

THE BALTIC INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

In collaboration with
Canadian International Development Agency
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Soros Foundation-Latvia

ANALYSIS OF
THE IMPLEMENTATION
**OF BILINGUAL
EDUCATION**

2002
Riga

*The Baltic Institute of Social Sciences would like to express its
gratitude to
Canadian International Development Agency
Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
The Soros foundation-Latvia
for providing financial support for this research project.*

Baltic Institute of Social Sciences

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Main spheres of expertise of BISS are

- **Public policy analysis:** monitoring and evaluation of social and political reforms; drafting of recommendations and alternative courses of action.
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Content

Introduction	6
Recommendations	8
Main conclusions	10
Analysis of laws which regulate the operations of minority schools	12
The results of surveys among parents, students, teachers and principals	15
<i>A socio-demographic characterization</i>	15
<i>Socio-political positions: Parents, teachers, students, principals</i>	16
A sense of belonging to Latvian society	
Attitudes toward the idea of introduction of Russian as a second state language	
<i>The school</i>	18
Teachers and students speaking about their schools	
Relations between schoolchildren and parents	
Attitudes toward work	
Resources: The sufficiency of textbooks	
The preferred model for a school	
<i>The Latvian language</i>	21
A self-evaluation of Latvian language skills among parents	
A self-evaluation of Latvian language skills among teachers	
Language skills among principals	
An evaluation of language skills among students	
Use of the Latvian language	
Associations with the words “the Latvian language”	
The age at which minority children should start to learn the Latvian language	
<i>Bilingual education</i>	29
Information about bilingual education	
Readiness to teach bilingually	
Teaching the Latvian language as a subject	
Informing parents about the use of the Latvian language in the educational process	
Use of the Latvian and Russian language in the educational process	
The practice of bilingual education – methodology	
Difficulties in bilingual education	
Attitude toward studying in two languages or in Latvian	
The views of the parents of children in the 2 nd or 3 rd grade with respect to the studies of their children bilingually	
Learning bilingual education methods	
Putting new methodologies to use	
The effect of bilingual method on the educational process and its results	

<i>Education mostly in the Latvian language at the secondary school level</i>	41
Attitudes toward the upcoming changes	
The readiness of students to study mainly in Latvian at the secondary school level	
The readiness of secondary school teachers to teach in Latvian	
The adequacy of language skills when it comes to teaching subjects in Latvian	
An evaluation of the overall readiness of secondary schools	
What has to be done to ensure that classes can be taught mostly in the Latvian language in secondary schools – the views of teachers	
Types of schools and their readiness to introduce studies in Latvian in secondary schools	
<i>Cooperation</i>	48
Exchange of experiences among teachers who work bilingually	
Cooperation among teachers and parents	
Cooperation among subject-based teachers and Latvian language teachers	
Cooperation with Latvian schools	
Cooperation with state and local government institutions	
Cooperation with the LASRS (the Latvian Association in Support of Russian Schools)	
<i>Education policies in minority schools</i>	52
Information about bilingual education policies	
The implementation of bilingual education in specific schools	
The appropriateness of a minority education model	
The results of education policies: Benefits and losses	
The models of basic minority education	
The primary results of the expert interviews	59
<i>The concept of “bilingualism”</i>	59
<i>Transition to teaching mainly in Latvian in secondary schools in year 2004</i>	59
<i>Implementing bilingual education</i>	61
Overall policies	
The choice of models	
Implementing bilingual education	
<i>Institutions with which schools cooperate during implementation of educational policies</i>	64
Educational reforms and politics	
The Ministry of Education and Science	
The school board and local governments	
The National Program for Latvian Language Training	
Other institutions	
<i>Financing</i>	68
<i>Selecting and implementing a model</i>	69
Selecting a model	
Implementation of the plans	

<i>Teachers</i>	71
A description of the situation	
The attitudes of teachers toward bilingual education	
<i>Methodologies for bilingual education</i>	72
<i>A lesson in two languages</i>	74
<i>Learning the Latvian language</i>	76
<i>The quality of education</i>	77
<i>The attitudes of parents</i>	78
<i>Students</i>	79
<i>Language skills</i>	80
Among students	
Among teachers	
<i>The Russian culture</i>	82
<i>Science</i>	83
<i>Integration and one's native language</i>	83
Appendices	85
1. <i>Description of methodology</i>	85
2. <i>List of the schools, which participated in survey</i>	88
Conclusions	89

Introduction

The research project “Analysis of the Implementation of Bilingual Education” is very timely, because there have been great debates in Latvia over the issue of education reforms. The Education Law, which regulates the use of languages in minority school, led to the implementation of bilingual education in elementary schools in 1999. The plan is to make a transition to teaching mainly in Latvian in year 2004.

Participants in the debate, insofar as ethnic minorities are concerned, include teachers in minority schools and politicians who seek to defend the rights of ethnic minorities in Latvia. They have pointed to a series of problems that are being created in the process of education reforms. First of all, politicians and the leaders of the Latvian Association in Support of Russian Schools (LASRS) have objected to the transition to teaching mainly in Latvian in secondary schools, arguing that taxpayers have the right to choose the language of instruction in the schools which their children attend. Teachers and politicians have also said that the reforms are being implemented in too hurried a way, without sufficient testing of minority education programs and without sufficient methodological readiness. Minority representatives have argued that the Latvian language skills of teachers are insufficient for a high-quality education process.

Politicians in the governing coalition and employees of the Education and Science Ministry (ESM), for their part, say that education reforms have been prepared to a sufficient degree, and they are being implemented in accordance with all relevant legal norms.

The goal of this study is to see how successful the Education Ministry has been in implementation of bilingual education, as well as to look at the extent to which minority schools have been preparing successfully for the next phases in this process. Bilingual education will be implemented in all classes of elementary school in the 2002/2003 school year, while minority secondary schools will shift toward a system in which most classes are taught in Latvian in 2004.

The study covers all of the major stakeholders in the field of education policy:

1) Those who shape the policies (politicians in the governing coalition, politicians who are in opposition in Parliament, people from the Education Ministry, leading researchers and education specialists);

2) The target audience for education reforms (principals, teachers, students and parents).

The study consists of three major parts. In the first chapter, we look at the laws which regulate minority schools. The second discusses the results of a survey of minority students, parents, teachers and principals. The third focuses on expert interviews with those who are charged with implementation of policies (principals and teachers), as well as with politicians, Education Ministry officials, NGO members, etc.

The goal of the surveys was to develop concrete answers to a number of questions:

1) The extent to which teachers, principals, students and parents support the policies of the Education Ministry;

2) The extent to which schools are ready for the next phases in the process;

3) The results of education reforms that have already been implemented – the main benefits and losses in this process.

Survey respondents included:

- 1) Teachers from the 1st to the 3rd grade (i.e., those are grade levels at which bilingual education was implemented since 1999);
- 2) Teachers from the 4th to the 9th grade;
- 3) Secondary school teachers;
- 4) School principals;
- 5) Students in the 6th and the 7th grade (i.e., those are students who will face education mainly in Latvian in secondary schools for the first);
- 6) The parents of 2nd and 3rd, 6th and 7th grade students.

Expert interviews are used to support the survey data, because they allow us to gain a better understanding of what is hiding behind the laconic answers to questions that were included in the survey. Through the expert interviews, we gain a livelier view of bilingual lessons and of cooperation between teachers and students. We also learn about the way in which principals serve as mediators between the Education Ministry and teachers at their schools.

The interviews also cover a wider range of stakeholders in education policies. In addition to teachers and principals, we learn about the views of Education Ministry officials, researchers, NGO representatives and politicians from various parts of the political spectrum. The interviews reveal the various motivations of participants in the process when it comes to interpreting the issue of education policies.

The results of the interviews and surveys allow us to gain an understanding of the conflicts which exist among various stakeholders in this process, as well as to learn the extent to which these people are prepared for dialogue and for a flexible implementation of education policies.

The implementation of these policies, thus, has been reviewed at two different levels:

- 1) The political background for the reforms, speaking about the views, interests and goals of participants in the process (politicians, language experts, Education Ministry officials, students, teachers, principals and parents);
- 2) The education policy process as such – the implementation of bilingual education in elementary schools, as well as preparations for the transition to teaching mainly in the Latvian language in ethnic minority schools in year 2004.

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Baltic Institute of Social Sciences wants to gratitude the experts – Tatjana Liguta, Brigita Šiliņa and Elmārs Vēbers – for the valuable advice during the research.

Recommendations

To the Saeima

- Amend the Education Law to strike the norm that says that 10th grade studies in state and local government secondary schools will be taught “exclusively in the state language” from September 1, 2004.
- Specify in the Education Law that the transfer toward education primarily in the Latvian language must take place gradually. Only those schools that are ready for the transition to teaching mainly in Latvian at the 10th grade level should do so on September 1, 2004.
- The Education Law must include a norm referring to opportunities for bilingual education in minority secondary schools, as well as a norm addressing the fact that subjects related to a minority’s ethnic history and culture are taught in the minority language. The terms “minority school” and “bilingual education” must be properly defined.

To the Ministry of Education and Science

- Involve representatives of society more actively in the elaboration of norms and the taking and implementation of decisions. Shape active dialogue between the society and the ministry, and teachers who work bilingually and the ministry.
- Work with local governments to evaluate the actual situation at minority schools and to assess the level of their readiness for the transition to teaching mainly in Latvian as of September 1, 2004.
- Elaborate sample programs to continue bilingual education at those minority secondary schools, which will not be ready for the transition to teaching mainly in Latvian in the next several years.
- Ensure greater financing from the state budget for the ongoing education of teachers at minority schools so that they can learn the Latvian language, bilingual pedagogy, development of bilingual methodologies, etc.
- Elaborate recommendations about ways in which parents can be informed and educated about the goals and missions of bilingual education, the methods and models that are applied, and other issues that may arise in relation to bilingual education.
- Establish a consultative institution to provide consultations to teachers who work bilingually as well as to provide schools with teaching aids, textbooks and technical equipment.

To local governments

- Elaborate a program of action to promote a timely learning of Latvian language at preschools for children whose families do not speak Latvian at home. Relate these programs to the preparation of five and six-year-old children for school.

To schools

- In cooperation with local governments and NGOs to promote Latvian language and bilingual pedagogical training among teachers.
- Promote cooperation between minority and Latvian schools, their teachers and their students.
- Cooperate more actively with parents and parent organizations, providing continuous information about the development of bilingual education at schools. Provide methodological assistance to parents and help them better to understand bilingual education.

To universities

- Introduce a mandatory course on bilingual education in professional training programs for teachers, and promote the learning of bilingual education methodologies in those programs.
- Pedagogical universities in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science to train secondary school teachers for work in bilingual classrooms.
- In cooperation with the ministry to develop research on bilingual education- analyze and evaluate the level of knowledge and skills of students at minority elementary schools in the subjects that are taught bilingually; compare the achievements of bilingual schools that are working on the basis of the various models that are available; elaborate concrete proposals to improve the effectiveness of bilingual education, keeping regional differences in this area firmly in mind.
- Compare bilingual education policy and implementation of bilingual education in Latvia and other countries.

Main conclusions

The Education Law says that all classes that are taught at the 10th grade level in state and local government secondary schools are to be taught “exclusively in the state language” as of September 1, 2004, but the Law on General Education says that general secondary education programs can be merged with minority education programs. Education policy makers and educational personnel say that the norm in the Education Law which speaks to just one teaching language in minority secondary schools after 2004 has been a mistake which has not been reversed. This causes serious complications and misunderstandings in the entire bilingual education process.

Reforms concerning bilingual education in minority elementary schools

1. Four-fifths of the principals and teachers at minority schools believe that the Latvian language knowledge and skills of students at these schools have improved over the last several years.
2. Nearly two-thirds of principals and more than one-half of teachers are worried about the idea that bilingual education has a deleterious effect on the knowledge of students in those subject areas which are taught bilingually.
3. The study does not confirm the widespread fears in society that bilingual education threatens the positions of the Russian language. Nearly one-half of teachers believe that the reforms do not have a direct effect on the native language skills of students.
4. Insufficient Latvian language skills among teachers at schools where classes are taught in Russian are still the main problem in bilingual education, while at the same time, there are few teachers who have a critical opinion about their professional readiness for work at a bilingual secondary schools.
5. Many students at minority schools whose families do not speak Latvian at home have few opportunities to speak the Latvian language, because they spend most of their time in an environment where the Russian language dominates.
6. One-third of teachers believe that bilingual education is hampered by a lack of concrete methodologies.
7. The Ministry of Education and Science has virtually no direct contacts with bilingual teachers. The ministry’s policies in this area are still dominated by administrative norms, while opportunities to engage in dialogue or even to disseminate ongoing information are not used very effectively.
8. A bit more than one-half of parents, students, teachers and principals believe that the number of subjects that are taught in Latvian and Russian in elementary schools should be approximately equal.
9. Most teachers feel that students have a positive attitude toward classes that are taught in two languages or in Latvian.
10. Four-fifths of teachers at the second and third grade level say that the model of bilingual education which has been selected for their class or school is the appropriate one.
11. Two-thirds of the parents of students in the second or third grade are informed about the use of the Latvian and Russian language in the education process, while a bit fewer than 30% of them have not received any information. The primary source of information about bilingual education for parents are the teachers of their children.
12. Most parents, teachers and principals think that the most appropriate time when a child should start learning the Latvian language is in kindergarten.

13. Answers given by students in the sixth and seventh grade indicate that the classes that are most often taught through the bilingual method are music, homemaking, biology, geography, history, the visual arts and math. One-third of students could not say which classes are taught “only in Latvian”, which suggests that there are certain differences between data that are presented in documents and the real situation in schools.
14. Most parents help their children to do their homework or check the assignments that have been completed. This indicates that parents are active participants in the bilingual education reforms, but this is not a phenomenon that can be judged in any clear way.

The language of teaching at minority secondary schools

1. Readiness of minority secondary schools for the next step of education policy–transition to teaching mainly in Latvian – in 50 research schools is different. The data tell us that 16% of secondary schools is fairly well prepared for the transition to teaching mainly in Latvian, 40% have an average level of readiness, 44% is not ready, and 6% are facing a particularly critical situation.
2. Most parents and teachers say that young people who are graduated from minority secondary schools have greater problems in entering Latvia state universities and that they have fewer opportunities in the job market than young people who are graduates of Latvian schools. A majority of principals, teachers and parents say that transition to teaching mainly in Latvian at minority secondary schools will increase the abilities of students in these areas.
3. The government’s education policies say that classes at the 10th grade level in all state and local government minority secondary schools will be taught primarily in the Latvian language as of 2004, but minority students will still have the ability to learn their native language and subjects that are related to their ethnic identity in their native language. These reforms are supported by approximately one-half of surveyed principals, by 42% of parents and teachers, and by 40% of students. Approximately one-half of principals and teachers and 48% of parents object to the reforms.
4. One-half of secondary school teachers and principals say that their school will be ready to teach classes primarily in the Latvian language in 2004, while 40% of teachers and 10% of principals say that they will not be ready. More than one-third of principals believe that this will cause serious difficulties at their schools.
5. 41% of teachers and one-half of surveyed principals feel that students who are presently in the 7th grade will, with a certain level of difficulty, be able to study in Latvian at secondary school, while 51% of teachers and one-half of principals think that this will create serious problems for students. Optimistic views about this issue have been expressed by more than one-half of parents, while negative opinions are held by a bit more than one-third of parents.
6. Approximately one-half of secondary school teachers believe that they will be able, with a certain level of difficulty, to teach in Latvian, while more than one-third of teachers think that this will create great problems for subject-based teachers or that some teachers simply will not be able to handle the task. Approximately one-half of secondary school teachers, evaluating their Latvian language skills, say that they are not ready to teach in Latvian or through the bilingual method.

Analysis of laws which regulate the operations of minority schools

The legal foundations for bilingual education policy involve three laws – the Education Law (1998), the Law on General Education (1999) and the Language Law (1989 and 1999). There are also regulations from the Cabinet of Ministers and instructions from the Ministry of Education and Science. The national concept on public integration is important in a broader context.

It must be stressed that certain changes in relation to the language of instruction that is used in minority schools occurred even before the Education Law took effect in 1998. *“In 1995, Article 5 of the old Education Law was amended to say that two subjects in elementary schools must be taught in Latvian, along with three subjects in secondary schools”* (an Education Ministry official). This means that the changes which the new Education Law mandates in terms of the language of instruction were not the first step in regulating the use of the Latvian language in minority schools.

Let us now look at the three laws separately. There have been extensive debates in society about the benefits and losses which have occurred as a result of bilingual education, but the fact is that the concept of “bilingual education” is not contained in any of these laws.

Article 9 of the Education Law speaks to the language of instruction, Article 41 addresses the matter of minority education programs, Article 60 speaks to the financing of educational institutions, and the transitional rules in the law also contain several sections which relate to this issue. The article **on the language of instruction** specifies that “education in state and local government educational institutions is obtained in the state language”. Other languages can be used in state and local government schools which implement minority education programs.

Article 41 says that **minority education programs** are elaborated by schools themselves, on the basis of recommendations from the Education Ministry on the use of languages in teaching various subjects. The programs are usually based on one of the four models which have been approved by the Education Ministry as sample minority education programs. The article also says that the education programs must include elements that are necessary for students to learn about their ethnic culture.

The financing of education in Latvia is governed primarily by Article 60 of the Education Law, which says that “several education programs can be implemented in one educational institution, and these can be financed from various sources – the resources of the state, local governments and other legal and natural persons”. In the case of minority schools, this means that a school can use more than one of the aforementioned models. Different models can be used in parallel classrooms or at different grade levels – one in the first grade and another in the 6th.

Also of importance in terms of education policies is Article 15.25, which says that the Education Ministry “hires and dismisses the directors of educational institutions (except universities) which are under the supervision of the Education Ministry”. This means that the central institutions have quite a few opportunities to influence processes at specific schools. Article 20, moreover, says that the National Education State Inspectorate, which is a structural unit of the ministry, supervises the way in which educational institutions follow the law.

The transitional rules of the Education Law said that in the **1999/2000** school year, all minority schools must use one of the minority education programs (which

included bilingual education). The ministry has often been accused of not providing timely information to schools about this fact.

The transitional rules also say that students in the 10th grade in minority secondary schools must be taught in Latvian in the **2004/2005** school year. This norm is widely known, and there are lots of debates about it. There are certain contradictions in the laws – between Article 42.2 of the Law on General Education and Article 9.3 of the transitional rules of the Education Law, for example). Politicians have admitted this: *“There was a mistake. The transitional rules (meaning the Education Law) includes the statement that secondary education will be available ‘only’ in the state language beginning in 2004. The word ‘only’ could not be stricken from the law because the article could not be reopened for discussion. This is, therefore, a very sensitive thing in political terms. There is a contradiction in the law – the Law on General Education says that secondary education can be based on minority education programs, and that does not mean that secondary education must involve only the state language. This contradiction has never been repealed”* (a politician from the governing coalition).

The greatest misunderstandings involved Article 6 of the transitional rules of the Education Law, which say that schools which have launched an education program “may continue to implement the program if they receive a license for the relevant program within three years’ time”. An Education Ministry official explained this rule: *“The Education Law says that all schools must have licensed program, but then there are transitional rules which make that clear – schools have to start within three years, and this article takes effect three years after the Education Law takes effect. The Education Law took effect on June 1, 1999.”* This means that the law says that in the 2002/2003 school year, all classes in minority elementary schools must be taught on the basis of the minority education program that the school has selected. This is not a very clear requirement, and that may be why very few people who are involved in minority education policies are aware of it.

Opposition members of Parliament and defenders of minority interests have openly spoken of their dissatisfaction with the law: *“Am I an opponent to the thinking of governing parties when it comes to the Education Law? Yes, I am an opponent!”*

The Law on General Education contains few norms which regulate minority schools. It says that the basic education program which applies to all of the schools in Latvia “may be merged with a minority education program”. This deals with the teaching of subjects which relate to minority languages and culture, as well as public integration. As was noted above, the Law On General Education and the Education Law are in contradiction to one another when it comes to the use of languages – the Education Law says that everything must be taught in the state language, while the Law on General Education says that “the general education program can be merged with a minority education program, including the native language of the ethnic minority, as well as content which relates to minority identity and integration into Latvian society”. This norm has usually been interpreted as meaning that even after 2004, approximately 25% of the education content in minority secondary schools will be taught in Russian or another language.

One minority principal had this to say about these norms: *“I think that the Education Law and the Law on General Education are out of date, they were adopted in 1998. Four years have passed, and we are still in the preparatory phase. The laws were adopted in a different millennium, but life changes very quickly”*.

It should be noted that the documents which regulate education are closely linked to other norms, especially the 1989 Language Law: *“Do you know the origin of the Education Law? It is from the law on the state language. If the State Language Law has been adopted, then there also has to be an Education Law. The one law provided for the second one”* (a minority school principal).

The State Language Law says that “the language of meetings at state and local government institutions is the state language”. This means that pedagogical meetings at schools must be held in Latvian.

Sample minority education programs

The sample minority education programs or “four models”, as they have come to be known, were approved by the Education Ministry on May 27, 1999, or just three months before they were to be implemented (keep in mind that schools are usually closed during the summer). This means that schools had to choose their model quickly and without much thought. There was no time to consult with the parents of students or to prepare teachers and teaching resources. Most schools chose the model that would mean the fewest changes in the educational process.

The sample programs have been adjusted a bit over the last two years. Currently in force is Instruction No. 303 of the Education Ministry, “Sample minority education programs”, which took effect on May 16, 2001.

One of the goals in the programs is to *“promote the integration of the person who is receiving an education into Latvia’s society and to ensure the learning of the Latvian language at a level which allows the individual to continue his or her education in the Latvian language”* (Instruction 303, Chapter 2, Article 5.I). We must note that the law says that a higher education in Latvia’s state universities must be obtained in the Latvian language.

A representative of the Education Ministry had this to say about the functions of minority education reforms: *“If the state offers its own sample education programs, then it must undertake responsibility for ensuring that when these children are graduated from the 9th grade or secondary school, they are competitive and able to continue with their studies”*.

