommendations provided by different experts on the development of a life-long education system for Latvia, as well as recommendations on life-long education adopted by various international conferences.

6. Enhance coordination and sharing of achievements in formal and informal education, thus promoting life-long education in practice.

7. Emphasize not only professional continuing education and professional education, but adult education in general (including informal adult education).

8. Appoint an institution responsible for the policy on the general development and funding of a goal-oriented adult education program in the nation.

9. Include norms that would define the responsibilities and obligations of the state, local authorities, and employers to provide financial support to adult education, envisaging a mechanism (for example, tax exemptions) to support the employer in this.

Glossary

The explanation of terms used is provided on the basis of the definitions used by the Law on Education of the Republic of Latvia and the communication of the European Commission "Making European Area of Lifelong Learning a Reality."

Formal education – a system that includes primary education, the secondary and higher levels of education; the completion of such programs is proven by a state approved document of education or professional qualification, as well as a document on education and professional qualification.

Interest education – the realisation of the individual needs and wishes of a person irrespective of age and previously acquired education.

Learning throughout one's lifetime – all formal, informal or daily learning. Learning throughout one's lifetime is one of the dimensions of life-long education.

Life-long education – acts of legislation of the Republic of Latvia provide no explanation. The European Commission is using the following explanation: the acquisition of knowledge in a person's lifetime with the aim of improving one's knowledge, skills and competence from the personal, civil, social and/or work-related perspective.

Informal education – educational activities organised outside the interests and demands of formal education.

Self-education – education acquired outside institutions of education.

Adult education – manifold process of education, ensuring personal development and competitiveness in the labour market in the lifetime of a person.

Continuous education – continuation of previously acquired education and improvements of professional skills corresponding to the demands of the specific profession.