Summary

These three laws have created a foundation for major changes in minority schools, and they apply mostly to the language of instruction. First of all this involves a move toward minority education programs in elementary schools, which means bilingual teaching. From the 2002/2003 school year, all elementary school classes must be taught bilingually. Secondly, this marks a gradual transition to teaching mainly in the Latvian language at minority secondary schools, beginning in the 2004/2005 school year. The overall goal is to increase the importance of the Latvian language at minority schools.

The results of surveys among parents, students, teachers and principals

A socio-demographic characterization

Principals

Most (80%) of principals in Latvia are between 40 and 60 years old. Only one-tenth are younger than 40, and a similar number are older than 60. 72% of surveyed principals were women. In talking about their financial circumstances, more than one-half (54%) agreed with the statement that “*I can barely make ends meet with my income*”, while 42% said that “*I can save a bit of money*”. Nearly one-half (46%) of principals can spend less than Ls 80 per month per household member. One-third (36%) spend between Ls 80 and 120, while only 16% spend more than Ls 120.

94% of surveyed principals are citizens of Latvia.

Teachers

90% of the surveyed teachers were women, approximately one-half (48%) of them were younger than 40, 46% were aged 41 to 60, and 6% were older. More than one-half of teachers said that they are Russian (56%), one-quarter (26%) are Latvian, 6% are Belarusian, 6% are Ukrainian and 4% are Polish.

Teachers had a more negative view of their financial condition than principals did – 56% said that “*I can barely make ends meet with my income*”, 32% said that they can save up a bit of money, while 8% admitted that they are forced to borrow money to make ends met.

Spending per household member is similar when it comes to teachers and principals – 49% of teachers spend up to Ls 80 per month, 28% spend between Ls 80 and 120, and the remaining 23% spend more than Ls 120. The more critical self-evaluation of finances can perhaps be attributed to the fact that teachers tend to be younger than principals, and so they have more unsatisfied needs.

65% of teachers are Latvian citizens, while among those who are not citizens, 73% plan to obtain citizenship. These plans were most often expressed by teachers with better Latvian language skills.

Parents

Parents were surveyed by telephone, and in 86% of cases the respondent was the mother or grandmother of the child. Only in 14% of the cases did we speak to the father. 33% of the respondents have a higher or an incomplete higher education, 46% have a secondary specialized education, 19% have a general secondary education, and 2% have a basic education. Two-thirds (68%) of respondents are Russians, 25% come from a different minority nationality, and 6% are Latvians. 84% are younger than 45, 41% are younger than 35, and 44% are aged between 36 and 45. 44% of surveyed parents are citizens of Latvia, and 72% of those who are not would like to become citizens.

Students

Students from the 6th and the 7th grade took part in the survey. 87% of them were between 10 and 13 years of age, while 13% were older. Boys and girls represented an approximately equal share of respondents. Two-thirds (67%) of the

students are Russian, 15% are Latvian, 5% are Ukrainian, 5% are Belarusian, and 3% are Polish.

59% of the students are citizens of Latvia, and two-thirds of non-citizens would like to obtain citizenship. Among those who do not want citizenship, 40% would choose Russian citizenship, 19% would choose American citizenship, 11% would like to be citizens in a Western European country, and 5% would choose citizenship in some other Eastern European country.

Socio-political positions: Parents, teachers, students, principals

A sense of belonging to Latvian society

Parents

Asked to answer the question “*Do you personally feel that you belong to Latvian society?*”, 62% of parents replied in the affirmative, while 27% expressed the opposite view. 86% of those parents who speak Latvian freely confirmed that they do feel a sense of belonging.

Teachers and principals

82% of teachers said that they feel a sense of belonging to Latvian society. This was more often true among those who speak the Latvian language to a better degree (88%).

Principals were more likely to feel this sense of belonging – 96% confirmed that they do.

In response to the question “*Are you proud of your nationality?*”, 90% of Latvian teachers replied in the affirmative. One-half of minority teachers answered “yes” to the question, while a greater percentage of minority teachers (27%) than Latvian teachers said that they have never thought about the matter.

Principals have a strong sense of ethnic identity – 73% of the principals in minority schools said that they are proud of their nationality.

Students

Only 29% of students said that they feel a sense of belonging to Latvian society, one-third (32%) said that they do not, and fully 40% could not answer the question.

This suggests that students in the 6th and 7th grade found it difficult to understand the question and that they perhaps thought it to be too abstract. It must be emphasized, however, that among those who have better Latvian language skills, 53% affirmed a sense of belonging.

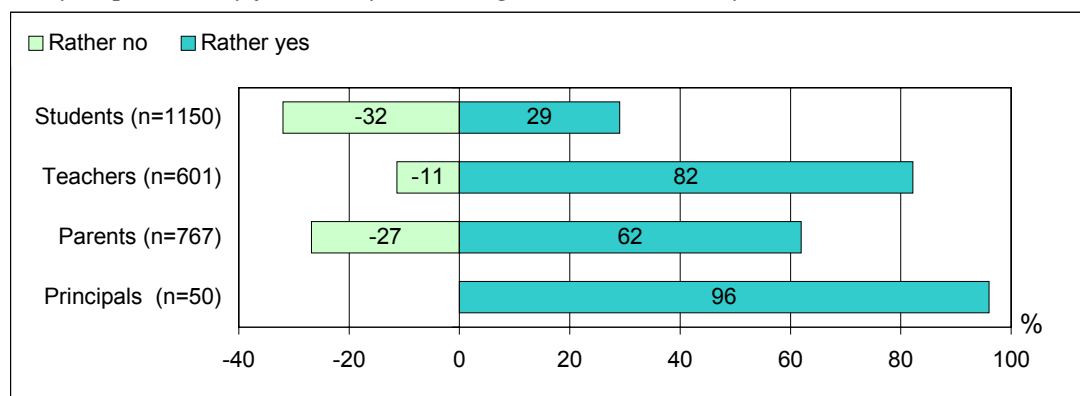
A sense of belonging is firmed up by friendships with Latvian peers – 48% of those students who have friends or acquaintances who are Latvians said that they feel a sense of belonging to Latvian society.

We also posed this question: “*With which country do you most associate your future plans in terms of where you will live and work?*” Only one-fifth (22%) of the students said that Latvia is the country, and this was more true among students in rural schools (39%).

Approximately one-quarter (27%) of students in minority schools link their future to the countries of the European Union, 13% - the United States or Canada, 12% - the Russia. 22% of respondents could not give a concrete response to the question.

Figure 1. A sense of belonging to Latvian society

“Do you personally feel that you belong to Latvian society?”



Base: all respondents

“Difficult to answer” are not given

A sense of belonging was more commonly found among principals (96%) and teachers (82%) than among parents (62%) and students (29%).

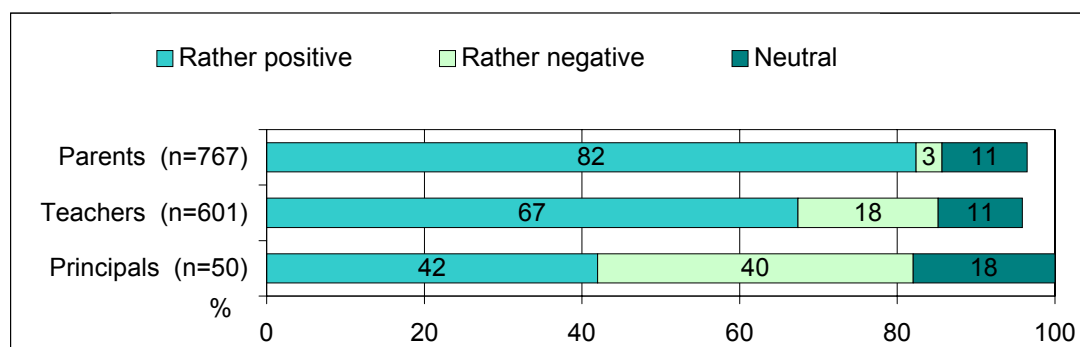
Attitudes toward the idea of introduction of Russian as a second state language

82% of **parents** support the idea of Russian being a second state language in Latvia. Minority **teachers** whose native language is not Latvian expressed this idea at the same level – 82%. The concept is not as popular among **principals** – only 42% support the idea of Russian becoming the second stage language. Those principals whose native language is not Latvian were more likely to give that response – 57%.

The views of **students** are similar to those of teachers – 79% support the introduction of Russian as a second stage language.

Figure 2. Attitudes toward the idea of introducing Russian as a second state language

‘What is Your attitude toward introduction of Russian as a second state language in Latvia?’



Base: all parents, all teachers, all principals

“Difficult to answer” are not given

The idea of Russian as a second state language is most often supported by parents (82%), teachers (67%) and students, but there is less support among principals (42%).

The school

Teachers and students speaking about their schools

Students: My school

As part of the survey, students were asked to write down three sentences about their school. The aim was to learn about the associations which students have when they think about their school. We wanted to find out whether spontaneous reactions to this question might not suggest that students have a distinctly negative view of the reforms that are taking place in minority schools.

It must be stressed that positive views dominated the responses to the question. Words that were commonly used include “I like my school”, “I love my school” and “I am proud of my school” (32%), “mine is a good school” (17%), “mine is the best school” (8%), “my school gives me knowledge and a good education” (12%), “I do not want to go to a different school” (6%), “mine is an ordinary and normal school” (5%). Students often listed physical parameters such as “large”, “beautiful”, “clean”, “small” or “old” (23%).

Some students (7%) stressed the friendly atmosphere at school.

Attitudes toward teachers were often expressed with words such as “good”, “understanding” and “interesting” (25%), or “they teach us well” (9%).

Asked to describe the process of learning, students used such words as “interesting lessons” (7%), “I like to study” (9%), “our classes and other events usually take place in Russian” (5%), “I would like the classes to be taught in Russian” (7%), “bilingual classes” (4%), “the procedure for learning the Latvian language” (9%). In talking about the procedure for learning the Latvian language, some students complained of “feeling overburdened with the Latvian language, many subjects are taught in Latvian” (1%). Students think that “the Latvian language should be taught in Latvian lessons, the Latvian language should be taught in additional lessons, or it should be taught in an extracurricular process”(1%). Often, however, the students said that the Latvian language teaching process in their school is a good one.

Teachers: The psychological atmosphere in the school

Given that serious changes are taking place in minority schools, there is good reason to ask about changes in the psychological atmosphere in specific educational institutions. Responses from teachers suggest that in relatively few cases (25%), the atmosphere in the school “*has become more tense and nervous*”. A similar number of respondents (22%) said quite the opposite – that the atmosphere “*has become more free and pleasant*”. The majority of teachers, however, said that the atmosphere “*has not changed*”.

Teachers in Latgale were more likely to say that the mood has become more tense and nervous (36%).

Relations between schoolchildren and parents

Responses from the students show that nine times out of 10, the relationship between the child and his or her parents is friendly and kind (“*We often discuss various issues*”, “*My parents listen to me and understand me*”). Only some 10% of survey respondents gave negative responses (“*My parents don’t understand me*”, “*My parents are busy and show no interest in me*”).

Attitudes toward work

Teachers

Approximately 80% of surveyed teachers expressed greater or lesser satisfaction with their work. On a 10-point scale, the average response was 7.5. That is a high indicator, especially taking into account that the overall level in Latvia (according to a European study of values in 1999) is lower – 6.7. The study was conducted in a number of European countries (Table 1).

Principals

None of the principals who were respondents in the survey expressed dissatisfaction with his or her work, and all of the principals had more or less positive attitudes. The average indicator in terms of job satisfaction was 8.8.

Table 1. Satisfaction with one's job – Latvia among other European countries
'Generally speaking, to what extent are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your work? Please answer using a 10-point scale, where 1 means "dissatisfied" and 10 means "satisfied".'

Country	Average indicator for people in senior positions	Average indicator in the country
Denmark	9.1	8.1
Germany	8.0	7.7
Austria	8.7	7.7
Belgium	7.9	7.6
Sweden	8.2	7.3
Czech Republic	7.7	7.3
Lithuania	7.6	6.9
Latvia	7.7	6.7
Estonia	7.6	6.7
Russia	7.0	6.2

Source: Halman, L. *The European Values Study: A Third Wave Source book of the 1999/2000 European Values Study survey*. Tilburg University (2001).

Resources: The sufficiency of textbooks

Approximately one-half (53%) of teachers believe that their schools have sufficient numbers of textbooks in the relevant area of study. 46% say that this is not true. Complaints about a lack of textbooks are made most often by secondary school teachers, as well as by teachers who are not involved in the "Open School" project.

The preferred model for a school

Parents

The attitudes of parents toward educational reforms are indirectly demonstrated through their statements about the number of subjects which, as far as they are concerned, should be taught in Latvian. **One-half of parents (51%) want an equal number of subjects to be taught in Latvian and Russian**, 14% believe that it would be better if most subjects were taught in Latvian, and 31% want most subjects to be taught in Russian. Studies in Russian are supported more often by those with

poor Latvian language skills (46%). A more positive attitude toward Latvian as the main language of instruction is displayed by those parents whose children are attending schools where the first model has been implemented (44%).

Teachers

An indirect indication of the views of teachers in the area of bilingual education consists of their thoughts about the language in which their children or grandchildren should be studying. **One-half (54%) of teachers tend to support bilingual education**, saying that their children should pursue an equal number of subjects in Latvian and Russian. One-third want most subjects to be taught in Russian, while only 4% of teachers would prefer that their children study mostly in Latvian.

Principals

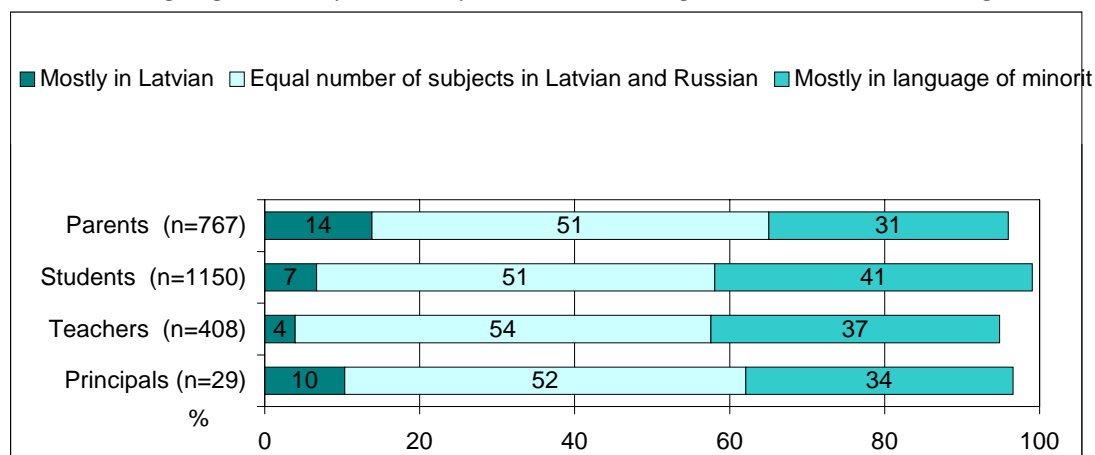
Similar views are found among school principals. **One-half would like the subjects that are taught to their children to be taught in Latvian and Russian to an equal measure.** One-third want most subjects to be taught in Russian (or another minority language). This is more likely among those principals whose native language is Russian (43%).

Students

Approximately one-half of students want to take equal numbers of courses in Latvian and Russian, 41% want to study in a school where most subjects are taught in Russian, while 7% would choose a school where most subjects are taught in Latvian.

Figure 3. The desired model of the school

"In what language would you want your children or grandchildren to be taught?"



Base: all students; all teachers; all parents

principals, who would not like to send their children in Latvian school

"Difficult to answer" are not given

Bilingual education is seen as the most desired model by approximately one-half of parents, students and pedagogues.

The Latvian language

A self-evaluation of Latvian language skills among parents

For 94% of the respondent parents, their native language is Russian, while for 5% it is another minority language. 38% of parents report that they have good Latvian language skills (29% said that “with minor difficulties, I can discuss any subject”, and 9% “speak freely”). Other parents have fairly weak skills – 48% agree with the statement that “I do not speak Latvian very much and can discuss only simple issues”, while 13% said that “I do not speak Latvian at all or hardly speak it.”

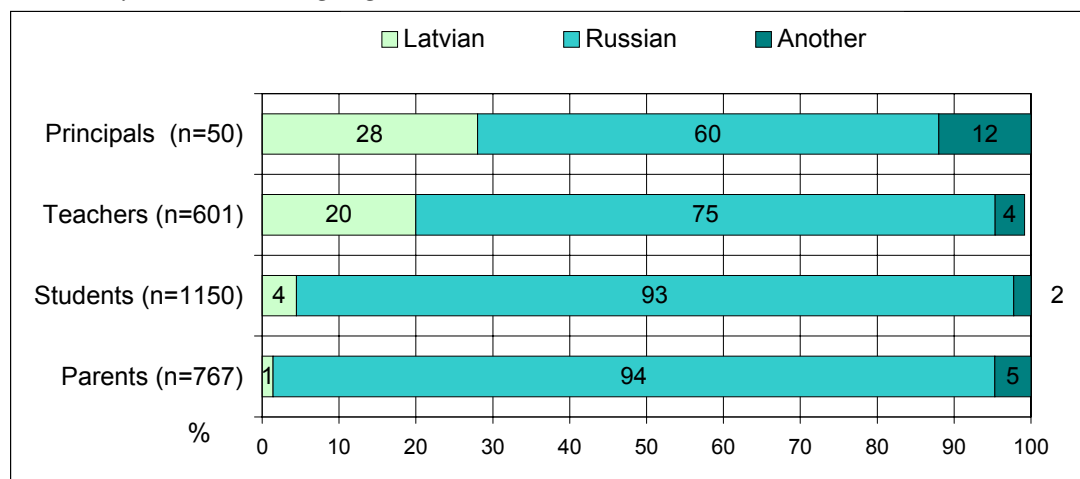
The Latvian language skills of parents who took part in this survey are more or less in line with the national average. In January 2002, the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences ran a study which found that among people whose native language is not Latvian, 13% speak Latvian “freely”, 27% have a “good” command of the language, 48% “have limited language skills”, and 12% “do not speak” the Latvian language.

A total of 17% of parents agreed with the statement that “I like to use the Latvian language and am happy to do so”, while approximately one-half (48%) agreed with the statement that “I like the Latvian language, but I am shy about speaking it”. Another 26% said that they have neutral attitudes, 3% speak Latvian “without any particular pleasure”, and 1% “do not like to speak Latvian and do not want to do so”. We see that it is hard for many parents to speak Latvian, both because of their skills in the language and because of emotional aspects. This means that they often have limited abilities in terms of helping their children to learn the state language and to do their homework.

A full 98% of parents chose to be interviewed in Russian for this study.

Fig. 4. Native language

“What is your native language?”



Base: all respondents

“Difficult to answer” are not given

A self-evaluation of Latvian language skills among teachers

Most of the surveyed teachers (75%) have Russian as their native language, while one-fifth (20%) have Latvian as their native language. Latvians are more likely than Russians to teach Latvian in minority schools.

Among teachers whose native language is not Latvian, some 10% say that their skills are in line with the highest level of certification, one-half (53%) report skills that are at the second, average level, and more than one-third (36%) confess to skills that are at the lowest level. Teachers with the best language skills usually teach Latvian (59%), teachers with average skills often teach a foreign language, while those with the lowest level of skills teach the exact sciences.

We find more teachers with Latvian language skills at the lowest level in Latgale, Rīga and Vidzeme (37-39%). This is much less common in Zemgale and Kurzeme (18-19%).

Teachers were more positive about their ability to read in Latvian – 53% said that they “*read freely*”, 38% - that “*I can read virtually any text with some difficulties*”, and only 9% - that “*can understand uncomplicated texts*”.

A total of 18% of teachers can speak Latvian freely, a majority (53%) said that they “*can speak about any subject with some difficulties*”, and 29% reported that “*can speak a little, can speak about uncomplicated issues*”. The latter answer was most common among teachers in Latgale and among those who teach the exact sciences.

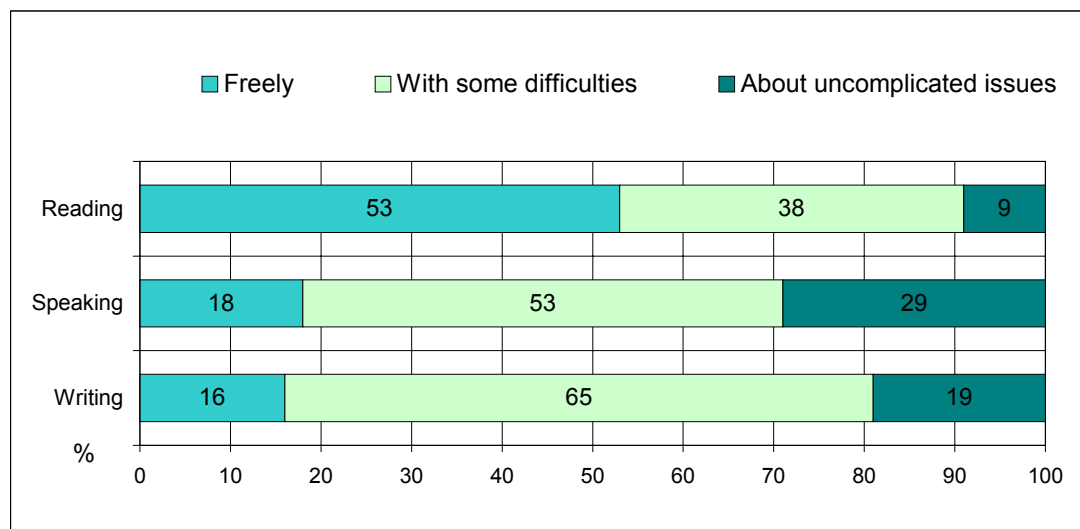
16% of teachers can write Latvian freely, 65% “*can write almost any text with some difficulties*”, but 19% can write only about the simplest of subjects.

One-fifth of teachers whose native language is not Latvian can freely move from Latvian to Russian and vice-versa when speaking. 41% say that this process is fairly easy to them, while one-third (33%) say that it is “*quite difficult*”. 3% of teachers said that it is “*very difficult*” to move from Russian to Latvian and the other way around.

It must be stressed that 75% of the teachers expressed a positive attitude toward the speaking of Latvian, and very few had negative emotions (3% said that “*I speak without much pleasure*” and 1% “*speak very unwillingly*”).

Fig. 5. Reading, writing and speaking skills

“How would you evaluate your...?”



Base: teachers with non-Latvian native language, n=481

“Difficult to answer” are not given

Teachers were given an opportunity to choose the language for their interview, and the fact that 71% chose Russian suggests that they do not feel sufficiently confident about their Latvian language skills to feel secure in a conversation.

Language skills among principals

28% of principals have Latvian as their native language, 60% have Russian and 12% have a different minority language. 34% of principals chose to be interviewed in Russian, which suggests that principals are more often able to communicate freely in Latvian than teachers are.

An evaluation of language skills among students

Students

93% of the surveyed students have Russian as their native language, 4% have Latvian and 2% have a different language. Some 68% of students reported no great difficulty in speaking Latvian (14% can speak “freely”, 54% - “can speak about any subject with some difficulties”, 30% “can speak about uncomplicated issues” and 2% - not at all).

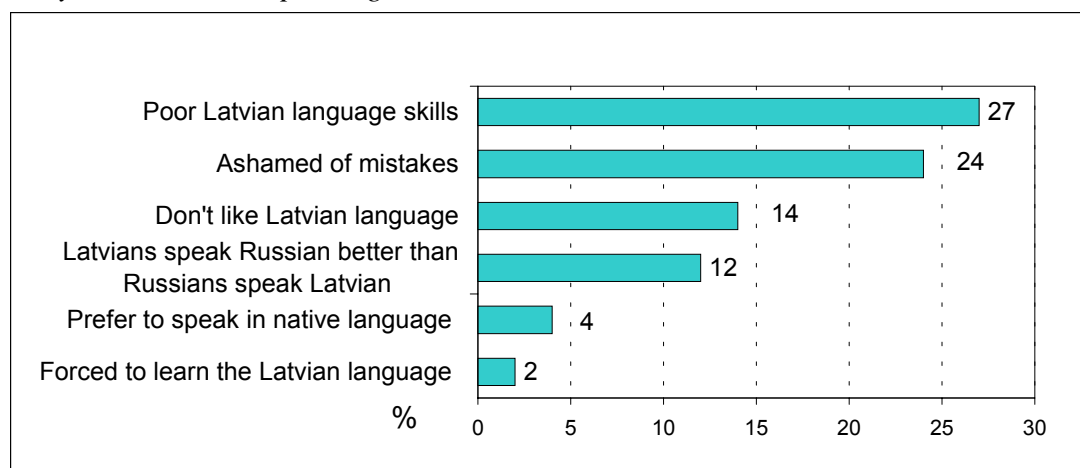
Some 80% of students reported no difficulty in moving from one language to the other – 16% said that it is “very easy”, while 63% reported that it is “fairly easy”.

One-third of students agreed with the statement that “I like to speak Latvian and am happy to do so”, 17% said that “I like the Latvian language, but I am shy about speaking it”, and 27% reported that “I speak Latvian, but without much pleasure”. Only 1% said that “I don’t like to speak Latvian and do not want to do so”. Another 22% expressed a neutral attitude about the issue.

Minority students who do not like to speak Latvian said most often that this is because they have poor skills (27%), because they are ashamed of their mistakes (24%), or that they simply don’t like the Latvian language (14%). Others said that Latvians speak Russian better than they speak Latvian (12%), that they prefer to speak in their native language (4%), or that they are being forced to learn the Latvian language (2%).

Fig. 6. Reasons, why students don’t like speaking Latvian

“Why don’t You like speaking Latvian?”



Base: students, who don't like speaking Latvian, n=319

multi-answer question, total % > 100

“Difficult to answer” are not given

Judging from this self-evaluation, teachers and students have better Latvian language skills than parents. 63% of teachers, whose native language is non-Latvian, and 68% of students can converse in Latvian without any difficulty, while among parents it is at a level of only 40%.

Parents

Asked to discuss the Latvian language skills of their **children**, parents were more critical – only 15% said that their kids “*speak freely*”, one-third (32%) reported that their children “*can speak about any subject with some difficulties*”, but a majority reported modest skills – the child “*can speak a little, can speak about uncomplicated issues*”, or, in 7% of cases, that the child “*can hardly speak or not at all*”.

Asked when their children speak Latvian outside of school, 34% said that they do not speak Latvian at all. This answer was more common among people in Latgale. Children most often speak Latvian “*out in the yard and with their friends*” (46%), “*in interest-based activities*” (28%), in the family (22%), and in conversations with relatives (19%).

Teachers

More than one-half of teachers (58%) think that most of their students have problems when the language of instruction is changed. Only 35% of teachers think that there are no problems with this matter.

Interestingly enough, those teachers whose Latvian language skills are at the lowest level were more likely to say that their students have difficulties with the change of language (72%), as were teachers in Latgale. A more critical view of the ability of students to shift from one language to another was expressed by teachers in those schools which use the third and the fourth model. A more optimistic view was expressed by teachers whose schools are implementing the first model of basic education for minorities.

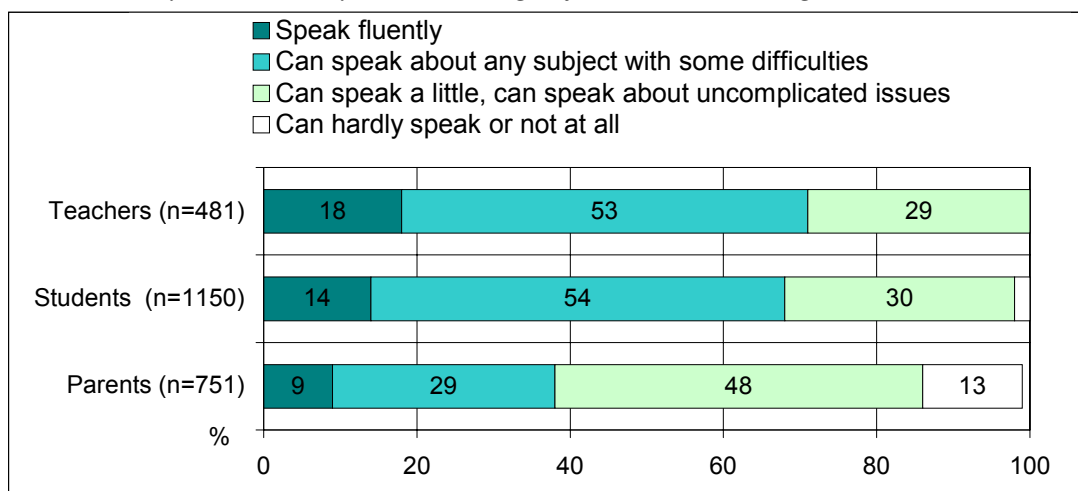
One-third of teachers (35%) said that the Latvian language skills of children who enter school are “*average*”. Relatively few teachers rated the skills as “*good*” or “*very good*”. 17% of teachers said that the students have “*poor*” Latvian language skills. This was most often true among teachers in Latgale, as well as among those teachers who themselves have Latvian language skills at the lowest level.

Principals

The views of principals were similar – some 40% said that the Latvian language skills of children who begin school are “*good*” or “*average*”. It is important that language skills were evaluated more critically by Russian speaking principals, as well as by principals in Latgale.

Fig. 7. Knowledge of Latvian - speaking skills

“How would you evaluate your knowledge of Latvian – reading skills?”



Base: teachers and parents with non-Latvian native language; all students
 “Difficult to answer” are not given

Use of the Latvian language**Teachers**

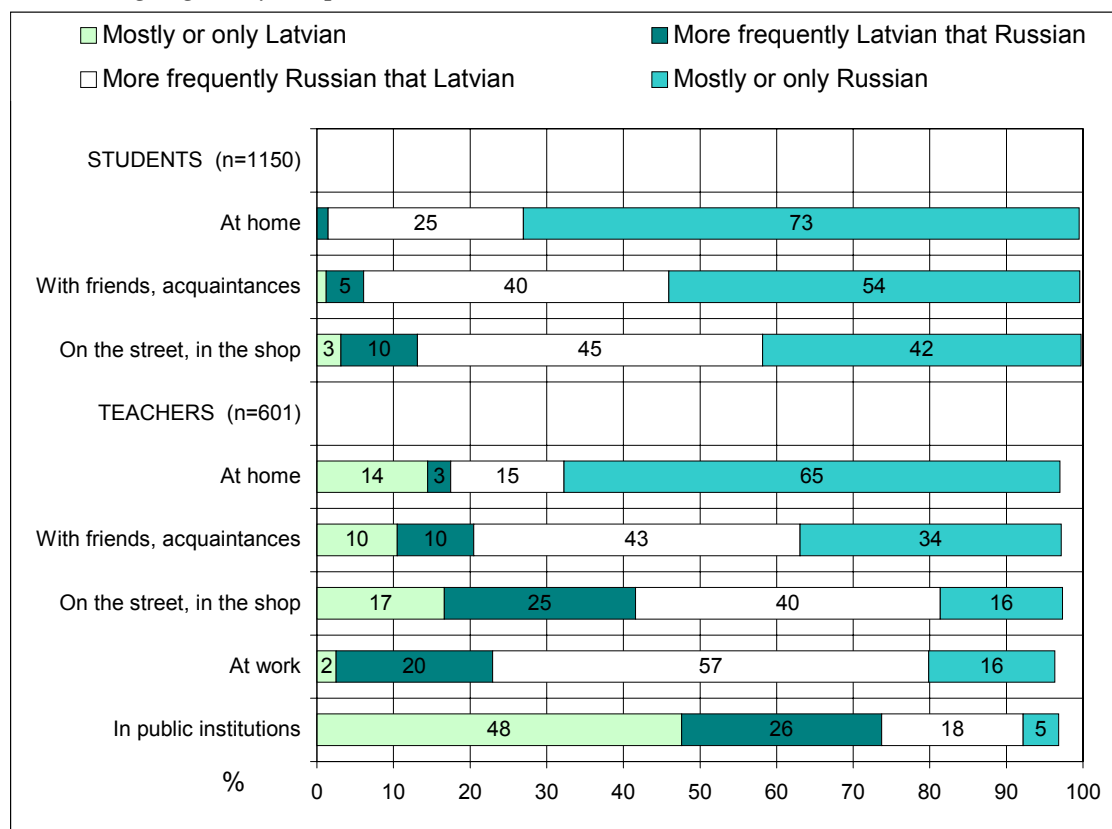
Asked where they speak the Latvian language, teachers whose native language is not Latvian said “at government institutions” (72% - answers ‘mostly or only Latvian’ and ‘more frequently Latvian than Russian’ taken into account), adding that in other situations (“at school, with acquaintances, on the street, in a shop”) they are more likely to speak Russian. Nearly all Russian speaking principals said that when they are at government institutions, they speak “only Latvian or mostly Latvian”. Principals are also more likely than teachers to speak Latvian “on the street or in a shop”.

Students

73% of students reported that at home, they speak “only Russian or mostly Russian”, while in 25% of families the Latvian language is also spoken. Approximately one-half of students speak Russian or Latvian when conversing with friends or when out on the street or in a shop.

Fig. 8. Language usage

“What language do you speak . . . ?”



Base: all teachers; all students

“Difficult to answer” are not given

Associations with the words “the Latvian language”

Teachers

Teachers often associate the words “the Latvian language” with work and related obligations. This was particularly typical among secondary school teachers, among whom 28% linked the Latvian language to the need to know it, 7% linked the concept to their work, and 8% associated it with tension. The words “the Latvian language” were less often associated with Latvian culture (16%). Elementary school teachers draw similar associations, although one major nuance is that they are more likely than their colleagues in secondary school to link the Latvian language to Latvia – the land in which they live.

Students

Students most often associate the words “the Latvian language” with their studies, with the obligation to speak the Latvian language (31%), with difficulty, dislike and fear (24%) and, less commonly, with Latvia, Latvians and contacts with Latvians (17%), with their future, further education and work (4%), and with Latvian culture and spiritual wealth (2%). A total of 9% of students said that they have positive associations when they think of the Latvian language, and only a few (1%) expressed radically negative views, using words such as “discrimination”.

Parents

Parents often associate the Latvian language with obligations, with the need to know the Latvian language and with studies. Parents do not have negative attitudes, but their answers were dominated by the normative aspect – they consider language skills to be a duty, and they do not speak of ideas such as a resource for communications or for learning about the culture.

The age at which minority children should start to learn the Latvian language**Parents**

Most parents (69%) believe that the best time for a child to start learning Latvian is in kindergarten. Many think that such skills can be learned even earlier – “*from birth*” (19%). Only 10% said that Latvian language learning should begin only when the child goes to school. 68% of parents believe that Russian, Ukrainian and other minority children should attend Latvian kindergartens. These responses suggest that most parents want their kids to learn Latvian as quickly as possible.

In practice, children actually have begun to learn the Latvian language somewhat later – “*from school age*” in 50% of cases, “*from kindergarten age*” in 46% of cases, and “*from birth*” in only 4% of cases. Children whose parents do not speak Latvian are more likely to begin learning the language at a later time, i.e., when they go to school (65%).

Teachers

Most teachers (62%) believe that kindergarten is the best place for a child to start learning the Latvian language. One-third of teachers (32%) believe that this can be done “*from birth*”. Only 5% say that the learning of the Latvian language can be postponed until the child is in the first grade.

More than one-half of teachers (56%) believe that it is desirable for minority children to attend Latvian kindergartens. The opposite view is less common (29%) – these are teachers who say that minority children should not go to Latvian kindergartens. This view was expressed more often by teachers who teach the native language (37%).

Principals

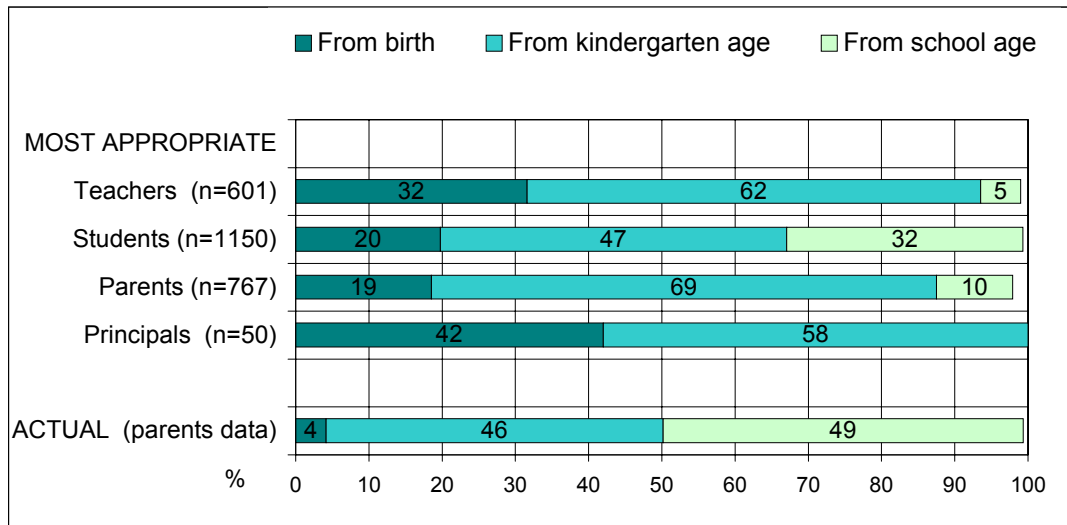
More than one-half of principals (58%) believe that children should start learning the Latvian language at kindergarten age, while 42% recommend that the language should be taught to children “*from birth*”. Principals are more likely than teachers to believe that minority children should attend Latvian kindergartens (60%), and fully 70% of principals whose native language is Russian believe that this is true.

Students

Unlike teachers and principals, one-third of students believe that the teaching of the Latvian language can be postponed to the time when a child enters school, but a majority believe that it is better to learn the language earlier (47% - “*from kindergarten age*” and 20% - “*from birth*”).

Fig. 9. Right and actual age for starting to learn Latvian

“What, in your opinion, is the right age at which one should start teaching the Latvian language to children of other nationalities (Russians, Ukrainians, etc.)?”



Base: all respondents
 “Difficult to answer” are not given

Parents (69%), teachers (62%), principals (58%) and students (47%) believe that kindergarten is the place where a child should start learning the Latvian language.

Bilingual education

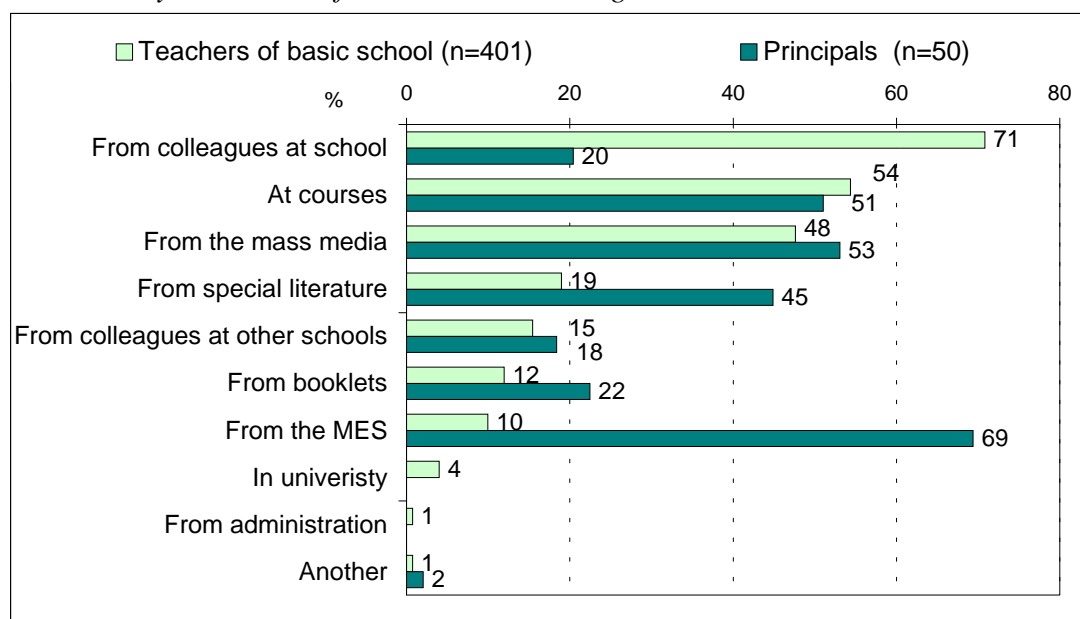
Information about bilingual education

Teachers

Most teachers (80%) learned about bilingual education over the course of the last five years – most often “from colleagues at school” (71%), “at courses” (54%), “from the mass media” (48%), “from special literature” (19%), “from colleagues at other schools” (15%), and “from the Ministry of Education” (10%).

Figure 10. Sources of information about bilingual education

“Where did you receive information about bilingual education?”



Base: all principals, all teachers of elementary school

“Difficult to answer” are not given

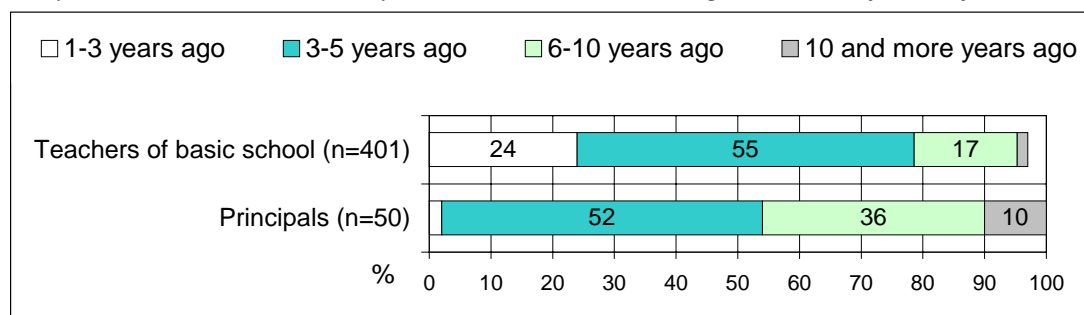
One-half of basic school teachers (55%) said that the bilingual education method means “the use of two languages in the study of one subject”. Many (23%) think that it means “teaching some subjects in Latvian and some in the native language”. Another 22% said that “the bilingual method means a gradual increase in the number of subjects that are taught in Latvian”.

Principals

Many principals learned about bilingual education sooner than teachers did – almost one-half had heard of the concept more than five years ago. The sources of information were the Ministry of Education (69%), the mass media (53%), courses (51%), and specialized literature (45%).

Figure 11. First information about bilingual method

'Do you remember, when did you heard about the bilingual method for the first time?'



Base: teachers of elementary school and principals

"Difficult to answer" are not given

Parents

40% of the parents of children in the 2nd and 3rd grade reported that they received exhaustive explanations about the use of the Latvian and the Russian language in the educational process. Another 30% learned a bit, while a bit fewer than 30% received no information at all.

Parents most often received information about bilingual education "*from the teachers of my children*" (69%), which shows that at least two-thirds of teachers discussed the issue of bilingual education with parents. The mass media were less significant as a source of information – only 23% learned about the bilingual education from the mass media.

The parents of children in the 2nd and 3rd grade learned about bilingual education relatively recently – in the last three years or so. The parents of children in the 6th and 7th grade learned about bilingual education somewhat sooner.

Readiness to teach bilingually

One-third of elementary school teachers rated their ability to teach bilingually as being high (at the level of 8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale), some one-half of the teachers rated it as average (the level of 4-7), and only 6% said that their readiness is at a low level (the level of 1-3). It should be said that 12% of teachers declined to provide a concrete answer to the question. It is likely that their readiness to teach bilingually does not exceed the average level, or perhaps it does not even reach the average level.

One-half of teachers (55%) stressed that teachers who teach bilingually lack Latvian language skills. One-third (33%) said that there is a lack of "*knowledge about bilingual pedagogy*". Factors such as "*a lack of knowledge about Latvian and Russian culture*" (3%) and "*insufficient knowledge about pedagogy as such*" (1%) were cited much less frequently.