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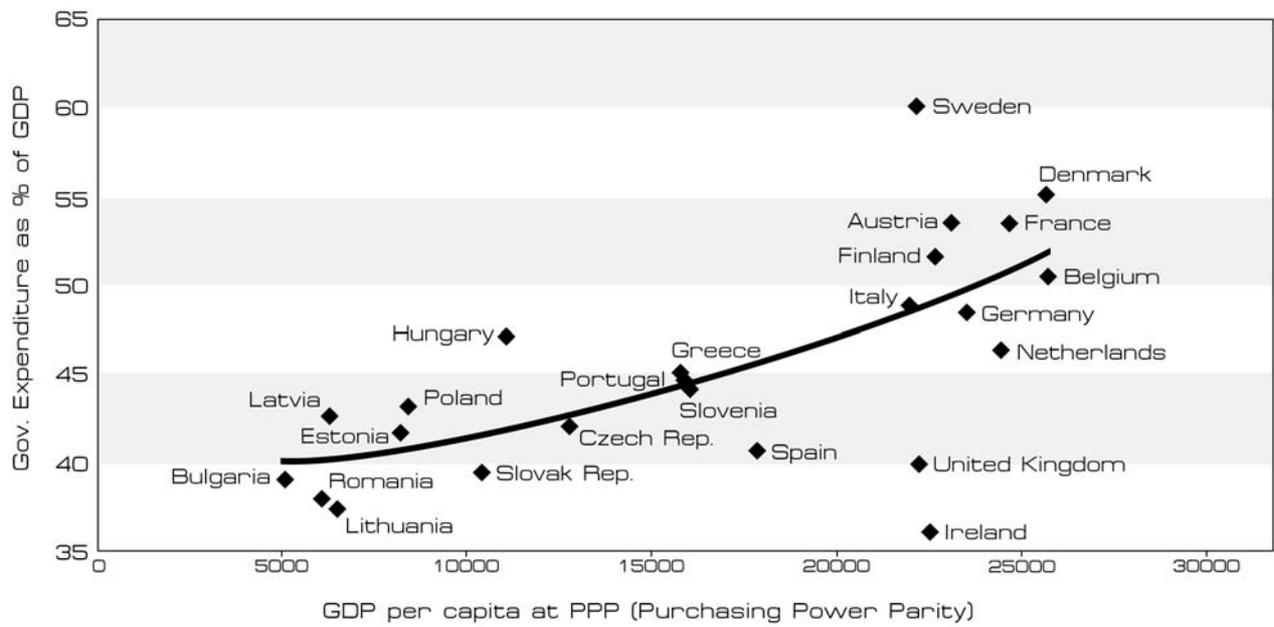
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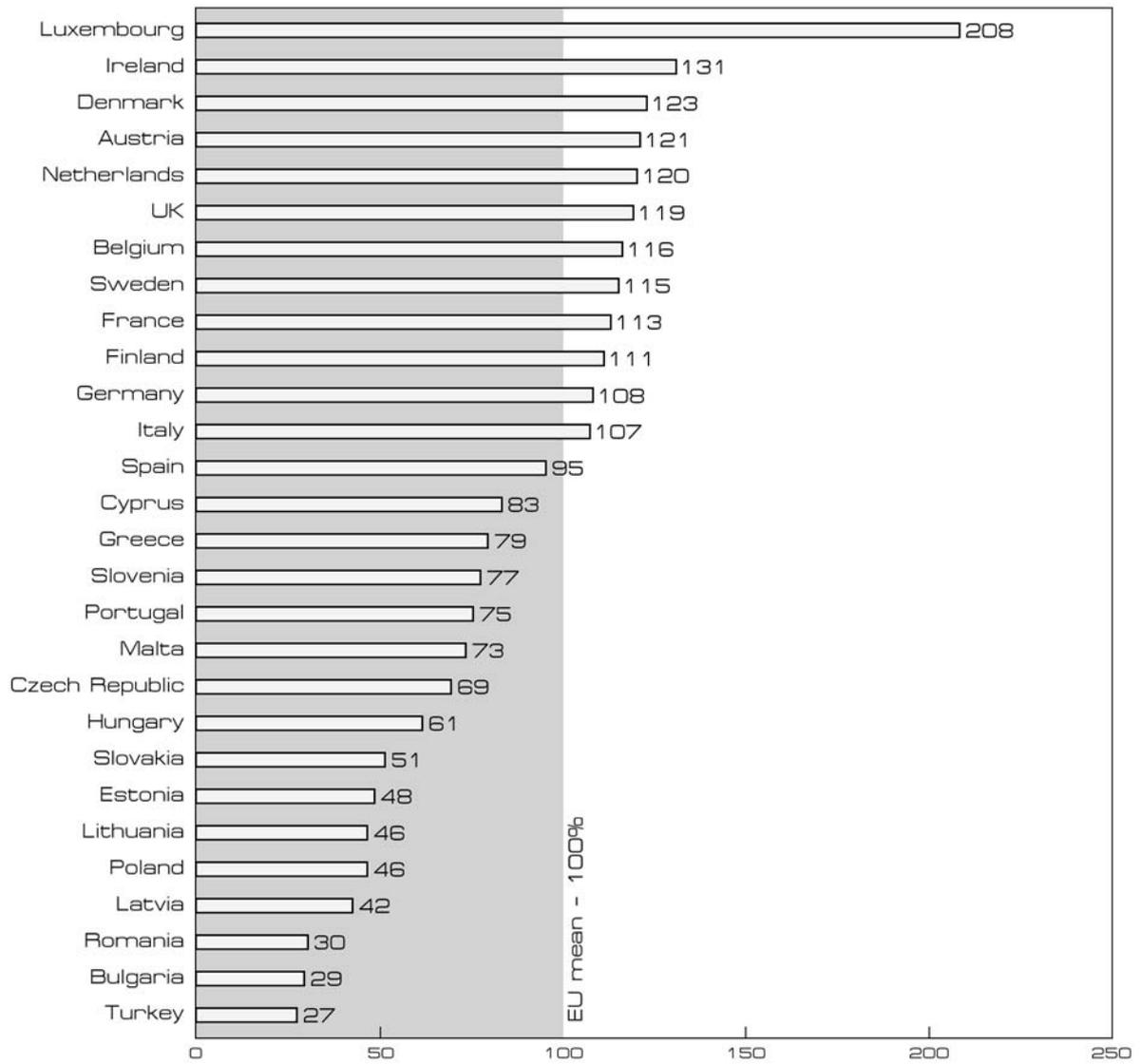
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Appendices