A majority of teachers (58%) said that the quality of bilingual education at their schools is "*average*", one-third reported that it is "*high*", and very few rated it as "*very high*" (1%) or "*very low*" (2%). More optimistic views were expressed by teachers from those schools that are using the first model, as well as by teachers from schools which have been involved in the "Open School" project. Teachers in Riga, as well as teachers in schools where the third or fourth model is being used were more likely to be critical of the quality of the process.

Teachers believe that when it comes to the ability of **students** to learn bilingually successfully, the greatest problems involve Latvian language skills (59%). Far fewer teachers talked of “a sufficient level of intellectual development” (20%), “textbooks” (10%), “support from the family” (4%), and “good Russian language skills” (2%).

Principals

Asked about the shortcomings of teachers when it comes to teaching bilingually principals most often spoke of insufficient Latvian language skills (50%) and insufficient knowledge about bilingual education (28%).

Asked what **students** lack in order to be able to study bilingually, principals cited “good Latvian language skills” (50%), “a sufficient level of intellectual development” (22%), “textbooks” (16%) and “support from the family” (8%).

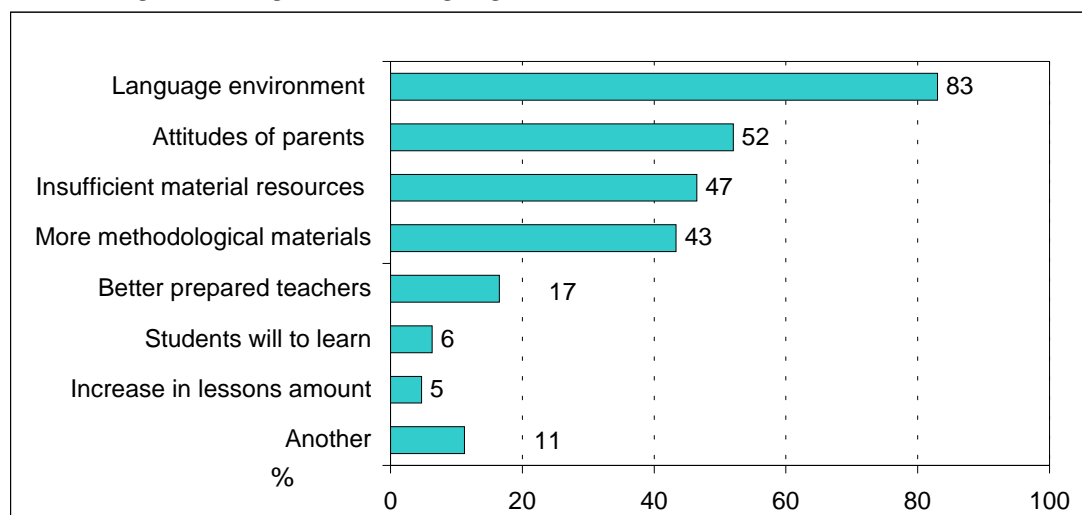
Teaching the Latvian language as a subject

Teachers

Asked what is missing in terms of the ability of students to learn the Latvian language at school, Latvian language teachers cited the language environment (83%) and the attitudes of parents (52%). With respect to the process of education, Latvian language teachers often spoke of insufficient material resources (47%), a lack of methodological materials (43%), and the need for teachers to be better prepared (16%).

Figure 12. Pre-conditions for learning the Latvian language during Latvian language classes

“What do you think is necessary so that students might learn the Latvian language to a better degree during Latvian language classes?”



Base: all teachers of Latvian language, n=127

multi-answer question, total % > 100

“Difficult to answer” are not given

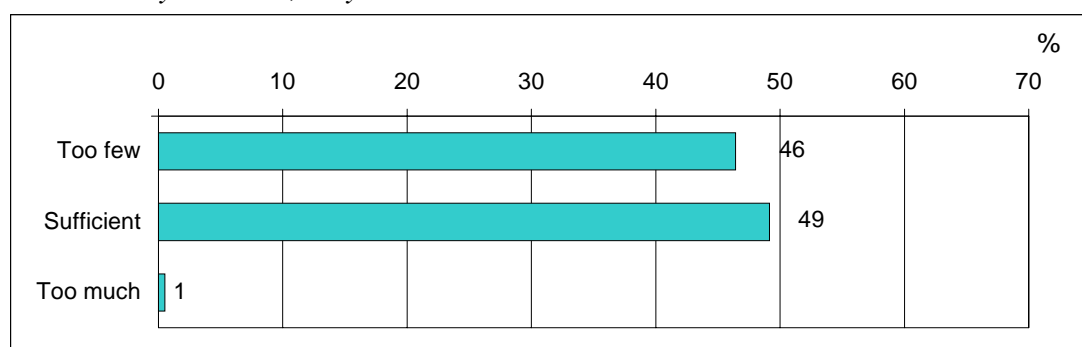
Parents

Parents did not have a unanimous view about the number of Latvian language lessons at school – nearly one-half (46%) think that there are “too few” lessons, while 49% think that there are “sufficient” lessons in the Latvian language. Only 0.5% of

parents feel that there are “*too many*” lessons in the Latvian language. 17% of parents would like the number of Latvian language lessons to be increased to the point where the language is taught every day. These data show that parents are interested in ensuring that there are sufficient amount of Latvian language lessons for their children.

Figure 13. An evaluation of the number of Latvian language lessons

“When it comes to the number of Latvian language lessons each week that are available to your child, do you think that the number is ...?”



Base: all parents, n=767

“Difficult to answer” are not given

Informing parents about the use of the Latvian language in the educational process

Teachers

Fully 91% of teachers at the 1st to 3rd grade level have told the parents of their students about the use of the Latvian language in the educational process, and 64% said that the parents are “*fully informed*” about the matter. If we compare these data to the things that the parents said, we see that despite discussions with teachers, many parents still do not have a clear understanding of the choice of languages when their children are taught.

Principals

Principals had similar views to those of the teachers – 64% think that the parents of children at their schools are “*fully informed*” about the way in which the Latvian language is used in the educational process.

Use of the Latvian and Russian language in the educational process

Teachers

When it comes to the earliest years of the educational process, classes that are taught “*only in Latvian*” include (other than Latvian language lessons, of course), sports (40%) and, far less commonly, other subjects (3-15%). Only in the case of the first model is the Latvian language used more intensively – in 70% of cases when it comes to sports, in 60% of instances when handicrafts are taught, 40% of the time in teaching visual arts, and in 30% of cases when mathematics are taught. In schools where the fourth model is being used, only the Latvian language is taught in Latvian, while other subjects are taught in Latvian very seldom.

Classes in the first years of elementary school are often taught in both languages. In 75% of cases, the natural sciences are taught in both languages. In the

case of music, the visual arts and handicrafts, both languages are used in approximately 60% of cases.

Students

Table 2
Use of the Latvian and Russian language in the 6th and 7th grade

Subject	Textbooks only in Latvian (%)	Textbooks in Latvian and Russian (%)	Lessons only in Latvian (%)	Lessons in Latvian and Russian (%)
Music	46	29	15	58
Homemaking/ handicrafts	34	22	11	43
Biology	35	45	12	64
Geography	33	37	-	49
Latvian language	30	-	33	4
History	22	30	8	
Visual arts / drawing	13	9	12	35
Math	10	30	4	31
Computer skills	5	4	1	9
Sports	2	0.6	9	14
Ethics	1	0.3	0.3	1
Chemistry	0.6	0.4	0.2	0.3
Introduction to economics	0.5	1	0.2	1.3
Physics	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.3
Health	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.3
No response	5	12	29	4

The answers which were given by students in the 6th and 7th grade tell us that bilingually most often are taught music, homemaking and handicrafts, biology, geography, history, the visual arts and mathematics. The fact that nearly one-third of the children (29%) could not tell us which subjects are taught “*only in Latvian*” suggests that there is a certain lack of conformity between the planned and the actual level of Latvian language use.

Parents

Nearly all of the parents of children in the 2nd and 3rd grade are aware of the number of subjects that are taught to their children in Latvian and bilingually. This indicates that they monitor their children’s studies. Only 8% of parents do not know how many subjects are taught to their children bilingually, and 3% do not know how many subjects are taught in Latvian.

The practice of bilingual education – methodology

Teachers

When teaching bilingually, most teachers “*explain terminology in two languages*” (79%). Far fewer teachers use different approaches – “*work in the*

classroom in one language and homework in the other” (this method is used less often by teachers who have a lower level of Latvian language skills). Some teachers (35%) teach certain themes in one language and others in the other language. In 31% of cases, work in the classroom involves one language while homework involves the other. This approach is used most often by teachers of the natural sciences.

Most of the teachers who work bilingually use teaching resources in Latvian (87%) and Russian (70%). Elementary school teachers use teaching resources in Latvian in 95% of cases, as do 77% of secondary school teachers.

Approximately one-half of teachers discuss the subject in Russian and in Latvian (24% do so “*in every lesson*”, while 31% - “*in nearly every lesson*”).

20% of teachers said that they “*always*” correct mistakes which students make when using the Latvian language, and another 25% do so “*frequently*”. We see that nearly one-half of teachers correct their students. This is more common among teachers who are Latvians, as well as among those whose schools are not involved in the “Open School” project. This creates additional stress for the student, of course, because he must think not only about the content of the subjects, but also about whether he is speaking Latvian correctly.

Difficulties in bilingual education

Teachers

Slightly more than one-half of the surveyed elementary school teachers (55%) use Latvian and Russian in the teaching process. The study indicates that teachers who work bilingually often have poor Latvian language skills themselves – one-half have skills which conform to the second level of certification.

Three-quarters of the teachers who work bilingually said that they have had difficulties in the process. In addressing specific problems, one-third mentioned the lack of methodologies and didactic materials (33%) and the lack of textbooks (32%). One-fifth (21%) said that students have poor Latvian language skills, while quite a few teachers (16%) reported a lack of time to teach new subject matter during classes. 12% said that teachers do not have sufficient language skills and an inadequate vocabulary in Latvian. 8% have problems with terminology and translation. 10% of teachers feel that bilingual education is hindered by the fact that students do not want to study in Latvian, 7% reported that children do not understand and perceive the material that is being taught, and 6% said that the fact that their students have different skill levels is a problem.

Fewer teachers spoke of issues such as a lack of bilingual education programs (5%), the fear of speaking Latvian (5%), excessively complicated Latvian language textbooks that have not been adapted for Russian schools (5%), and the lack of Latvian language skills among parents (4%).

Some teachers (4%) said that a lot of time is needed to prepare for classes or that literature is expensive while salaries are low (3%). Some teachers have problems in the classroom because they cannot easily move from one language to the other (3%).

We see that factors which hinder bilingual education, as far as teachers are concerned, include the lack of methodologies and textbooks, as well as insufficient Latvian language skills among teachers and students.

Parents

More than one-third (37%) of the parents of children in the 2nd and 3rd grade said that bilingual education has created “*additional difficulties*” for their children.

Attitude toward studying in two languages or in Latvian

Teachers

Most teachers (68%) believe that **students** have a positive attitude toward classes in two languages (15% said that attitudes are “*very positive*”, while 53% said that they are “*mostly positive*”). This was claimed more often by teachers in Kurzeme and Zemgale and less often by teachers in Latgale. Clearly the language environment is an important factor in determining the level of language learning, as well as attitude toward this process.

A majority of teachers (70%) believe that the attitude of children toward learning in Latvian is positive, and only 21% think that children have negative views about the process. This was said more often by teachers who themselves have average or low Latvian language skills, as well as by secondary school teachers.

The vast majority of teachers from schools which are involved in the “Open School” project (83%) think that students have positive attitudes.

Parents

18% of parents object to the idea of bilingual education – they want their children to study only in Russian. This was seen more often among parents of children who go to schools where the fourth model is being used.

12% of parents complained of the fact that they cannot help their children with schoolwork if the subjects are taught in Latvian. This was claimed more often by parents of children in schools which use the fourth model or a different one. 6% said that the level of knowledge of their children has declined and that the children are falling behind in their studies. The same percentage think that exact subjects and the natural sciences must be taught in the Latvian language. 5% of parents called for improvements in the way in which the Latvian language is taught. Another 5% think that textbooks must be simplified, and 4% complain that their children cannot handle their studies. A similar percentage believe that students are overloaded with work.

One-half of parents (52%) are convinced that their **children** “*like to study in Latvian*”, while one-quarter think that their children’s attitudes are neutral. Fewer parents (17%) believe that children “*do not like to study in Latvian*”. Positive attitudes about the matter were expressed more often by parents whose children are attending schools where the first model is being used.

The views of the parents of children in the 2nd or 3rd grade with respect to the studies of their children bilingually

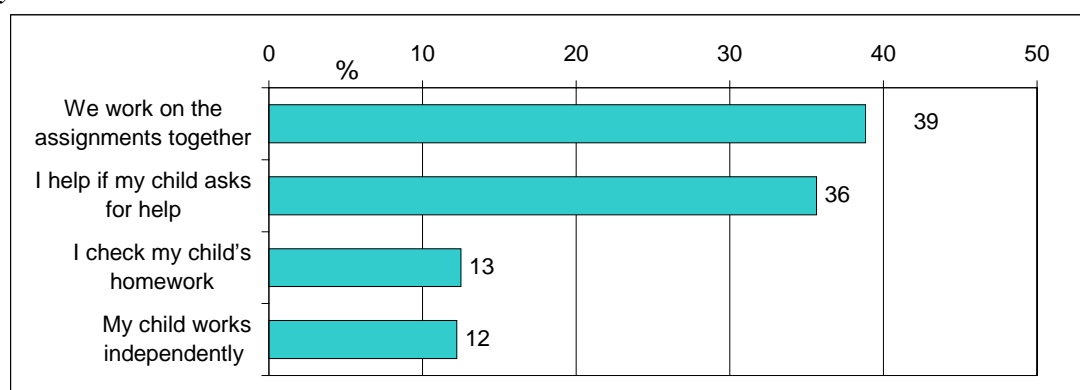
The majority of the parents (59%) believe that a “*sufficient*” number of subjects are taught bilingually. Far fewer think that the number of subjects that are taught in both languages is “*too low*”.

Parents have similar views when it comes to the use of Latvian and Russian in the educational process – 59% feel that the number of subjects that are taught in each language is “*sufficient*”. 24% of parents think that “*too few*” subjects are taught in Latvian, while only 10% argued that insufficient numbers of subjects are taught in Russian.

Many children in the 2nd and 3rd grade cannot do their homework independently. 39% of parents say that they help their kids with the homework. Nearly as many say that they help occasionally – if the children ask for help. A total of 13% of parents check their children's work. Only 12% said that “*my child studies independently*”. That answer was given most often by parents who do not themselves speak Latvian.

A majority of parents (69%) believe that the amount of work that is assigned to their child is “*in line with his abilities*”. One-fifth believe that the workload is “*excessive*”. This latter view was expressed more often by parents who do not speak the Latvian language (24%), by parents whose children are studying in the first model (26%) or the second model (24%), and by parents who live in Latgale (28%).

Figure 14. Doing one's homework in Latvian or bilingually taught subjects
“How is homework from subjects that are taught in Latvian or bilingually done at your home?”



Base: parents of children in the 2nd or 3rd grade, n=376

“Difficult to answer” are not given

Learning bilingual education methods

Improving the skills of teachers

The fact that fully 99% of teachers have attended courses at some point over the last five years indicates that teachers want to improve their skills and to prepare for educational reforms. In nearly all cases, teachers said that school administrators supported their efforts.

Teachers

Three-quarters of surveyed teachers (78%) obtained information about bilingual education in “*courses*”. Many spoke of “*exchanging experiences with colleagues*” (62%) and “*studying the literature*” (50%).

Teachers in schools where the fourth model is being used have attended courses less often than their colleagues in other schools. Courses and opportunities to exchange experiences were used more often by teachers in schools which are involved in the “Open School” project.

Soros Foundation courses have been attended more often by teachers in Rīga and by teachers who work in schools where the first model is used.

Teachers most often have attended courses that have been organized by the National Program for Latvian Language Training (65%), the Soros Foundation (39%), the school board (28%), the Ministry of Education and the Teacher Training Support

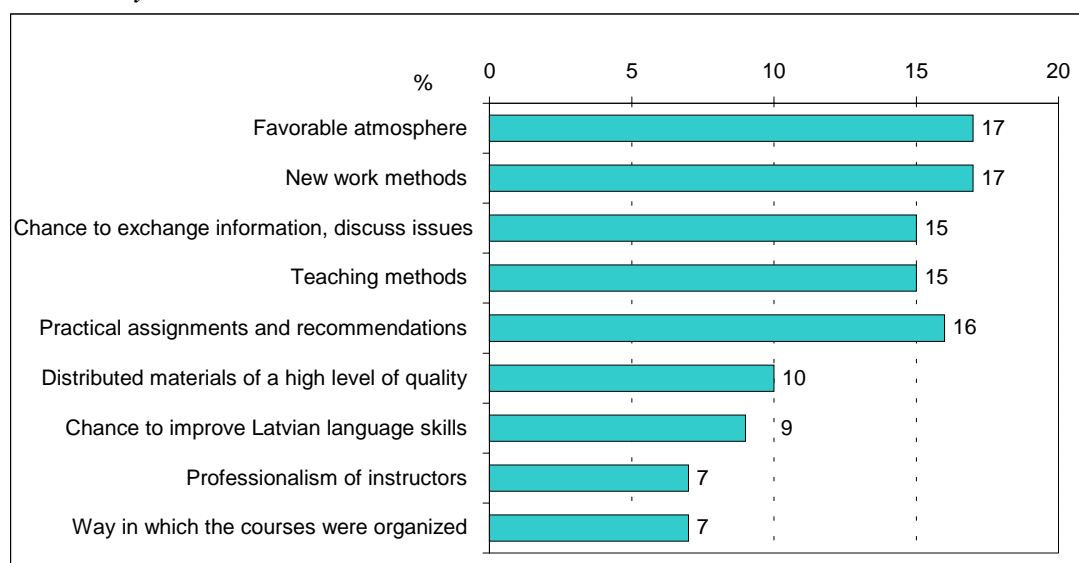
Center (16%). Some have attended courses at the University of Daugavpils, the Latvian Academy of Sports and the University of Latvia.

Speaking of the quality of the courses, 63% of teachers described it as being “high” or “very high”, 29% - as “average”, and only 4% - as “low”.

Asked to talk about the positive aspects of the courses, teachers spoke to a favorable atmosphere and cooperation among colleagues (17%), new work methods (17%), a chance to exchange information, to meet with colleagues and to discuss issues (15%), teaching methods (15%), practical assignments and recommendations (16%), distributed materials of a high level of quality (10%), contacts in Latvian and the ability to improve Latvian language skills (9%), the professionalism, erudition and personality of instructors (7%), and the way in which the courses were organized (7%).

Figure 15. Positive aspects of courses

‘What did you like in those courses?’



Base: teachers, who teach bilingually and have attended courses, $n=172$

multi-answer question, total % > 100

“Difficult to answer” are not given

Far fewer teachers talked about shortcomings in the courses – the fact that the courses did not focus on the teacher’s specific subject of specialization (5%), too little in the way of practical materials and concrete methodologies (5%), the idea that the courses were too long (4%) or that they were too short and hurried (4%).

Putting new methodologies to use

Teachers

Approximately 10% of the teachers who attended courses said that they did not have an opportunity to use the skills that they learned there in practice. More than one-half of these teachers said that this was because they have problems with teaching aids. One-third spoke of poor Latvian language skills among students and a lack of time. One-fifth said that their own Latvian language skills are a problem. A lack of time was cited more often by teachers whose Latvian language skills are at the lowest level of certification.

Teachers said things to suggest that one-half of elementary school teachers have studied various methodological resources in the area of bilingual education –

publications from the National Program for Latvian Language Training and the LAT2 program (11% of all elementary school teachers),

from the Soros Foundation and its “Open School” project (5%),

the book “Bilingual Education: Theory and Practice” (4%).

We see that teachers most often used the bilingual education materials that were prepared by the National Program for Latvian Language Training and the Soros Foundation.

The effect of bilingual method on the educational process and its results

Teachers

Most teachers (78%) said that the main benefit to bilingual education is that students gain better command of Latvian language. This was reported more often by teachers in the first to the 3rd grade, as well as by teachers who work at schools where the first model is being used. The indicator was even higher among teachers whose schools are involved in the “Open School” project. Many teachers (43%) said that students who are taught bilingually have a greater desire to speak Latvian, while 8% of teachers disagreed with this view.

Teachers had differing views about the extent to which students in bilingual lessons pay attention to what is being taught. 26% think that the method increases attention, while 31% believe that it reduces concentration. Another 26% of teachers don't think that bilingual education has an effect on the student's level of attention. Some 17% of teachers had no opinion on the matter.

Views about Russian language skills are more pessimistic – one-third of teachers (33%) believe that the Russian language abilities of their students deteriorate during the bilingual education process, while one-half (48%) think that native language skills do not change. Few teachers (8%) claim that Russian language skills improve as a result of the bilingual education.

The idea that Russian language skills are deteriorating was promoted most often by teachers in schools where the first model is implemented, i.e., where subjects are mostly taught in Latvian. This leads to the justified question of whether good skills in the Latvian language are not developed at the expense of the student's native language when the first model is used. This is not a question that can be answered exclusively on the basis of teacher responses, because teachers still have relatively little experience with bilingual education. There is a need for a comparative study which looks at the Latvian and Russian language skills of students who are being taught on the basis of the various models that are available.

Speaking to the effect of the bilingual method on the knowledge of students in specific study areas, most teachers listed losses, not gains. One-half (51%) believe that the bilingual education has a negative effect on the ability of students to learn new material in various subjects, and far fewer teachers claim the opposite. 19% say that studying bilingually does not have any effect in this area.

It is also important to know the extent to which students are interested in their studies. Many teachers (41%) think that the bilingual education has not effect on the level of interest, but it must be noted that one-third (33%) say that the level of interest among students is declining. Only one-tenth of teachers believe that the interest level is increasing. The fact that teachers who have been involved in the “Open School” project were less likely to say that students have less interest in subjects when they are taught bilingually and more likely to point to an increased level of interest demonstrates the extent to which the quality of bilingual education is important.

Teachers are fairly pessimistic about the ability of students to understand things which teachers discuss when the bilingual method is used – 42% of teachers think that the level of understanding “*declines*”, while only 13% feel that the bilingual education helps students to perceive what they are being taught. This view was heard more often at schools which have been involved in the “Open School” project.

The responses of teachers also suggest that the bilingual method causes psychological difficulties – 62% said that when subjects are taught bilingually, students worries about providing correct answers “increase”. Only 4% claimed the opposite – that the level of concern “*decreases*”.

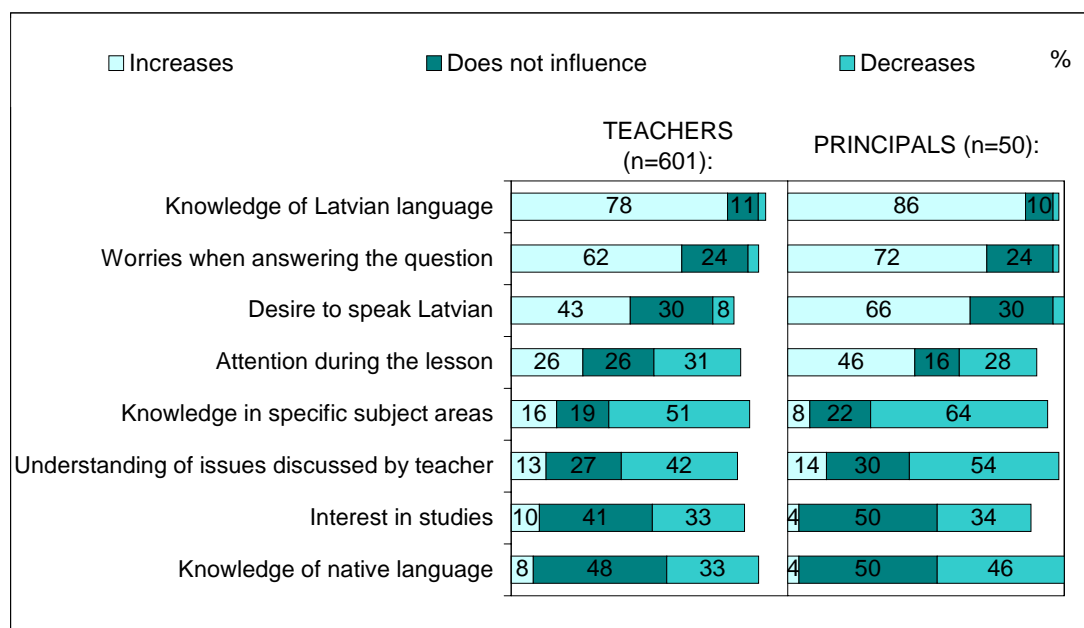
Principals

The views of principals about the influence of the bilingual method on the education process and its results are quite close to those of teachers – most principals think that students are more worried about answering questions, when taught bilingually (72%), that they have lower levels of knowledge in the subject of study (64%), that they are less able to understand what the teacher is saying (54%), that their Russian language skills are deteriorating (46%) and that students have less interest in the subject at hand (34%).

Principals, like teachers, say that the greatest benefits of the bilingual education process are that students gain a better command of the Latvian language (86%) and that they have a greater desire to speak Latvian (66%).

Figure 16. Effect of bilingual education

‘When learning bilingually does ...increase, does not change or decrease for students?’



Base: all teachers; all principals
 “Difficult to answer” are not given

The benefits of bilingual education: Improved Latvian language skills (78% of teachers, 86% of principals) and a greater desire among students to speak Latvian (43% of teachers and 66% of principals);

The losses that are caused by bilingual education: A negative influence on native language learning (33% of teachers, 46% of principals), a negative influence on the level of knowledge in specific subject areas (51% and 64%), and a negative effect on the psychology of students (62% and 72%).

Education mostly in the Latvian language at the secondary school level

Attitudes toward the upcoming changes

Teachers

According to Education Ministry policies, students in the 10th grade in Latvia will begin to study mostly in Latvian in 2004, maintaining the ability to learn their native language and to study the culture of their nation in their native language. These are changes which are supported by 42% of teachers and opposed by approximately one-half of teachers (52%).

The changes are more often supported by teachers with Latvian language skills that are at the highest level (46%), by teachers in the first to the 3rd grade (47%), and by teachers whose schools work on the basis of the first model (58%).

We see that positive attitudes are based on experience with bilingual education, as well as on Latvian language skills.

Principals

One-half of principals support the transition to teaching mainly in the Latvian language in year 2004. In expert interviews principals admitted that would be more appropriate, if secondary education in minority schools in Latvian could be started in 2008, because it is the time when 10th class reach students, who started to learn bilingually from the first grade.

Parents

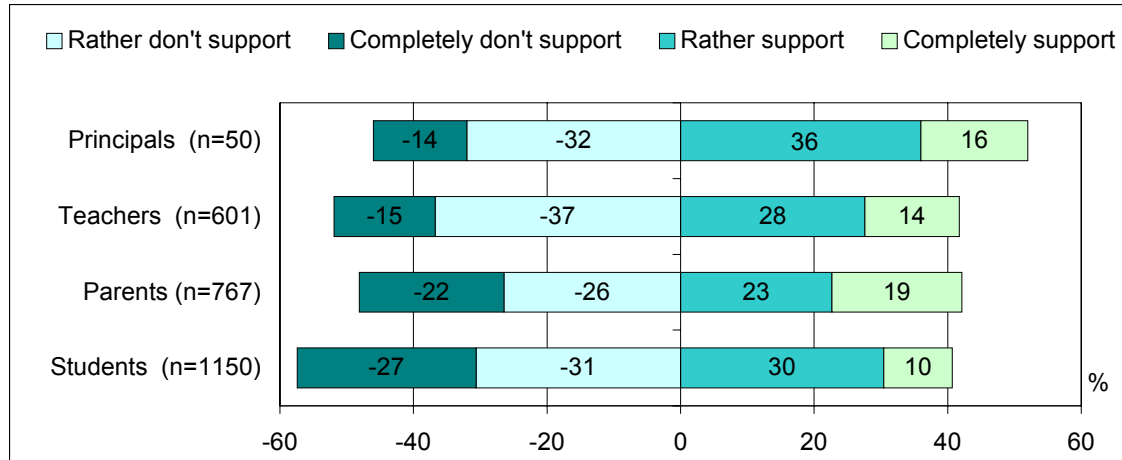
42% of parents support the transition to teaching mainly in the Latvian language in year 2004 to a greater or lesser degree, 48% oppose the policy, and 10% do not have a clear view of the matter. Parents with poor Latvian language skills are more likely to oppose the change.

Students

40% of students support the transition to studying mainly in the Latvian language at the secondary school level, although students in Rīga are less likely to do so (34%).

Figure 17. Attitudes toward the teaching mainly in Latvian language as of the year 2004

“Beginning in September 2004, most subjects in the 10th grade at all Latvian schools will be taught in Latvian, but the ability of students to study their native language and culture in their native language will be preserved. Do you ...?”



Base: all respondents

“Difficult to answer” are not given

The transition teaching mainly in Latvian language in ethnic minority secondary schools in year 2004 is supported by 52% of principals, 42% of teachers, 40% of students and 42% of parents.

The readiness of students to study mainly in Latvian at the secondary school level

Teachers

41% of teachers believe that students who are presently in the 7th grade will be able to study in Latvian with certain difficulties when they reach secondary school, while 51% of teachers feel that this will create serious difficulties.

The conviction that students will be able to handle the transition was expressed most often by teachers whose Latvian language skills are at the highest level (58%), as well as by teachers in school where the first model is being used (67%).

Principals

Principals have a similar view when it comes to the ability of current 7th grade students to handle studying in Latvian. One-half of principals think that this will not be much of a problem, and the other half think that there will be serious problems.

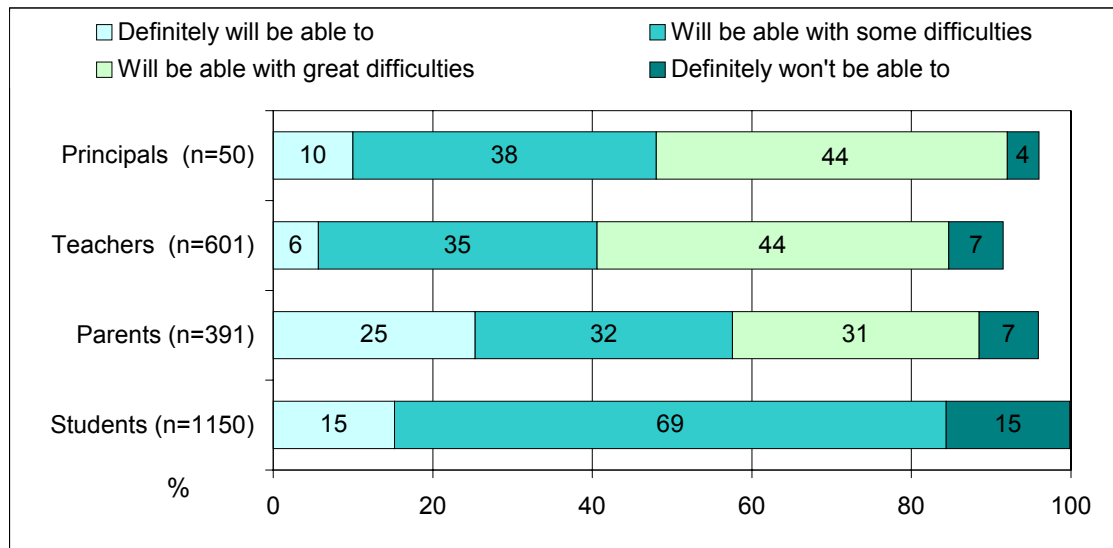
Parents

25% of the parents of students in the 7th grade feel that their child “*will certainly be able*” to handle studying mainly in Latvian at the secondary school level, 32% think that there will be some problems, and 38% claim that their children will have serious problems or find the process entirely impossible. This means that 57% of parents are more or less optimistic, while 38% are more or less pessimistic.

Optimists are found more often among the parents of children whose schools use the first model (77%), while those parents who do not speak Latvian are more likely to be pessimistic about their children’s future in secondary school (57%).

Figure 18. The readiness of students to study mainly in Latvian at the secondary school level

“Do you think that most of the students who are presently in the 7th grade at your school will be able to study in the Latvian language in secondary school?”



Base: all principals; all teachers; all students; parents of parents of children in the 6th or 7th grade
 “Difficult to answer” are not given

Teachers are the most critical about the readiness of students to study mainly in the Latvian language at the secondary school level – only 41% think that this will be possible, as do 48% of principals and 57% of parents.

The readiness of secondary school teachers to teach in Latvian

Teachers of secondary schools

When asked whether secondary school teachers will be able to teach subjects that are not related to minority languages or culture in Latvian, approximately one-half of teachers say that they will be able to do so with certain difficulties, while more than one-third of teachers (37%) think that teachers will have a very hard time with the process or that they will find it impossible. Teachers with good Latvian language skills are more likely to be optimists about the matter.

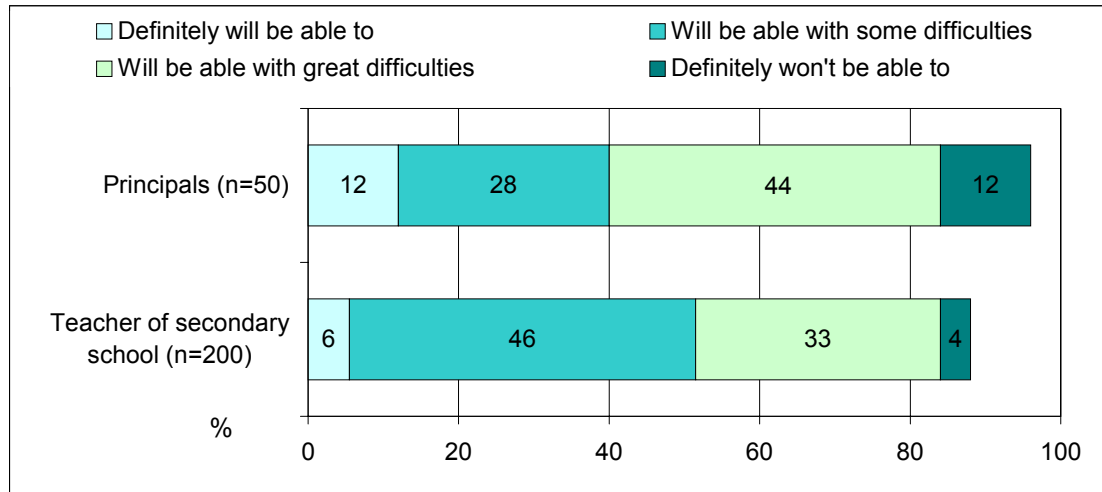
Among teachers who think that their colleagues will not be able to handle the change, 75% say that this is because of insufficient Latvian language skills among teachers, 62% point to weak Latvian language skills among students, and fewer talk about the lack of textbooks (9%) and methodologies (5%), or about the lack of psychological preparedness of teachers in terms of removing language barriers (4%).

Principals

Asked about the readiness of teachers to teach in Latvian, principals are more sceptical – 40% think that teachers are ready for this, while more than one-half disagree (44% think that teachers “*will be able to do so, but with great difficulty*”, while 12% argue that teachers “*will definitely not be able to do so*”).

Figure 19. The readiness of secondary school teachers to teach in Latvian

“Do you think that teachers at your secondary school will be able to teach subjects that are not related to minority language or culture in Latvian?”



Base: all principals; all secondary school teachers
“Difficult to answer” are not given

52% of teachers and 40% of principals believe that secondary school teachers will be able to teach their subjects in Latvian.

The adequacy of language skills when it comes to teaching subjects in Latvian

Secondary school teachers

Approximately one-half of secondary school teachers think that they have more or less sufficient Latvian language skills to teach a subject in Latvian (13% say that their Latvian language skills are “*completely sufficient*” and more than one-third (37%) believe that their skills are “*probably sufficient*”). One-third of secondary school teachers (36%) feel that their Latvian language skills are “*probably insufficient*”, 5% say that their skills are “*very insufficient*”, and 9% did not answer the question. Teachers in Kurzeme and Zemgale were more likely to feel convinced about their own skills.

Only one-third of the teachers are currently teaching one or more subjects in Latvian. Taking the language skills of teachers into account, we see that approximately one-half will have problems in teaching their subject in Latvian or bilingually.

An evaluation of the overall readiness of secondary schools

Teachers

One-half of secondary school teachers (49%) were convinced that their schools will be ready for the transition to teaching mainly in the Latvian language in year 2004, while 40% said that their schools will not be ready for the change. Some 12% of teachers could not answer the question.

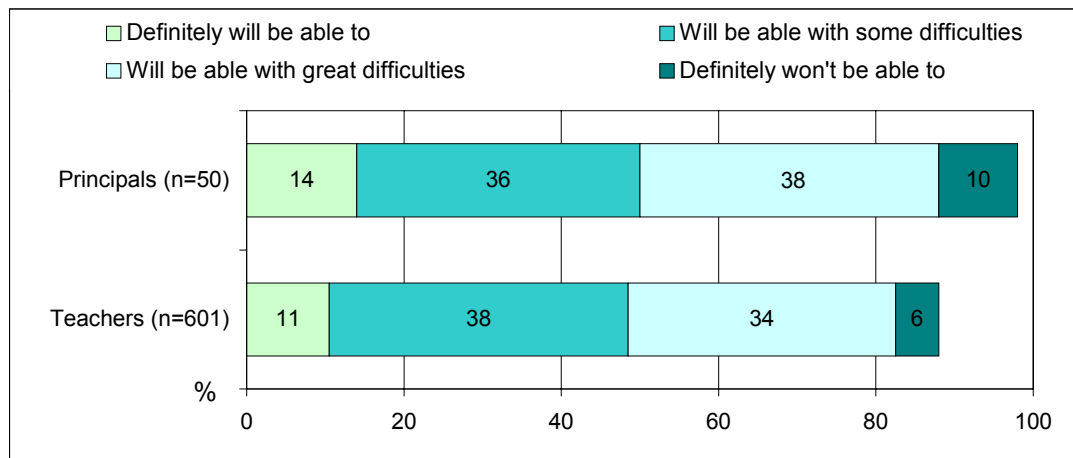
Here, too, the teachers who have Latvian language skills at the highest level are greater optimists (77%).

Principals

One-half of principals believe that with certain difficulties, their schools will be ready for education mainly in Latvian. Other principals think that there will be great difficulties (38%) or that the transition will be impossible (10%).

Figure 20. An evaluation of the overall readiness of secondary schools

“Do you think that your secondary school will be able to make a transition to teaching mainly in Latvian as of the year 2004?”



Base: all principals; all teachers
 “Difficult to answer” are not given

One-half of teachers and principals believe that their secondary schools, overcoming a series of difficulties, will be able to make a transition to teaching mainly in Latvian in secondary school in year 2004.

What has to be done to ensure that classes can be taught mainly in the Latvian language in secondary schools

Teachers

Teachers who believe that they will not be able to teach their subjects in Latvian were asked what needs to be done in order to ensure that the transition can be made in 2004. One-half spoke of the need for courses which prepare teachers, 15% called for literature, 8% stressed the need to improve the Latvian language skills of teachers, and 5% recommended that positive attitudes be fostered. Teachers also said that they need to

learn Latvian, that they have to speak Latvian more often and that they have to find a Latvian environment for themselves. Some teachers emphasized not only the preparedness of teachers, but also their desire to work.

Types of schools and their readiness to introduce studies in Latvian in secondary schools

Schools were divided up into certain types on the basis of the views of survey participants vis-à-vis the subject of readiness to transition to teaching mainly in Latvian in secondary schools in 2004. Criteria included the self-evaluation of teachers when it comes to their Latvian language skills, the extent to which teachers and principals support the Education Law, which provides for the transition in 2004, the views of students, teachers and principals about the readiness of students to study in Latvian, the views of principals about the readiness of teachers to teach in Latvian, and the views of principals when it comes to the readiness of their schools for the transition.

(A more detailed description of this typology can be found in appendix.)

The data tell us that 16% of secondary schools will be fairly well prepared for the transition to teaching mainly in Latvian, 40% have an average level of readiness, 44% will not be ready, and 6% are facing a particularly critical situation.

If we look at the group of secondary schools with a fairly high level of readiness (16%) of all schools, we must note that principals there are more optimistic about this issue than teachers or students are. Principals think that the schools will be able to handle the transition to teaching mainly in Latvian. Most teachers at such schools have good Latvian language skills, and they are convinced of their ability to teach in Latvian. Most teachers believe that students who are currently in the 7th grade will not have problems with this process. Some, however, say that there will be significant complications. Students are more optimistic than their teachers about this issue.

In the group of schools where the level of readiness is average (40%), we have more schools, and they are by no means homogeneous. The readiness of students is the main issue at these schools. Teachers have slightly weaker Latvian language skills than teachers in the first group. Attitudes toward the transition differ – some “*rather support*” the shift, while others “*rather do not support*” it. Most principals at these schools believe that they will rather be able to make the change, but one-third of principals think that they will rather won’t be able to do so.

At those secondary schools with relatively poor levels of readiness (38%), principals are more critical about the upcoming situation than teachers and students are, and that is particularly true when it comes to the readiness of teachers to provide instruction in Latvian. Teachers at these schools usually have average or even very poor Latvian language skills, and there is reason to worry about the abilities of students, too – all groups of respondents in these schools feel that most students will have great difficulties with studies in Latvian. These schools tend to be quite negatively inclined toward the transition to teaching mainly in Latvian in secondary school as of the year 2004. Principals feel that their schools probably will not be able to make the change.

In those schools with the lowest level of readiness (6%) are pessimistic, feeling that current teachers “*definitely will not be able*” to teach their subjects in Latvian. Teachers are not as categorical about their abilities. In all of the respondent groups, the dominant view is that students are going to face great difficulties. Teachers and principals alike have very negative views toward the transition.

Rural secondary schools are more often in the first group. Most schools in major cities are in the second group. More than one-half of the secondary schools in Rīga are in the third group, while some are in the second group.

We can conclude that schools differ in their attitude toward the shift and in their readiness for the move toward teaching mainly in Latvian language in secondary schools.

We also see that approximately one-half of schools (56%) will be more or less ready for the transition, while the level of readiness in the other half (44%) will be dissatisfactory.

Cooperation

Exchange of experiences among teachers who work bilingually

The survey data show that 62% of teachers who work bilingually regularly discuss the matter “with other bilingual teachers at their own school”, while 23% do so “with bilingual teachers from other schools”. There are very few respondents (3%) who have “never” discussed bilingual education with other teachers. Regular discussions of the matter indicate that teachers are seeking to learn methodology and to improve their skills.

Cooperation among teachers and parents

Statements by teachers suggest that approximately one-third of the parents of students have an active interest in the bilingual study program which their children are facing. They have tried to influence “the way in which two languages are used in the education process”.

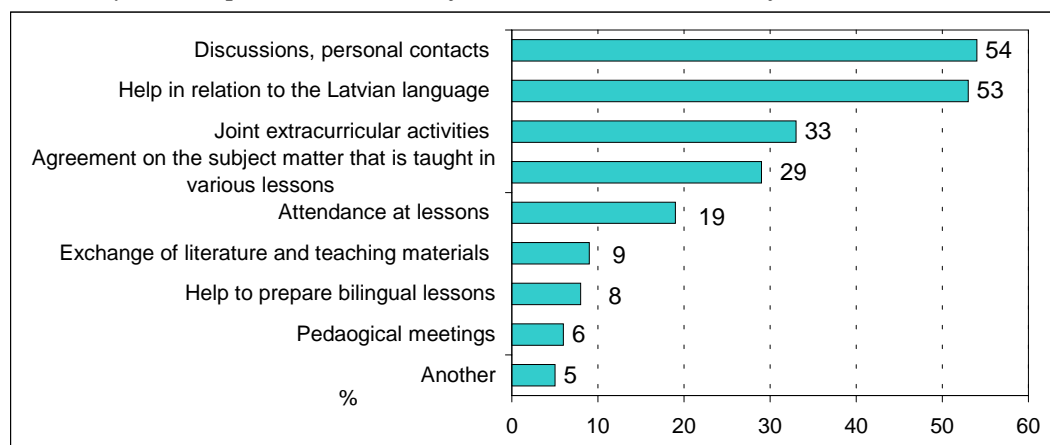
Cooperation among subject-based teachers and Latvian language teachers

We can assume that cooperation among teachers improves the skills that are needed when two languages are used in the education process, and it is important that 88% of elementary school teachers are trying to work with other instructors. People from small education institutions talked about such cooperation more often than others.