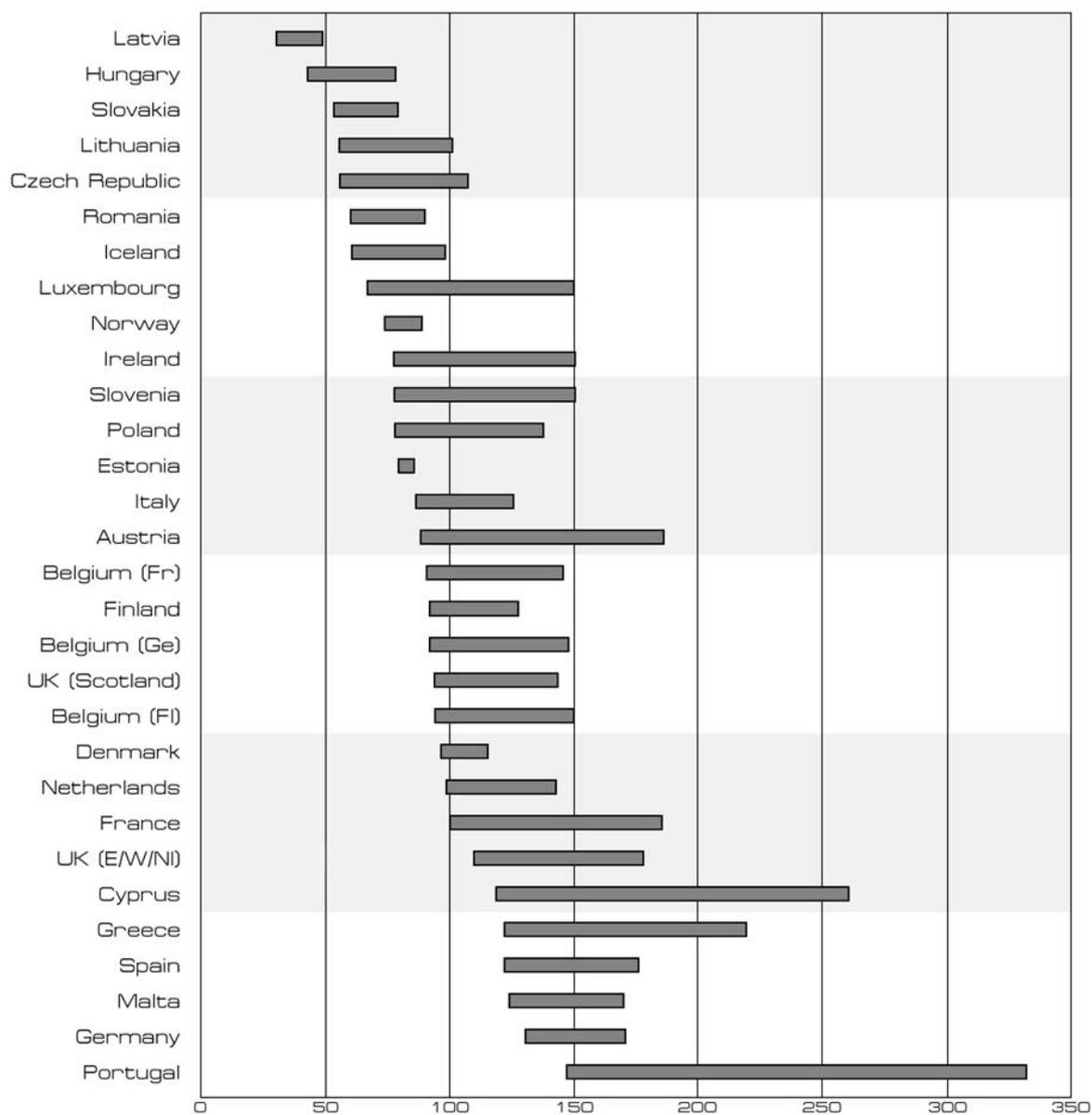
Source: WB, 2004.

Figure 1. Public expenditure vs. GDP level.