Latvian language teacher work with the teachers of other subjects – 80% of survey respondents said that they do so. Cooperation between Latvian language teachers and other teachers is usually manifested through discussions, personal contacts (54%), help in relation to the Latvian language (53%), joint extracurricular activities (33%), agreement on the subject matter that is taught in various subjects (29%), attendance at lessons (19%), and an exchange of literature and teaching materials (9%).

Figure 21. Manifestations of cooperation with subject-based teachers

“How is your cooperation with subject-based teachers manifested?”



Base: teachers of Latvian, who collaborate with subject teachers, n=127
multi-answer question, total % > 100

The teachers of various subjects were a bit less ready to say that they cooperate with Latvian language teachers – some 70% of respondents in that category said that they engage in such work. Subject teachers were most likely to say that the main element in cooperation is that Latvian language teachers help them with the state language (53% of respondents). Data show that Latvian language teachers provide such support quite frequently.

Cooperation with Latvian schools

Teachers

Cooperation between minority schools and Latvian schools is quite popular – more than one-half of teachers (57%) said that their schools are involved in such processes. One-fifth of teachers said that there is no such cooperation, and a similar percentage (23%) could not answer the question.

It is interesting that cooperation with Latvian schools was discussed more often by those teachers who have better Latvian language skills, as well as by those who use the first model in their work. Teachers with weaker Latvian language skills appear to have stayed “on the sidelines” in this process.

75% of those who talked about cooperation with Latvian schools have taken part in such events personally.

Principals

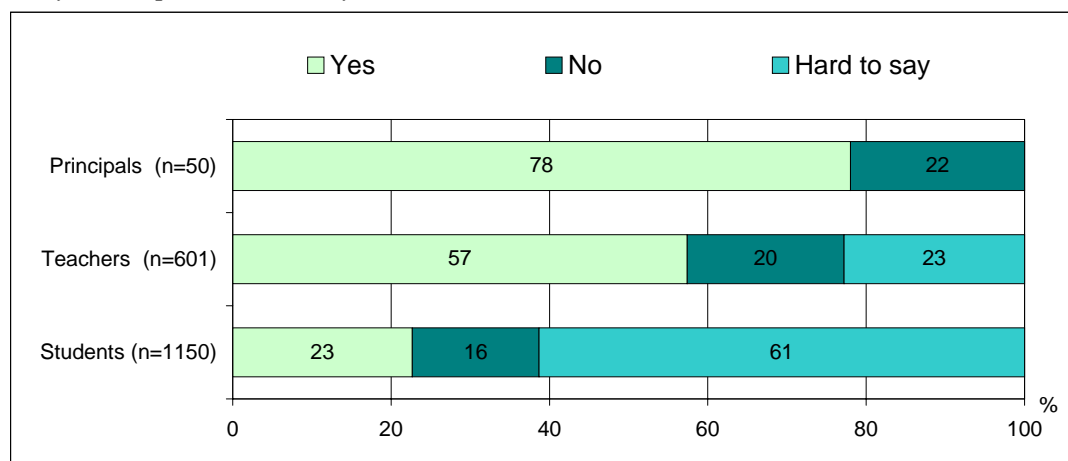
Most principals said that their schools cooperate with other schools, as well as with local kindergartens. Principals believe that cooperation with schools and kindergartens has been successful – 90% said that it has been successful in terms of work with other minority schools, 86% said so with respect to local kindergartens, 78% - with Latvian schools, and 70% - with universities.

Successful cooperation with non-governmental organizations was mentioned less often – in 56% of cases.

Students

Students often do not have information about cooperation with Latvian schools – only 23% of students said that such processes are in place. Most (61%) could not answer the question. Among those who were aware of cooperation, nearly one-half have taken part in relevant events. That was mostly true among students with better Latvian language skills.

Most students (78%) speak highly of the fact that their school is working with Latvian schools, but we must not ignore the fact that one-fifth have a negative view of this process.

Figure 22. Co-operation with Latvian schools*'Do you cooperate with any Latvian schools?'*

Base: all principals; all teachers; all students

Co-operation with state and local government institutions

Principals

Asked about cooperation between their schools and state and local government institutions, principals spoke most positively about the school board (94%). Most principals also were positive about cooperation with the Center for Curriculum Development and Examination (76%) and with the Licensing Commission of the Education Ministry (72%).

Very few principals said that cooperation with these institutions was unsuccessful. It is possible that those who evaded the issue by saying “*it is hard to say*” also were hiding dissatisfaction with the process. All in all, however, indistinct or negative responses represented no more than 25% of cases.

Principals say that examinations of schools by state institutions are not anything extraordinary. 96% said that the school board has visited their schools for this purpose over the last two years, 74% - that Education Ministry representatives came calling, and 64% - that they were visited by specialists from the National Language Center.

All of the surveyed principals have taken part in regional conferences of principals that are organized by the ministry.

Cooperation with the ASRLSL (the Association for Support of Russian Language Schools in Latvia)

Parents

Slightly fewer than one-half of surveyed parents (43%) said that they are aware of the organization that is called the ASRLSL. It is more popular in Rīga – there, 48% of parents said that they know about the group. 3% of those who are aware of the group are its members.

40% of those who have heard about the ASRLSL have studied the minority education program which the group has proposed. Among them, more than one-half (59%) would like their children to study on the basis of that program.

Teachers

71% of teachers are aware of the ASRLSL. Educators who teach the native language in schools are more likely to have heard of the group. One-half of those who are familiar with the organization have studied its education program, and 4% are members.

Teachers who have studied the ASRLSL's education program were asked whether they would like their own children or grandchildren to study on the basis of the program. 52% said yes, 61% said no, an 32% did not answer the question.

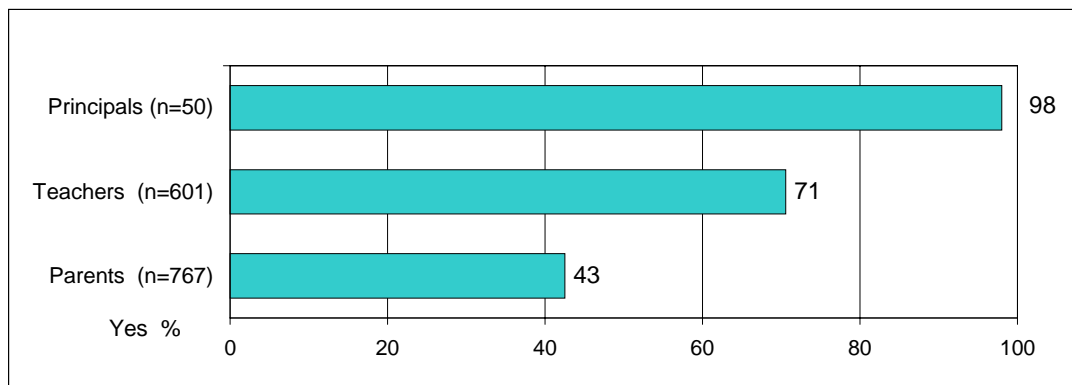
Principals

Almost all principals (98%) are aware of the ASRLSL.

75% have studied its education program, but only 10% would like their own children study on the basis of the program.

Figure 23. Awareness of ASRLSL

'Do you know organization ASRLSL (the Association for Support of Russian Language Schools in Latvia)?'



Base: all principals; all teachers; all parents

Education policies in minority schools

Information about bilingual education policies

Teachers

Teachers were asked this question: *“In which school year will all of the classes in your elementary school study on the basis of the minority education program that has been selected?”* One-half of teachers (50%) said that it is already happening. Only 2% of teachers pointed out that the Education Ministry has specified that the system must be in place by the 2002/2003 school year. This suggests that few people are aware of this fact. Many teachers (24%) believe that the change is coming only in the 2003/2004 school year, while 18% admit that they do not know when it will happen.

Asked about the subjects that will be taught in Latvian for the first time in the 10th grade in 2004, more than one-half of secondary school teachers (56%) answered: *“Nearly all of them, except for the native language and literature.”* This answer is in line with current education policy in Latvia.

Principals

One-half of surveyed principals said that all of the classes of elementary schools already learn on the basis of implemented minority education program. 14% said that the transition will take place in the 2002/2003 school year. Some principals (18%) said that it will happen only in 2007/2008. This indicates that not all principals have a complete understanding of the Education Ministry's policies.

The implementation of bilingual education in specific schools

Most **teachers and principals** said that bilingual education was introduced at their school even before the 1999/2000 school year, which means that many teachers had an opportunity to learn about the system even before it was implemented on a more general basis.

Principals

The survey of principals indicates that the second model and the third model are most commonly used in the first three grades of school (40% and 46% respectively). The first model, it must be stressed, is used more often in schools with Latvian principals.

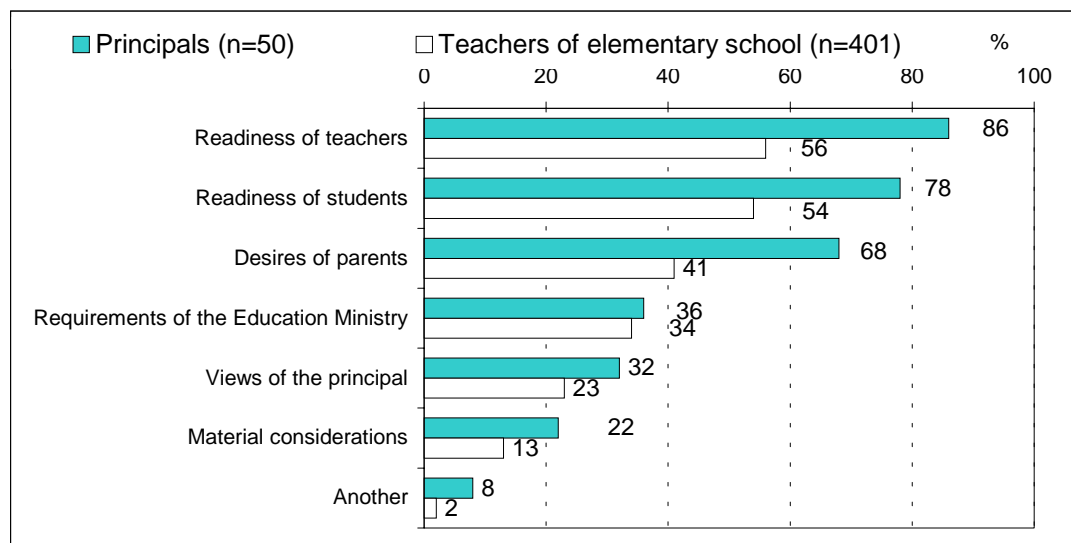
60% of principals said that their minority education program is licensed, and among the remaining principals, 35% have sought licensing.

One-fifth of principals at schools with licensed education programs or at schools which have sought licensing said that the program might be changed in the future.

Asked about the factors which led to the selection of a specific model, principals mentioned *“the readiness of teachers”* (86%), *“the readiness of students”* (78%), *“the desires of parents”* (68%), *“the requirements of the Education Ministry”* (36%), *“the views of the principal”* (32%), and *“material considerations”* (22%).

Figure 24. Factors which determined the choice of a model

“What did you take into account when choosing a minority education model for your school?”



Base: all principals; all teachers of elementary school
 “Difficult to answer” are not given

Teachers

Teachers made statements which suggest that the second model and third model are being used most often (in 39% and 35% of cases), while the first and fourth model are used far less seldom (in 7% and 6% of cases respectively). 15% of teachers did not answer the question about which minority education model is used in their classroom.

The selection of a minority education model, according to teachers, was based on “*the readiness of teachers*” (56%), “*the readiness of students*” (54%), and “*the desires of parents*” (41%). One-third of teachers (34%) said that the choice was based on “*the requirements of the Education Ministry*”, while 23% stated that “*the views of the principal*” were of importance.

Nearly one-half of surveyed teachers (48%) took part in the process of selecting or elaborating an education program.

The appropriateness of a minority education model

Teachers

79% of 2nd and 3rd grade teachers said that the selected model in their classroom or school is the appropriate one. Those who work on the basis of the first model were the most likely to say so – in 90% of cases.

Approximately 10% of teachers feel that the selected model is not appropriate. This answer was given more commonly by teachers with the lowest level of language skills (17%).

In talking about the appropriateness of the various models, teachers spoke of the readiness of students and their Latvian language skills (42%), the idea that the selected model helps to improve the level of knowledge among students (14%), and the argument that the model is helping students to prepare for their further education (6%). Some teachers (9%) talked about emotional factors such as the idea that

children like to study on the basis of the selected model. Only 12% spoke of the attitudes and support of parents.

Few teachers said that the selected model at their school is not appropriate. Reasons that were mentioned for this included the weak Latvian language skills of students, the idea that students must study in Russian, and the argument that children lack a proper Latvian language environment.

The results of education policies: Benefits and losses

Half of the **parents** (52%), **teachers** (51%) and **principals** (40%) admit that there are unequal chances to enter Latvia's state universities for graduates of schools with Latvian language of instruction and those, who learn at minority schools. Principals more frequently (58%) than teachers (39%) and parents (35%) admit equality of chances for both groups.

The equality of chances was mentioned more frequently by parents, whose children learn in schools with first minority education model (40%). It was admitted not so often by those, whose children learn at schools with 'another' model (30%), and by the parents, who don't know Latvian language.

It should be mentioned that majority of principals (64%), teachers (59%), parents (63%) think that transition to Latvian as language of instruction will 'increase' their children's opportunities to enter Latvia state universities. Opposite opinion is rather uncommon – decline in opportunities to enter Latvia state universities admit 8% of principals, 95% of teachers, 5% of parents.

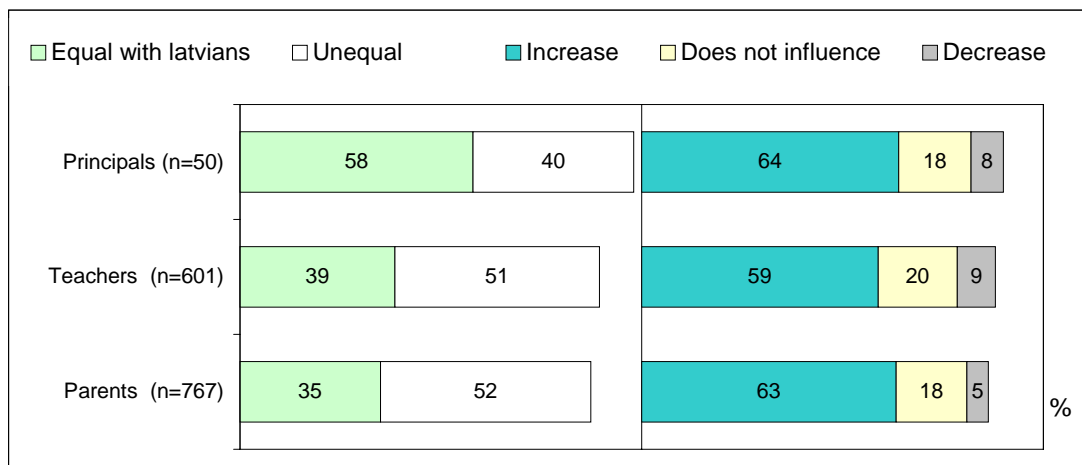
Considering opportunities in labour market principals (44%) not so often as teachers (54%) and parents (55%) think that currently they are not equal for Latvian and minority school graduates. On the other hand principals (36%) and teachers (32%) more frequently than parents (28%) admit equality of opportunities in labour market for both groups.

It should be noted that majority of principals (70%), teachers (54%) and parents (61%) consider that increase in Latvian usage in minority schools also enlarge chances of minority youth to enter labour market.

Figure 25. Ability to enter Latvia’s state universities

“Do you think that students who are graduates of minority schools have the same opportunities as students who are graduates of schools where language of instruction is Latvian when it comes to their ability to enter Latvia’s universities, where all classes are taught in Latvian?”

“Do you think that the gradual will increase or decrease the ability of students of other nationalities (Russians, Ukrainians, etc.) to enter Latvia’s universities, where all classes are taught in Latvian?”

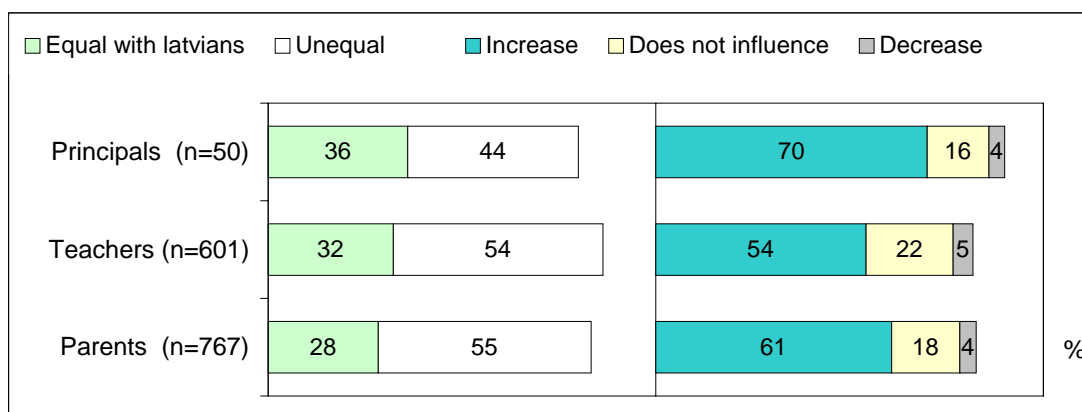


Base: all principals; all teachers; all parents
 "Hard to say" does not shown

Figure 26. Opportunities in labor market

“Do you think that students who are graduates of minority schools have the same opportunities as students who are graduates of schools where language of instruction Latvian when it comes to the labor market?”

“Do you think that the gradual transition will increase or decrease the opportunities which young people of other nationalities (Russians, Ukrainians) have in the labor market?”



Base: all principals; all teachers; all parents
 "Hard to say" does not shown

Parents

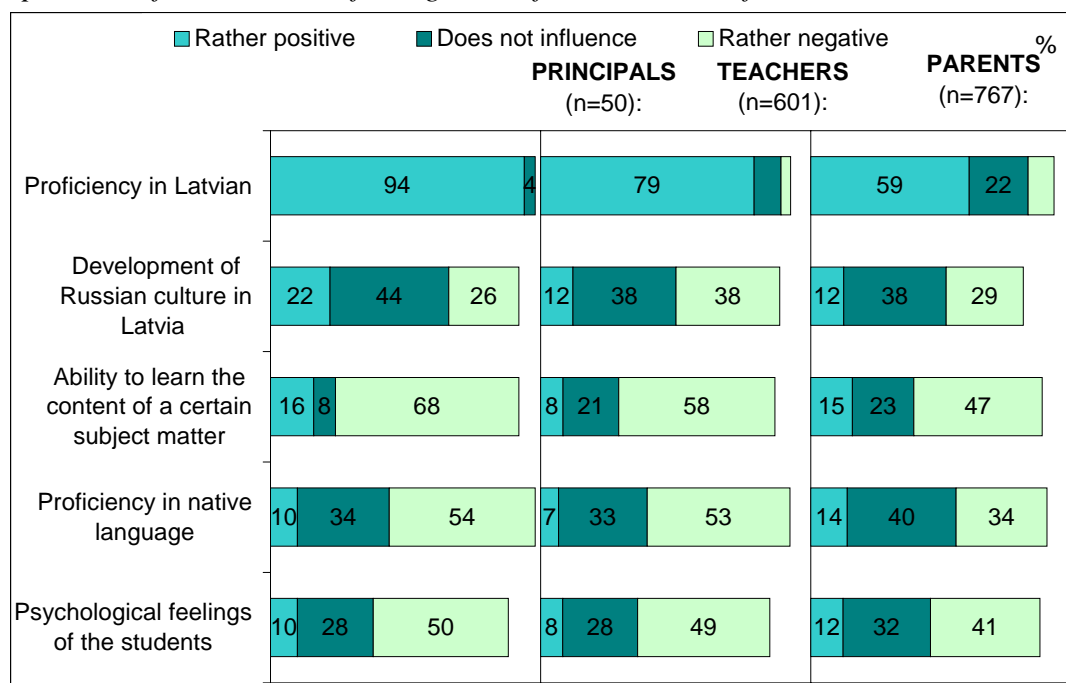
Asked about changes in minority schools, most parents (59%) said that the main benefit of the process has been that their children have learned the Latvian language to a better degree.

When it comes to the negative consequences of education reforms, parents spoke of the ability of students to learn certain subjects (the process has had a deleterious effect on “*the ability to learn the content of a certain subject matter*” – 47%), and of the “*psychological feelings of the students*” (41% said that education reforms have had a negative effect here). Only 12% of parents feel that education reform improves the ability of students to learn certain subjects and that it improves the psychological feelings of students.

Fewer parents felt that a negative consequence of education reforms is that it harms the development of Russian culture in Latvia and that it hinders the ability of children to learn their native language. Still, one-third of parents think that education reform in minority schools is having a deleterious effect on native language skills, while 29% believe that the development of Russian culture in Latvia will suffer.

Figure 27. Opinion about consequences of minority education reform

“Do you think that the changes that are taking place at minority schools have more of a positive influence, more of a negative influence, or no influence at all?”



Base: all principals; all teachers; all parents
 "Hard to say" does not shown

Teachers

According to teachers who were surveyed, the greatest benefit of the education reforms is that students will learn the Latvian language (79% of teachers believe that Latvian language skills will improve). Many teachers (53%), on the other hand, think that the native language skills of students will worsen. This means that attitudes toward education reforms are related to the concept of a “*subtractive model of bilingualism*”¹. It is a situation in which a second language is learned at the expense of one’s native language.

Teachers were most pessimistic about the ability of students to learn other subjects – 58% believe that the level of knowledge among students will decline.

¹ Lambert, W.E. “Culture and Language as Factors in Learning and Education”. In Wolfgang, A. (ed.). Education of Immigrant Students. Toronto: OISE (1975), pp. 55-83.

It is not unimportant that 49% of teachers believe that changes in minority schools will have a negative effect on the psychological feelings of students. Teachers in Latgale were more likely to say so – 57% did.

Comparatively fewer teachers (38%) believe that education reforms will have a negative effect on the development of Russian culture. This, too, was said more often by teachers in Latgale (49%), and by teachers who work at schools where the first model is being used (47%).

Principals

The thinking of principals in the area of the benefits and losses of the education reform process is similar – 94% think that the main benefit is that students in minority schools will gain better Latvian language skills. Two-thirds of principals (68%), however, said that the changes will make it more difficult for students to learn various other subjects, and 54% said that Russian language skills are deteriorating.

One-half of principals think that the changes in schools are having a negative effect on the psychological feelings of students. Only 26% said that the changes are having a deleterious effect on the development of Russian culture in Latvia.

The benefits of education reform: Better Latvian language skills (59% of parents, 79% of teachers and 94% of principals), better chances to enter Latvia state universities (63% of parents, 59% of teachers and 64% of principals), better chances in the labour market (61%, 54% and 70%).

The losses of education reform: Worsening native language skills (53% of teachers and 54% of principals), a lower level of knowledge in other subject areas (47% of parents, 58% of teachers and 68% of principals), a negative effect on the psychological feelings of students (41% of parents, 49% of teachers and 50% of principals).

The models of basic minority education

Minority schools can select from amongst four different models to base their education programs on. These are described in a document from the Education Ministry, “Models for Basic Minority Education”. The models differ in terms of the use of the Latvian and Russian language in the education process.

Each school must license its program with the Education Ministry. Schools can submit programs which are based on one of the aforementioned models, or they can design their own program. Only 6% of schools, according to survey data, have developed their own program, however.

Responses that were given by principals tell us that minority education programs have been licensed by approximately 60% of schools. Programs can be licensed for individual groups of grade levels. There are some cases in which one parallel classroom is working on the basis of a licensed program while the other parallel classroom is not. The third and the second model are used most often in licensed programs in the first to the 3rd grade.

Schools which are using the **first model** of minority education are basically implementing a process of “voluntary assimilation”, because the Latvian language is very important in the teaching process. Teachers in these schools expressed comparatively positive views about their ability to teach bilingually. Attitudes toward bilingual education are mostly positive among principals, parents and teachers in

these schools. Parents tend to have good Latvian language skills. We should remember that the first model is mostly being implemented in Latgale, where there is a distinctly Russian environment. These schools are chosen by parents who are strongly motivated in terms of the desire for their children to learn the Latvian language.

The **second model** is recommended by the Education Ministry for students who are able to converse in Latvian but who do not live in an area where the Latvian language is spoken very often, but this minority program has been chosen quite often in regions where there is a Latvian environment – Kurzeme and Zemgale. Parents of children who attend schools with the second model are more likely to want to send their children to a “*Russian school*”. Only one-third of the teachers in these schools believe that the level of quality of the bilingual education is “*high*”. Most teachers (71%), however, have also said that students have a positive attitude toward bilingual studies. Attitudes toward bilingual education reforms and toward teaching mainly in Latvian language in secondary schools are very varied – approximately equal shares of respondents support and reject the process.

The **third model**, according to one expert, is chosen by schools which are still preparing for the changes that are about to occur – most often in Latgale and in Rīga. The third model involves the fewest teachers who work bilingually. More than one-half of teachers (57%) claim that students have difficulty in using two different languages in the education process. Only one-fifth of teachers said that the level of quality of the bilingual education at their schools is “*high*”. Most parents do not support the transition to teaching mainly in Latvian language in ethnic minority secondary schools in 2004.

The **fourth model** is used mostly in schools which are standing apart from any Latvian-speaking environment, and in these schools we find more skeptical views about bilingual education and about the transition to teaching mainly in Latvian. Teachers at these schools had the lowest opinion of their own ability to work bilingually. Teachers at schools where the fourth model is being used were most likely to say that the attitudes of children are rather negative.

Parents are comparatively pessimistic about the effect which minority education reforms will have on Russian culture and the psychological feelings of students. They are also very skeptical about the way in which the reforms will influence the ability of their children to enter Latvia’s state universities. Parents do not have much motivation in terms of pressuring their children to learn the Latvian language.

The primary results of the expert interviews

The concept of “bilingualism”

The word “bilingual” does not appear in Latvia’s Education Law or Law on General Education. It is, however, found in sample programs of basic education for minorities. When school principals began to institute bilingual education, they also often did not have a real understanding of what the concept meant:

“Right now nobody knows what ‘bilingual education’ really is. We decide that on our own” (a teacher in Rīga).

“We all talk about bilingual education, but nobody knows what it is” (a principal in Latgale).

An employee of the Ministry of Education and Science emphasized that bilingual education does not apply only to minorities and must be understood in a broader sense:

“There is no reason for the accusations that we’re sometimes hearing to the effect that bilingual education is used only for minorities here. No, bilingual education is an elite process throughout the world, and it is starting to be developed in Latvia, too.”

Experts spoke highly of the activities of the Soros Foundation-Latvia, which has published a booklet that helps people to understand the concept of bilingualism. *“The booklet that was published – it was the first informational booklet on a bilingual child, and it was really a model of the term ‘bilingual’ as such”* (a researcher).

Some experts expressed fears that when the Education Law was adopted, there was no subsequent process in which bilingual education would be implemented and monitored very carefully:

“The main thing here is that a law was issued on the basis of the understanding that bilingual education is necessary in Latvia’s schools, but once the law has to be implemented in real life – well, throughout the world the practice in any area of activity is that the law is first adopted, and then methodologies and instructions for the implementation of the law are drafted, along with methods to supervise the implementation of the law and to provide explanations about it” (a school principal in Latgale).

Transition to teaching mainly in Latvian in secondary schools in year 2004

The Education Law says that minority secondary schools must implement curricula in 2004 in which teaching is in Latvian language. School principals stressed in the interviews that there is a certain gap between the policy itself and its implementation. Principals basically support educational reforms as such, but many of them stress that their schools are not ready to start teaching in Latvian in 2004:

“Schools are doing everything to implement the law, but is it realistic to expect that even if we do everything properly, we will be able to teach ‘only’ in Latvian in 2004?” (a principal in Latgale)

“I’m not against this decision, but I believe – and I think that I’m right – that we’re not ready. Just because a decision has been taken, that doesn’t mean that we will make a transition to teaching in Latvian” (a principal in Rīga).

“As far as our school is concerned, we’re not going to be ready, and we’re not going to start teaching in Latvian in 2004” (a principal in Rīga).

“I am very much opposed to this. Why am I very much opposed? Because nobody has calculated the consequences of this. If a teacher doesn’t speak Latvian, then you have to hire specialists who can teach in Latvian. There are no such people, there are few specialists of that kind in Latvian schools. There are not enough teachers in mathematics, physics and English” (a principal in Rīga).

“The amount of time that we have been given to learn the language – until 2004 – so that we can begin teaching in Latvian – it is too hurried a process” (a principal in Latgale).

Some principals added that students will not be ready to study primarily in Latvian in 2004. They say that only those who have been studying bilingually since the first grade will be able to do so:

“First of all I want to say that it won’t happen – we won’t be teaching ‘only in Latvian’. What does ‘only in Latvian’ mean? In 2004 these will be children who are now in the 7th grade. I don’t believe that in just four years they will have language skills that would allow them to study only in Latvian. Those who are in the first grade this year – by the time they get to the 12th grade, they will be able to” (a principal in Rīga).

The transition to teaching mainly in Latvian in secondary school is also not supported by representatives of opposition political parties, and they primarily use political arguments to defend this idea:

“I oppose the transformation of schools into ones where classes are taught in Latvian.”

“As far as I understand it, there will be schools where classes are taught in Latvian to Latvians and schools where classes are taught in Latvian to Russians. This is a situation which can be described as segregation or apartheid.”

Some principals, however, said that their schools will be ready for the move:

“We basically don’t have any problems. If we have students, we’ll be ready” (a principal in Latgale).

“I think that we’re ready for 2004. Our teachers are ready, too” (a principal in Rīga).

Article 15.25 of the Education Law says that school principals are hired and fired by the Ministry of Education and Science. Principals stress that implementation of the ministry’s policies is their direct duty, and they try to do this despite opposition from students or parents:

“I will do everything possible to make the transition in 2004 so that we obey the law” (a principal in Rīga).

“In secondary school, all of the parents and children tell us that it is better to learn in their native language. I’m a principal, and I am paid by the ministry. There are laws, and I have to think about how to obey the law” (a principal in Rīga).

The shift toward education in Latvian is also supported by a senior official at the Naturalization Board of the Republic of Latvia, who also says that it is enormously important to ensure that the shift is organized precisely and that the classes are of a high level of quality:

“I support 2004, but I support a sensible transfer.”

“If we are talking about a shift in 2004, then we must already know the curriculum for the 10th grade in 2004.”

“In the 10th grade, there must not be any teachers who speak Latvian in a stylistically messy or incorrect way, with an accent, or without knowing the right terminology in his or her subject matter.”

Several experts have suggested that one way to deal with this issue is to differentiate among various schools on the basis of how ready each one is to make the changes. That could serve as a cornerstone for differentiated educational policies in minority schools:

“That year will be useful for those schools that are ready to implement the changes and do so. The ones that are not ready will not do it. Not all schools are ready” (an NGO representative).

“I think that we need to slow down a bit and look at what schools can achieve. If they can do this, then let them do so. If they can’t, then we shouldn’t hurry them. We have to look at the situation in each school instead of saying that that’s the year that we’re going to do it, case closed” (a University of Latvia instructor who is from a minority nationality).

Among the experts who were interviewed, those who represent minority ethnic groups were the ones who objected to the proposal that subjects in minority secondary schools should be taught mostly in Latvian.

“I am worried about the goal as such – why is it necessary?” (a University of Latvia instructor who is from a minority nationality).

“I think that the law or the article of the law which speaks to the transition in 2004 must become more democratic and liberal” (a representative of an opposition party).

Representative of the Ministry of Education and Science, which is responsible for implementation of the changes in 2004, explained the changes thus: *“1995 plus nine years is 2004”*. This means that those students in elementary school who began to study two subjects in Latvian in 1995 will be attending secondary school beginning in 2004.

Ministry representatives were cautious in speaking about the implementation of studies “only” in the Latvian language in secondary schools – *“from the perspective of methodology, it is already clear that if additional explanations are needed in secondary schools, teachers will be able to provide those only in their native language”*.

Representatives of rightist political parties were the most insistent about the need for a chance in 2004: *“I would like to know what those teachers were doing for the past seven years. Maybe some of them have been at their jobs for too long, and a new teacher is ready to take their place”* (a representative of the governing coalition).

Implementing bilingual education

Overall policies

Experts criticized implementation of bilingual education a lot. Some experts from public organizations argued that the new policies are very authoritarian, adding that responsibility for the situation rests not only with government officials, but also with other policy stakeholders. The experts stressed that not all of the stakeholders that are involved in the reforms are receiving sufficient information:

“These policies are being implemented in a very authoritarian way, to tell you the truth” (NGO representative).

“The recommendations should have, at least in part, been formed from the bottom up – not from those people who reject the idea as such, but rather from those who have had some positive experience in this area” (an NGO representative).

“That is one of the shortcomings in these reforms. The reforms were prepared somewhere in the offices of the ministry, in a very secret way. Russian speakers who are the focus of the reforms, who have to implement them and on behalf of whom the reforms have been developed – they were excluded from the process” (a University of Latvia instructor who is from a minority nationality).

Representative of the parties who support minority nationality interests opposed the educational reforms very strictly: *“I believe that the word ‘reforms’ is too gentle here. Rather, we should be speaking of the gradual elimination of education in minority languages”* (a representative from a minority party).

Researchers, for their part, expressed the view that the world’s experience with bilingual education allows us to be optimistic about the planned reforms:

“The things that are happening in Latvia – dissatisfaction among teachers or parents – are nothing unique. This is a gradual process, and we cannot expect enormous response in the first few years. This has been true in other parts of the world, too. People gradually adapt to the changes. Educators and theorists are still discussing the various models of bilingual education” (a researcher).

“There should be efforts aimed at popularizing positive experience” (an NGO representative).

The elaboration of models

The things which principals told us suggest that the elaboration of four minority education models took place among a fairly narrow range of people – school principals, ministry officials and a few specialists.

“The idea was expressed ... it was a small meeting with three or five principals. We basically talked about what we should do. An idea was expressed, and we were asked to answer the question : “What should be the curriculum for studies in 2001?” This was six years ago. My deputy and I thought about it and prepared a curriculum, and that’s how the model emerged. It was not our own initiative, to turn our proposals into models. Because there were no other proposals, the ministry itself suggested that there should be four models” (a principal in Rīga).

“... establishing a curriculum for 2004 – that was the first job for our school and three or four others. Then the ministry decided that our plans could be a sample, a model. The plans weren’t tested, they were just our idea, perhaps our vision” (a principal in Rīga).

An NGO representative who is involved in educational policy making in Latvia offered a somewhat different view of the way in which bilingual education models were developed. He believes that the process was more democratic:

“The study of the needs – the study of the needs of teachers, students and parents – that is what actually led to the concept of three and then four different models” (an NGO representative).

The Ministry of Education and Science has offered four models in terms of implementing bilingual education in Latvia’s schools. An expert in the field of social linguistics claimed that *“all of the models, as far as I am concerned, should lead to the same results, both in terms of language and in terms of content. To be sure, we cannot*

compare an primary school at which there have been lesser classes studied in the Latvian language to a school where have been more. The results upon graduation from a school must be the same when the finish line is crossed. That is up to the Department of General Education at the Education Ministry”.

Implementation of bilingual education

Some minority experts expressed a very negative position toward the process of implementation of bilingual education in Latvia:

“We are implementing this bilingual education very improperly. The work was done all at once, in the entire country. It’s an experiment, and nobody knows today what the results will be. Which model is the best? The models have been tested in other countries, under other circumstances. None of the models has been tested here, but we’re already implementing them in all of the country’s schools” (a University of Latvia instructor who is from a minority nationality).

“These are basically first grade teachers who have not been given an opportunity to attend any courses – how are you going to work on September 1 of this year? The teachers have not been given any methodological recommendations, no special textbooks – nothing at all. Each teacher works in the way in which he or she understands. This is the third year of the process, perhaps some things are becoming clearer, but this is the third year, the children are in the third grade. What’s going to be done with them?” (a University of Latvia instructor who is from a minority nationality).

A researcher who engages in analysis of bilingual education: *“If we hadn’t begun the work in 1999, we wouldn’t be starting it in 2009 either.”* In other words, no matter how hurriedly the policies were implemented, the country could not have delayed the process any further.

Some principals admitted that the proposed models were discussed at regional conferences: *“The Ministry of Education offered four models for basic education among minority ethnic groups, and these were discussed publicly until 1999”* (a school principal in Vidzeme).

A senior ministry official said that principals took part in the discussion of sample educational programs for minorities: *“At these regional conferences [in 1998 and 1999], principals had a special working group in which we talked about the proposals that could later be confirmed as MES samples.”*

“It is absolutely not true that there was no testing of the models – the principals took part in the process.”

“In 1998 – I already told you that we tested and discussed the elaboration of these programs, and in addition to that, there were several working groups, principals and teachers who were involved. Anyone could take part in the consideration of the draft Education Law.”

Principals told us things to suggest that the discussion of bilingual education at conferences of school principals was more or less a formality, and the things which they said were not taken into account. Many principals held their silence and did not express their views.

“There was no [cooperation] with the ministry. Nobody asked me anything – nobody, never! There was a conference, we were not asked about anything. No matter what we principals said, they did not listen to us. After these conferences or seminars, the

conclusions were the ones that they wanted, not the ones that we suggested. No matter what we said – I heard later on the radio or on television that they were saying the things that they wanted to say, not the things that we principals told them” (a principal in Rīga).

“They [MES] send out orders, and they send examinations – there has been no more cooperation. They talk about their own ideas. Everything comes from the top to the bottom. There are conferences each year, we take part, but I don’t see any results there” (a principal in Rīga).

“Principals don’t speak out loud. At the conferences, principals from Russian schools were silent, nobody said anything. The actual situation is that we will not be able to move toward subjects in the Latvian language” (a principal in Rīga).

“The problem is that many Russian principals are afraid to speak up about their difficulties. We had a conference at which we were told that everything is wonderful, everything is just fine. When we started to call and visit schools which claimed that everything was wonderful and just fine, we found that no – things are not all that normal, sad to say” (a principal in Rīga).

When school wants to operate on the basis of one of the four minority education models this model have to be licensed. This means that the model have to be approved by the Education Ministry’s licensing commission. An expert at the ministry says that this process is not moving forward very quickly.

“The program must be harmonized with the relevant local government, because schools are maintained by local governments . The state provides only teacher salaries and a few subsidies in terms of additional financing. Repairs, equipment – that is all up to the local government. In other words, the school has to reach agreement with the local government, then it has to reach agreement with the education state inspector and then it reaches Licensing Commission” (an Education Ministry official).

“In 1999, very few programs were licensed. This means that schools are taking time in preparing for the changes. In 2000 there were schools which licensed their models. In 2001 we saw a tendency of schools choosing the second model or developing their own educational programs” (an Education Ministry official).

“June 30, 2002, is the deadline for each school to license one of the programs” (an Education Ministry official).

Institutions with which schools cooperate during implementation of educational policies

Educational reforms and politics

Several school principals said that they do not want their schools to become too closely involved in politics, nor do they want their schools to be politicized. Principals emphasized that the main function of a school is to disseminate knowledge.

“A school has to be a school. It should not be politicized” (a principal in Rīga).

“But a school should not be politicized” (a principal in Rīga).

“The work must not be dependent upon or related to ‘political games’” (a principal in Rīga).

The Ministry of Education and Science

Things which experts said in the interviews suggested that the relationship between the Ministry of Education and Science on the one hand and school principals on the other hand is a fairly tense one. Principals feel that they have too much responsibility and too little support.

“The ministry said today that only the principals are responsible, but without any help from the state or the ministry, without any laws” (a principal in Rīga).

Politicians who are experts in the field of education were sarcastic about some school principals, arguing that they are “too dedicated” in implementing the requirements of the Education Ministry.

“At one time the situation here was one in which the party said that something had to be done, and the Communist Youth Organization said that it had already been done. That’s what is happening with many principals – not all of them, but some of them, perhaps many of them – the ministry tells them that three subjects have to be taught in Latvian, and tomorrow they’ll respond that they’re already teaching five subjects in Latvian” (a representative of an opposition party).

Cooperation between a school and the Education Ministry usually involves the intermediation of education state inspector. A principal in Rīga said this: *“We work with the ministry via the education inspector. That involves all of the materials that come from the Education Ministry – the instructions, the recommendations.”*

An NGO expert stressed that the whole Education State Inspectorate often creates tensions in minority schools. On the other hand, an expert from the ministry said that the education state inspector tries not to bother schools with ceaseless inspections.

“Teachers are bitterly complaining about the inspectors, about the national inspectorate. I understand that the supervision is all on paper, the inspectors don’t even go into classrooms. They look at the language level of the teachers, and that’s all. They really hinder the work, and this institution of inspectors creates enormous stress” (an NGO representative).

“Yes, if we go into a school and find that a teacher, a principal or a deputy principal does not speak the state language and we cannot make contact with that person, then we make the situation known to the National Language Inspection, asking it to go and check the teacher and find whether the language skills really are at the third level” (an Education Ministry official).

“If we have accredited a school for six years and the principal is accredited, then it is clear that there must be order in that school at least for a while, and we should let the school work and develop. We cannot be constantly sitting around in schools and supervising something” (an Education Ministry official).

The school board and local governments

The importance of the school board and local governments as institutions with local power in the implementation of bilingual education processes was addressed by several principals in Rīga and in other parts of the country.

“The school board represents the mechanism which determines policies in the area of education. Contacts with them have been regulated” (a principal in Rīga).

“Everything has been put onto the shoulders of schools and local governments” (a principal in Latgale).

Principals spoke highly of the fact that the school board has hired bilingual education methodologists.

“The duty of the school board is to organize the educational process in the city, offering teachers seminars, watching the ways in which they work in schools and generalizing experiences. We have no problems with our school board in this case. The school board has created the institute of a subject-based methodologist – specifically, the focus is on methodologies related to the teaching of the Latvian language in minority and in Latvian schools. There are people who are working in the area of bilingual education. In other words, the school board is on the right road in terms of collecting experience in the field of bilingual education” (a principal in Latgale).

“A bilingual education inspector or a methodologist? I don’t know. Our school board has no such employee” (a principal in Rīga).

A parliamentarian from an opposition party who works to defend the interests of minority voters said that the educational process can more easily be influenced in the right direction at the level of local government. *“In those places where we are in the majority in the local government, we try to do everything that we can in terms of dealing with this issue within the confines of the law. Of course, local governments must obey the law, but in the area of education, quite a lot is dependent on the local governments as such, and we are trying to help in resolving this problem insofar as we are able to do so”* (a representative of an opposition party).

Many school principals spoke highly of their cooperation with school boards in terms of organizing an exchange of experience between teachers, who work bilingually, and between principals of minority schools.

“Coming to the school – that is exactly what our school board did. Our education board came to the school, visited classrooms, watched what was happening and how the teachers and students were working, saw what is successful and what is not successful” (a principal in Latgale).

“We are also taking part in a city [project]. It is interesting, and we are collecting experience. At first there was a general introduction – we visited those schools which participate in the project, we met one another, we talked about our models and about the things that are working in those models. The second stage, which is now being introduced – we’re showing our lessons to others, showing the teaching aids that we are using. That was very interesting, and this was demonstrated by the huge number of teachers who took part. In some cases there were more teachers in the classroom than students” (a principal in Rīga).