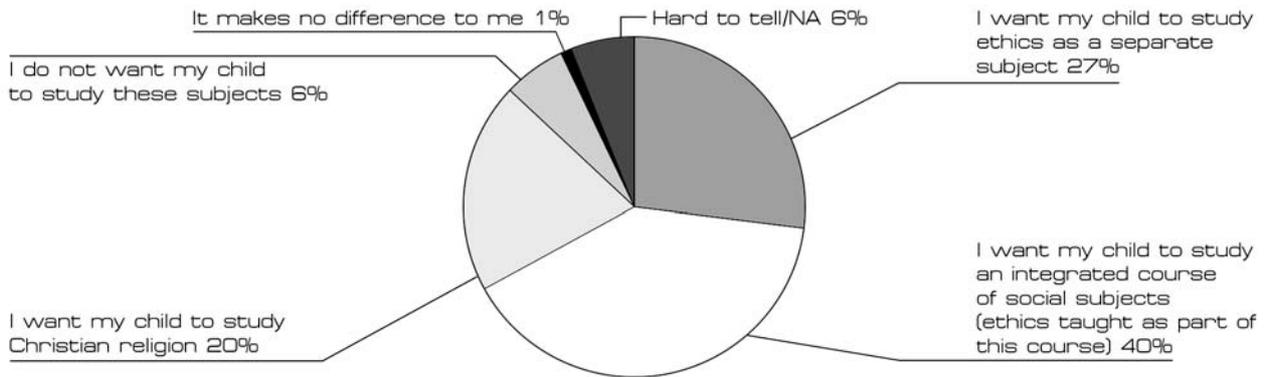
Source: EUROSTAT, 2003.

Figure 2. GDP per capita as % of PPP (Purchasing Power Parity), 2003.



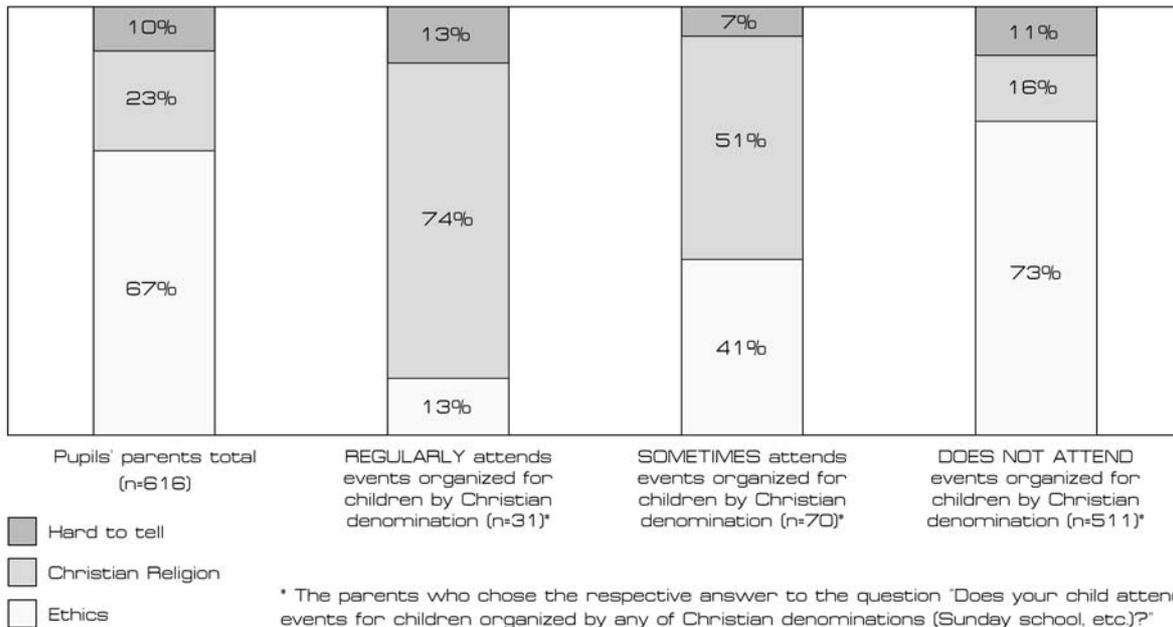
Source: Eurydice, 2000/2001.

Figure 3. Minimum and maximum salary for primary and secondary school teachers as % per capita GDP.



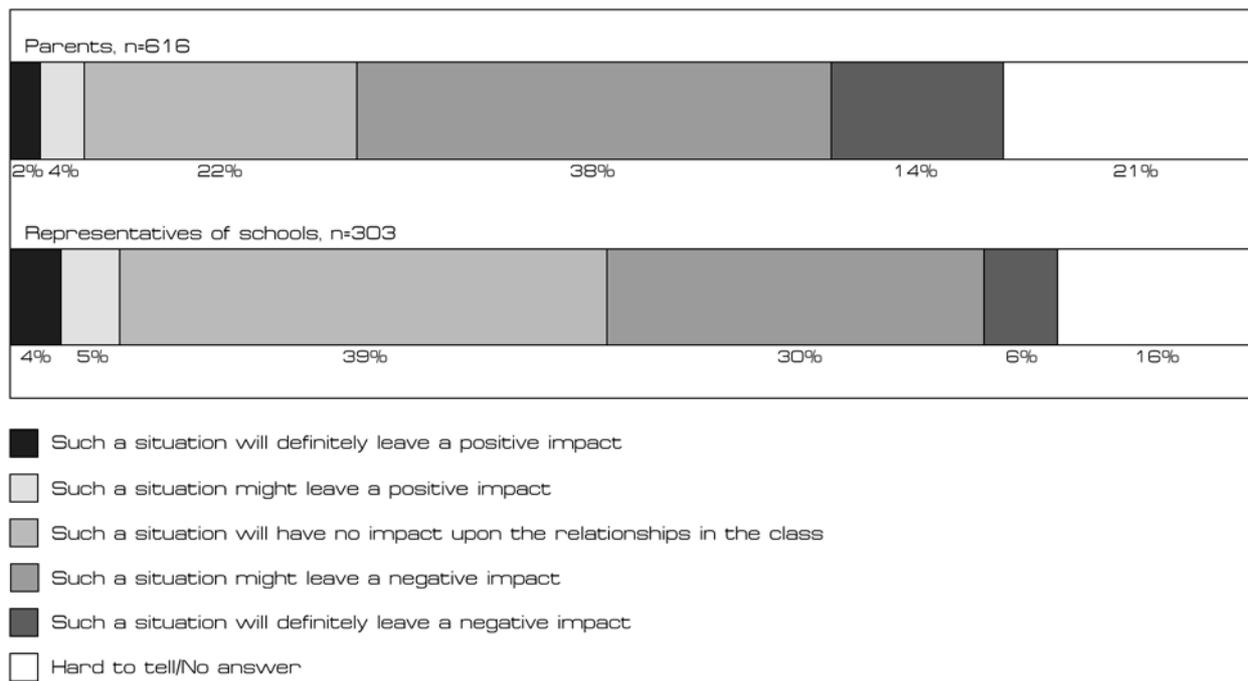
Source: SKDS, 2004.

Figure 4. Answers (%) to the question “According to the project, at the beginning of the academic year 2004/2005, you will have to choose whether your child will study ethics or Christian religion. Which subject would you choose?” (02/03, 2004) (Parents, n=616)



Source: SKDS, 2004.

Figure 5. Answers to the question “In case it would be mandatory for you to make the choice between Christian religion and ethics, which subject would you choose?” (Depending upon participation of the child into events organized by a Christian denomination.) (02/03, 2004)



Source: SKDS, 2004.

Figure 6. Answers (%) to the question “A view has been expressed that the division of children into groups according to their attitude to the subject of Christian religion might leave a negative impact upon relationships within the class. Others object to this view. What is your opinion?” (02/03, 2004)



Table 1. The number of grade 1–9 pupils in comprehensive day schools in Latvia, who are studying Christian Religion as an optional subject, academic year 2002/2003

	Region, City	Number of schools	Forms 1–9	Forms 1	Forms 2	Forms 3	Forms 4	Forms 5	Forms 6	Forms 7	Forms 8	Forms 9
1.	Aizkraukle region	1	176	35	41	30	56	14				
2.	Alūksne region											
3.	Balvi region	3	151	32	28	24	45	22				
4.	Bauska region	4	215	33	35	46	54	30	17			
5.	Cēsis region	1	21	12	4		5					
6.	Daugavpils region	4	251		40	47	31	26	27	30	30	20
7.	Dobele region											
8.	Gulbene region											
9.	Jelgava region	2	109	31	31	22	25					
10.	Jēkabpils region	3	110	21	13				32	26	18	
11.	Krāslava region	1	33	9	8	8	8					
12.	Kuldīga region											
13.	Liepāja region	2	16	1	8	2		2			2	1
14.	Limbaži region											
15.	Ludza region											
16.	Madona region	1	75	9	15	9	27	15				
17.	Ogre region											
18.	Preiļi region											
19.	Rēzekne region	3	90	9	10	40	31					
20.	Rīga region	3	467	88	98	90	128	10	12	14	14	13.
21.	Saldus region	4	309	91	78	48	57	35				
22.	Talsi region	5	156	16	41	28	33	5			33	
23.	Tukums region	1	71	11	12	12		10		26		
24.	Valka region											
25.	Valmiera region	2	23	12	4	1	6					
26.	Ventspils region	1	25	8	6	6	3	2				
27.	Daugavpils	1	50	12	12	13	13					
28.	Jelgava	1	113	29	30	28	26					
29.	Jūrmala											
30.	Liepāja	4	207	18	32	32	35			70	10	10
31.	Rēzekne											
32.	Ventspils											
	Rīga	4	651	66	60	72	64	57	40	217	46	29
34.	Centra district											
35.	Kurzeme district	1	138	17	17	21	22	20	12	14	15	
36.	Latgale suburb	3	513	49	43	51	42	37	28	203	31	29
37.	Vidzeme suburb											
38.	Zemgale suburb											
39.	Ziemeļu suburb											
	Total in the State:	51	3319	543	606	558	647	228	128	383	153	73
	Academic year											
	2001/2002	51	3622	579	622	767	685	242	116	475	74	62
	2000/2001	45	2932	471	500	470	454	236	190	491	72	48
	1999/2000	76	7303	1220	1434	1283	1053	559	438	864	217	235
	1998/1999	83	8416	1282	1336	1349	1253	1122	836	629	338	271

Source: Ministry of Education and Science data.

Table 2. Number of students (%) in primary schools against the total number of children of primary school age (1998–2000), comparison between countries

Country	Academic year	Number of students (%) in primary schools against the total number of children of primary school age
Austria	2000/2001	91
Belgium	2000/2001	100
Bulgaria	2000/2001	94
Croatia	2000/2001	82
Cyprus	2000/2001	95
Czech Republic	2000/2001	90
Denmark	1999/2000	99
Estonia	2000/2001	98
Finland	2000/2001	100
France	2000/2001	100
Germany	1999/2000	87
Hungary	2000/2001	90
Iceland	2000/2001	100
Ireland	1999/2000	90
Italy	2000/2001	100
Latvia	2000/2001	92
Lithuania	2000/2001	95
Luxembourg	2000/2001	97
Malta	2000/2001	98
Netherlands	2000/2001	99
Norway	2000/2001	100
Romania	2000/2001	93
Spain	2000/2001	100
Sweden	2000/2001	100
Switzerland	2000/2001	99
UK	2000/2001	99

Source: EFA Global Monitoring Report 2003/ Education for All by 2015, <http://portal.unesco.org/education/>



Table 3. Number of students excluded from primary schools in Latvia, 2002/2003
(districts and cities of Zemgale region are highlighted)

	Total	Grades 1–4	Grades 5–9
Total in the country	7053	2925	4128
Cities			
Riga	2517	770	1068
Administrative districts of Riga City			
Centra district	313	75	124
Kurzeme district	304	122	120
Latgale suburb	821	273	365
Vidzeme suburb	609	165	282
Zemgale suburb	174	52	63
Ziemeļu district	296	83	114
Daugavpils	409	135	143
Jelgava	481	208	183
Jūrmala	207	60	82
Liepāja	208	40	88
Rēzekne	107	20	55
Ventspils	98	41	46
Regions of Latvia			
Aizkraukle	208	62	103
Alūksne	130	43	65
Balvi	158	45	88
Bauska	184	44	90
Cēsis	295	85	171
Daugavpils	125	56	55
Dobele	149	43	71
Gulbene	133	47	68
Jelgava	130	35	70
Jēkabpils	296	92	140
Krāslava	195	54	122
Kuldīga	141	37	82
Liepāja	154	61	75
Limbaži	130	41	69
Ludza	75	33	29
Madona	179	60	81
Ogre	243	81	118
Preiļi	130	32	54
Rēzekne	236	88	92
Rīga	515	163	274
Saldus	208	54	109
Talsi	361	159	133
Tukums	263	101	118
Valka	121	38	62
Valmiera	203	76	88
Ventspils	67	21	36

Source: Statistics Bulletin of the Central Statistics Bureau of the Republic of Latvia, 2003, p. 51.

Table 4. Number of children who did not start attending primary schools in Latvia, 2001/2002
(regions and cities in which the research was carried out are highlighted)

No.	Regions and cities	Number of children who did not start attending primary schools			
		In the beginning of the academic year, as of 06.09.2001	At the end of the 1st semester, as of 10.12.2001	In 2001/2002 academic year, as of 31.05.2002	In 2001/2002 academic year, as % of the total number of children of compulsory schooling age, as of 31.05.2002
1.	Aizkraukle region	47	18	39	0.66
2.	Alūksne region	47	5	2	0.05
3.	Balvi region	22	12	10	0.25
4.	Bauska region	60	15	15	0.20
5.	Cēsis region	44	31	28	0.31
6.	Daugavpils region	16	5	5	0.11
7.	Dobele region	28	3	4	0.07
8.	Gulbene region	13	8	6	0.15
9.	Jelgava region	35	30	44	0.94
10.	Jēkabpils region	18	12	10	0.13
11.	Krāslava region	22	17	14	0.32
12.	Kuldīga region	–	8	29	0.54
13.	Liepāja region	22	12	11	0.18
14.	Limbaži region	38	16	17	0.31
15.	Ludza region	3	4	4	0.10
16.	Madona region	26	14	6	0.10
17.	Ogre region	60	30	14	0.17
18.	Preiļi region	24	9	16	0.30
19.	Rēzekne region	51	24	13	0.24
20.	Rīga region	88	41	127	0.79
21.	Saldus region	47	14	26	0.47
22.	Talsi region	14	26	31	0.43
23.	Tukums region	47	35	32	0.39
24.	Valka region	18	1	0	0
25.	Valmiera region	51	18	28	0.34
26.	Ventspils region	13	11	16	0.82
27.	Daugavpils city	104	100	85	0.63
28.	Jelgava city	71	67	73	0.87
29.	Jūrmala city	75	73	95	1.59
30.	Liepāja city	67	109	120	1.13
31.	Rēzekne city	29	21	21	0.43
32.	Ventspils city	57	61	81	1.55
33.	Rīga city, Central district	48	58	39	0.46
34.	Kurzeme district	114	46	67	0.51
35.	Latgale suburb	206	176	175	0.91
36.	Vidzeme suburb	105	35	101	0.56
37.	Zemgale suburb	52	49	65	0.53
38.	Ziemeļi district	45	41	57	0.63

Source: Annual report of the State Education Inspectorate, 2002.



Table 5. Funding for the continuous education of adults included in the budget
(excluding vocational and higher education)

Ministry, goal	2002	2003	2004
The Ministry of Defence Training Management Forces		9 204 890	1 585 012
The Ministry of Interior Training of the employees of Fire-Security Service	283 526	329 590	481 493
The Ministry of Agriculture The Continuous education and methodological support to the institutions of education for the employees of the sector Adult continuous education	711 483	711 483	670 122
The Ministry of Welfare Supplementary training Continuous education	245 683	18 182	
The Ministry of Justice Society Integration Foundation	510 000		
The Ministry of Culture Professionally orientated specialised, interest education programs Latvian Academy of Arts, Department of Visual Communication – ensuring of study and creative work	563 035 12 000 44 328	658 192	713 187
The Ministry of Health Continuous Education Training of Residents		266 441	289 573 989 510
The Ministry of Environment Environment Education Foundation program			30 000
The Secretariat of the Minister for Special Assignment on Society Integration Issues Society Integration Foundation	1 623 758		2 450 333

Source: the Law On the State Budget, years 2002, 2003, 2004.

Table 6. The Funding of Adult Education (LVL)

	2001	2002	Increase
Total annual funding,	12 987 319	10 563 196	-2 424 123
Including			
State budget allocations	5 509 524	3 065 094	-2 444 430
Allocations from the local authorities' budget	455 567	482 426	+26 859
Payment by adult students	2 298 027	2 700 521	+402 494
(average payments covered by each student)	11.22	12.82	+1,60
Payments by companies, organisations for the training of the employees	2 798 190	3 313 084	+514 894
Other sources	1 926 011	1 002 071	-923 940

Source: Data of the Central Statistical Bureau of the Republic of Latvia.