If most principals speak highly of the activities of school boards in relation to bilingual education, then some teachers tend to be more critical.

“The school board organized a few little courses bilingually – what can I say about the courses that the school board organized? There was a contingent of teachers from Russian schools for whom, of course, the Latvian language is not their native language, and basically the courses consisted of our taking a list of Russian words in the natural sciences and working with those words, translating them into Latvian” (a principal in Rīga).

The National Program for Latvian Language Training (NPLLT)

The main job of the National Program for Latvian Language Training (LVAVP in the Latvian acronym, NPLLT in the English acronym) is to organize courses for teachers in minority schools. The NPLLT allows teachers who work bilingually to learn new methods, and it helps teachers for whom Latvian is not their native language to learn the language. Minority experts speak very highly of the institution and its director, Aija Priedīte.

“The National Program for Latvian Language Training does a lot of work, and it does the work very well. Once again, much depends on the people who are involved. I think that Aija Priedīte as an individual is of great benefit for Latvia. The team that she set up – it also had a great deal to do with her personality. She’s the one who sought out and assembled that team” (a University of Latvia instructor who is from a minority nationality).

An NGO representative was slightly more skeptical about the work of the NPLLT in training teachers, saying that this *“... work cannot be called a system”* (an NGO representative).

Teachers who have attended the courses also expressed criticism.
“It helped a little bit, of course. At least you know how to shape the lesson – when to speak Russian, when to speak Latvian” (a principal in Rīga).

“Those are bilingual methodology courses. Actually, one cannot really call them methodology courses. Rather, they represent an attempt to provide new teaching methods, familiar Western teaching methodologies such as ‘Critical thinking’ to the teachers” (a principal in Latgale).

Other institutions

Some principals said that the Naturalization Board of the Republics of Latvia provides a positive example in terms of cooperation.

“We have developed positive cooperation with the Naturalization Board” (a principal in Zemgale).

Statements from the Naturalization Board’s representatives confirmed this.
“We are often invited to visit educational institutions, minority educational institutions, and we are familiar with what the principals and teachers at those minority institutions think. We know what parents often think, we know about the level of preparedness for 2004, etc.”

“We have not been involved in these issues as direct cooperation partners, but we know the situation.”

Association for Support of Russian Language Schools in Latvia (or ASRLSL in the English acronym) is an organization which defends minority interests. Experts who represent minority groups expressed a positive attitude toward its work.

“That’s the only program which really tries to maintain a balance between both languages, both cultures” (a University of Latvia instructor who is from a minority nationality).

“It is hard to talk about assistance. We support them morally, we support them politically, but it is a completely independent organization, it is not our affiliate in any sense of the word” (an opposition party representative).

Principals had very diverse views. Some thought that the ASRLSL model is not acceptable, while others rated it positively.

“We have invited ASRLSL to visit us, and they have spoken here, they [presented] their program. The program which they offered was not ready. I don’t think that it represents a solution” (a principal in Rīga).

“My school and I have had contacts with the public organization ARSL. They had a model which we did not introduce in our school, the parents of our students were interested in the model. It was divided up into blocs – a bloc of subjects, for instance, which can easily be taught in Latvian – sports, music, Latvian geography, Latvia’s history, home-making. There’s another bloc – subjects such as physics, chemistry and mathematics – those are basically taught in Russian, with certain bilingual elements. Children study a subject, not the language. This model can’t be introduced for the time being, although I think that it would not be bad” (a principal in Rīga).

Another NGO that is closely involved in the shaping of the bilingual education policies in Latvia is the Soros Foundation-Latvia, and especially its “Open School” project. A Soros Foundation representative had this to say about the NGO’s work with minority schools: *“We work with a team. There’s a Latvian language teacher, there’s an primary school teacher, a teacher who works bilingually, and a representative of the school administration.”*

Financing

Compensation for inadequate educational financing in Latvia is often provided by the enthusiasm of teachers. A statement by a representative of one of the parties that is in the governing coalition confirmed this: *“When it comes to the content of general education – math, civic education programs, by the way, everything that involves elementary schools, secondary schools and the new standards – the state has not had financing for any of these content reforms. Everything has been done exclusively on the basis of the enthusiasm of teachers and within the confines of existing financing.”*

Several principals spoke negatively of the way in which teachers who teach in Latvian and bilingually are paid. They stressed that without any additional funding, the Education Ministry could implement effective changes.

“The situation today is that bonuses are paid first of all to Latvian language teachers, and then, if money is left over, to bilingual teachers. I would reverse the situation. We have more problems today with bilingual teachers, those who can work in two languages” (a principal in Rīga).

“The way in which bilingual teachers are paid is all wrong, because they only take into account the amount of time that the teacher has worked, the number of lessons that are taught and the courses that have been completed. Surely you will agree that one cannot compare the amount of work that is needed for one lesson in sports, one lesson in history, one lesson in computer skills and one lesson in geography or biology” (a principal in Latgale).

“In changing the rules on paying teachers who teach bilingually, they should also take into account the extent to which the language is used in each lesson” (a principal in Latgale).

International organizations are involved in the bilingual education process in Latvia primarily as suppliers of additional financing. Some teachers spoke critically of the fact that this money is not spent wisely.

“Foreigners spend a lot of money on education, but sometimes they don’t monitor the money – where did it go, what is the final project? The PHARE Program, for instance, spent a whole lot of money on bilingual posters in the field of botany. The posters are not laminated, however, they are printed on very thin paper, they cannot be fastened with anything. They should have talked with the teachers who have to work with the posters” (a principal in Rīga).

An Education Ministry official said that the fact that books which are published abroad are not on the list of recommended teaching materials can be attributed to an unwillingness of the system to support the economies of other countries. A school principal had this to say: *“The Zvaigzne ABC publishing house is the only one which produces books for us. There are books called ‘Lielvārds’, but they are very expensive. We have to buy books only from Zvaigzne ABC. It’s a monopoly, and the prices are amazing – approximately four lats per book”* (a principal in Rīga).

In talking about the need for minority education reforms, an official from the Education Ministry spoke about the state’s interests – it is not advantageous for Latvia to educate people who will then work or study elsewhere.

“How can the state undertake the training of people, purely from the financial perspective, who will then live, work and use their knowledge in a neighboring country? Why should we spend money on such goals? We want our children to stay here. We undertake responsibility” (an Education Ministry official).

A representative of an opposition party, for his part, says that *“the transformation of Russian schools will be much more expensive than would be a normal improvement of the system”*. In other words, he feels that the education reform which is being implemented is more or less disadvantageous to the state.

Selecting and implementing a model

Selecting a model

The new Education Law which mandated the implementation of minority education programs in Latvia’s schools beginning in the 1999/2000 school year was published in the newspaper *Latvijas Vēstnesis* in November 1998. Most schools, however, developed minority education programs only later – in the summer of 1999, and in a very hurried way.

“The education programs do not include only this lesson plan, that’s only one part of the overall education program. Education programs also involve the need for financing, for personnel – beginning with the goals and missions of the specific program” (an Education Ministry official).

“Schools develop their own education programs, they could take into account the situation that exists at each school instead of adapting to a program that was developed in a centralized way” (a principal in Vidzeme).

Many schools chose the model which required the fewest changes in the teaching process in the first few grades in each school. Education Ministry data show that the third model was used most often at first. One principal said that there was a lack of

information when the bilingual education model had to be chosen. Principals said that when they selected a certain model, they did not always understand the justification for the choice.

“Of course, they first of all tried to choose the model which does not require them to do anything this year. They did not study the issue in depth” (a University of Latvia instructor who is from a minority nationality).

“When the models were proposed, we started to look at them, we studied them. Clearly, the level of explanatory work before the models were instituted was not at the appropriate level. The first thing that happened was that the models were put on the table. All kinds of discussions began in the magazine ‘Skolotājs’, in the press, in ‘Izglītība un Kultūra’, but even though I attended all kinds of meetings and was interested in everything, I, as a school principal, constantly had to pose questions to the director of our Education Department: ‘What kinds of models are those? What models are there?’ For a while she could just shrug her shoulders. Then we had to choose a model, and then we ourselves had to figure out what was involved. I think that not only our school, but many other schools, in choosing the model, initially looked at it differently than now. Now that we have analyzed the results of the work, we would definitely choose a different model” (a principal in Rīga).

Schools often change the education programs that they are implementing. Some schools chose two or even three programs, introducing different ones in parallel classes or in different phases in the educational process (e.g., different programs for primary school and for elementary school).

“Conferences, courses, parents, Latvian language courses, the participation of our teachers in methodology courses, the participation of our own teachers in the preparation of methodological materials – that was the reason why we felt safe in choosing the second model and in gradually shifting from the third model to the second one” (a principal in Kurzeme).

A school principal in Latgale had this to say about the bilingual education at his school: *“How was the system implemented? We talked about it at a meeting of teachers, we discussed it in our pedagogical council, we talked with each teacher individually, and in the end we concluded that this system had to be implemented. How was the system implemented? At the beginning of the school year, the principal issues instructions about which teachers have to teach bilingually. That involves salaries, and teachers know what is required of them, they know what they have to do”* (a principal in Latgale).

Implementation of the plans

When schools restructure the education process in line with the programs that have been selected, there are sometimes problems and complications. This has encouraged people to look for new solutions – establishing *“the post of a deputy principal for bilingual education”*, for instance (a principal in Rīga).

Difficulties in the implementation of bilingual education and a lack of information can create a situation when the actual educational process in a school is much different from the process that is described in the relevant documents. The existence of “double bookkeeping” is confirmed by experts from government institutions and NGOs. Sometimes principals themselves admit that this is true.

“Educational institutions and minority schools have two different sets of bookkeeping at this time – one is the polished side of the medal, which is displayed to the Education Ministry, to education state inspectors, often to the directors of educational boards or school boards. The other side is the not always very bright reality that exists in educational institutions” (a Naturalization Board official).

“We have experts who travel to schools, and they said that the school told them that it was introducing the third model, while what they saw in classrooms was the second model” (an NGO representative).

“Principals are dependent people – there are instructions, there are other instructions, we have to implement them! Then the commission comes to visit, and we can show them exemplary lessons. The other children then sit quietly” (a principal in Rīga).

Some experts said that there is a need for consistent work in the implementation of bilingual education. Teachers must undergo constant education, they must have the support and understanding of administrators, and experiences must be exchanged.

“There has to be very harmonized teamwork, and the models really do have to be implemented consistently. We are working on this methodically – educating a team of teachers who work with the classes” (an NGO representative).

“In the first year we understood that we want a normal bilingual school, not just one class and one enthusiastic teacher. We have to work very hard with administrators, convincing them that this is necessary, that there has to be flexibility, that they have to work with other schools and social partners, that there has to be a promotion of ongoing education” (an NGO representative).

Teachers

A description of the situation

Some principals said that they have found good teachers for their schools.

“I really like the fact that our school has attracted good teachers, because children like good teachers” (a principal in Rīga).

Many principals said that it is difficult to find sufficiently qualified specialists who are willing to work for the salaries that schools can afford to pay. University graduates are unwilling to work in schools.

“We get these young specialists who have been graduated from university, they work for two years, and then they leave the school. You must understand that we, as administrators, teach them all of the methods, everything, everything. They start to work, and then they leave because the salary is so low” (a principal in Rīga).

“Let me tell you what we need – young teachers who are graduated from higher school should be assigned to schools so that they replace the older teachers who cannot teach in both languages” (a principal in Rīga).

Bilingual education makes it even more difficult for educational institutions to find qualified teachers.

“I think that everyone can teach bilingually right now, but not everyone can teach in Latvian” (a principal in Latgale).

“First of all, they won’t be able to work in secondary schools, if they can’t implement the education program, then they will work at the elementary school level” (a principal in Rīga).

“What are we to do with those teachers who are 50 years old and do not speak Latvian? How are we to sack them? There is no such law” (a principal in Rīga).

A researcher in the field of bilingual education believes that the ideal teacher who can teach bilingually *“would be young, well trained in methodologies, would speak two languages, would be well trained in the area of multicultural education, and would be very familiar with his subject. He would be able to work not just in a frontal way, with the teacher in front of the classroom and the students just as the audience. The teacher would be able to organize students in groups according to ability, he would be able to differentiate the work of the classroom.”*

The attitudes of teachers toward bilingual education

Several teachers said that they understand that bilingual education is necessary so that students learn the Latvian language at a sufficient level to be able to go on to secondary school, university, work and fully vested life in Latvia’s society.

“This thing has a future, I’m thinking about the future of the children – they need this, they will have to study exclusively in the Latvian language in the future” (a teacher in a school in Latgale).

“My attitude is positive, because I think that the child whose native language is Russian has quite a bit of difficulty if he ends up in a purely Latvian environment. Here the child is given an opportunity to speak in his native language and to undergo intensive training in the Latvian language” (a teacher in a school in Latgale).

Other answers create the impression that teachers feel that they are being forced to teach bilingually:

“I can’t tell you whether I like it, but it is necessary” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

“How do teachers perceive these reforms? They’re necessary, so we’ll implement them, but I feel sad that I can’t teach the children what I know, because I don’t have the time to do so” (a principal in Latgale).

Principals often stand between the state and the teacher. They stress that teachers must try to understand government policies and that this can serve as a stimulus for further development.

“The fact that teachers understand that the Education Law will have to be implemented without any exceptions promotes their growth, it encourages them to work with themselves” (a principal in Kurzeme).

“The teachers who want to understand the government’s policies have an easier time of it. They try to speak, to attend courses, to attend the LAT-2 courses, and everything is fine” (a principal in Rīga).

Methodologies for bilingual education

Principals stressed that the use of new pedagogical methods in the educational process is a key prerequisite for the successful implementation of bilingual education.

“It is very important for teachers to learn the methods. We will achieve results in bilingual education only if interactive work forms and methods are used” (a principal in Rīga).

Complaints about the lack of a concrete methodology were often expressed by teachers and, sometimes, by principals, too. Other experts confirm this.

“A true and complete bilingual education methodology has not been developed to this very day. The only thing that can be called a bilingual education methodology is the experience which each teacher has accumulated, perhaps the experience which a group of teachers has accumulated in the teaching process” (a principal in Latgale).

“There basically is no methodology. The success is due entirely to the fact that teachers have worked at the school for a long time” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

“There is, after all, no [methodology] in bilingual education. We can’t go to the store and buy a methodology, we have to develop it ourselves. We went to those LAT-2 courses, there was no methodology there. We have to come up with everything ourselves, nobody presents it to us” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

“There should be a demonstration of the right way to teach a bilingual lesson” (a teacher in a school in Latgale).

“Each teacher do as best he can, because there is no system. No university trains teachers specifically on the basis of the principles that must be implemented so that they can become teachers who work in the field of bilingual education”(an NGO representative).

Various courses might be one way for teachers to learn the methods that they need and to obtain information about work techniques, but many teachers criticized the non-specific nature of courses that have been offered, saying that they are far removed from everyday work in the classroom and that there is too much theory in the content of the courses.

“The only thing is that all of the courses produce generalized recommendations, there is very little discussion of specific lessons, specific methodologies. These are generalized recommendations without any concrete skills. A lot of theory, very little practice in these courses” (a principal in Latgale).

“There are [courses] from which teachers return and then tell us that they did not learn anything new. The teacher seemingly was not prepared to teach the course. That has happened, too” (a principal in Rīga).

“Often the [courses] are taught by people who have never worked in a classroom and have never introduced the principles in real work” (a principal in Rīga).

“There was an instructor from the Education Ministry who was far removed from the issues of schools. There was nothing but theory, and we had differences of opinion with him on many issues” (a principal in Rīga).

Officials from the Education Ministry have their own ideas about the extent to which teachers have access to pedagogical methods in the field of bilingual education.

“An enormous volume of methodological materials have been accumulated at schools, and then I say ‘Hey – let’s publish them!’ The Soros Foundation has also recommended this. I know that those mountains of paper – I have seen terribly good things. Let’s release them! But no, the teachers tell us that this is missing and that is missing. That’s the next step. How can I motivate publishing houses to find these authors?” (an Education Ministry official).

Teachers complained about the lack of bilingual textbooks. Ministry officials doubt that such books are needed and think that there is a greater need for methodological materials for teachers: *“I am thinking more about these methodological materials which could be published in two languages and oriented toward the teacher.”* This is a rational

idea, because the teaching procedure in schools is not uniform – bilingually teach at different grade levels and different subjects.

As we know, the list of recommended books – i.e., those books that can be purchased with government financing – is approved by the Center for Curriculum Development and Examination. Latvian schools are not allowed to use government money to buy books that are published in Russia. A representative of a political party which represents minority interests objects to this ban: *“When it comes to the teaching of history, that is completely logical and reasonable. I don’t know, however, why a mathematics or physics textbook that has been published in Russia could be seen as being harmful for Latvian schools?”* (an opposition party representative).

Because there are no bilingual textbooks (Education Ministry specialists do not even recognize a textbook in the field of music by Firsov as being a bilingual textbook), one solution is to use Latvian textbooks.

“The book that is called ‘Mūzika’ – that is not a bilingual textbook, it’s a translation. It didn’t receive support from the ministry for that reason – because of the methodology. The ministry evaluates not only the content, but also the methodology that is involved” (an Education Ministry official).

“Insofar as it is possible, we try to use all of the [books] which are used by teachers in Latvian schools” (a teacher in a school in Kurzeme).

“I think that we can also use the textbooks that have been published in Latvian, I don’t think that there is a need for special books and so forth” (an official from the National Language Center).

A lesson in two languages

When it comes to the use of two languages, a quote from one teacher is typical: *“There is that very nice phrase in the bilingual education program that ‘the teacher must speak Latvian and [is allowed to] speak Russian only insofar as this is necessary for the children to learn the subject at a higher level”* (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

Teachers most often pointed to two factors which dictate the balance of the Latvian and Russian language in a lesson – the complexity of the subject matter and the issue of whether the teacher is presenting new information or repeating older information. More complicated subjects are taught in Russian.

“Everything depends on the subject matter. If we look at the distribution in terms of percentages, then certainly the larger share of lessons are taught in Russian” (a teacher in a school in Latgale).

“It all depends on the subject, how complicated it is. I am not another Latvian language teacher, I teach biology. If the subject is complicated, we mostly speak in Russian. I present the terminology, and that is enough for me. Our children are normal kids. I manage to discuss the basic aspects in Latvian. If there are simple subjects, normal subjects in which I have many illustrative materials, then we speak Latvian. There’s another aspect, though – to what extent are they conversant in Latvian? That’s because I present them with the terminology. I have tried a system in which examinations involve questions which students can answer in Russian and questions which they must answer in Latvian because I know that we have studied the respective issue thoroughly” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

New material is usually explained in the student's native language, and the Latvian language is used to firm up the knowledge and to repeat certain elements.

"I have not been successful in explaining new material in the Latvian language – that's where children and teachers have the greatest problems" (a teacher in a school in Latgale).

"At first, of course, everything is taught in Russian, but then, in the process of the work, it is taught in Latvian" (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

"If we are looking at new material, then we do not immediately use [the Latvian language]. The Latvian language is used very seldom – only when information is repeated" (a teacher in a school in Kurzeme).

"We initially present the terminology to the children, but I explain the subject matter in Russian. When the children draw their projects, they try to talk about those projects in Latvian" (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

In some schools, subjects are taught bilingually by two teachers – each in his or her own language. This is a system which is used in the West.

"In the area of the natural sciences, there is one lesson in Russian and one in Latvian. The seasons of the year, for instance, are taught in Russian. One subject, but two languages, two teachers. On Monday they study the natural sciences in Latvian, and on Wednesday they study the natural sciences in Russian" (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

Another principle of language use says that teachers must avoid translations during the course of a single lesson as much as possible, because otherwise students have no motivation to learn the second language.

"The most common mistake in many schools – if I explain concepts such as 'gluing', 'cutting' or 'tearing' to the children, I absolutely must not translate the words, I have to demonstrate what they mean. We do not translate words into Russian – we demonstrate them in drawings and through activities" (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

Teachers try to be flexible in the use of the two languages, adapting to the language skills of the children:

"One must really feel the reciprocal links to the children – do they understand you when you speak in Latvian? If I see that four or five kids [do not understand], then I develop a longer sentence with explanations. If half the class does not understand, then I say the same thing in Russian" (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

"If there are difficulties, then they can express their thoughts in Russian – that is not a problem" (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

"This [the move from one language to another] depends on the success of the child, but there are endless pauses – pauses which last several seconds while the child feverishly seeks the answer" (a teacher in a school in Latgale).

There are students in each classroom who speak Latvian better than others, and teachers often organize the work in their classroom so as to take advantage of the skills of those children:

"When we do group work, we put the children who speak the language well together with those children who do not" (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

An Education Ministry official stressed that bilingual education elements can be very different, but the decisive issue is the use of two languages in the teaching process in any way.

“In bilingual education one lesson is not the criterion. A lesson can be taught entirely in Latvian, it can be taught entirely in the native language, the teacher can say no more than ‘Good morning’ and ‘Good-bye’ [in Latvian]. The issue here is the age of the child, the subject that is being taught – that is a matter of the process” (an Education Ministry official).

Learning the Latvian language

Bilingual education was implemented in Latvia’s minority schools so as to allow non-Latvians to learn the Latvian language, but experts feel that there must be a certain freedom of choice in terms of how the language is learned.

“Everyone must be given an opportunity to learn the language, but there have to be many different opportunities, not one scheme but many schemes, many opportunities, different ways to learn the language” (an NGO representative).

Some teachers question the idea that students who learn bilingually obtain a better command of the Latvian language.

“For years now they have been learning various words in shop class, in gym classes. I don’t see any improvements in their vocabularies, they don’t even know elementary words. I don’t see any positive factors with respect to my class” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

An interesting aspect of bilingual education is the question of correcting errors in the Latvian language – this means more work for the teacher. Students, for their part, can feel psychological discomfort, fear and an unwillingness to work.

“We repeat new words, entire sentences. When we learn new material, I correct mistakes, but at the end of the lesson, when the child talks about his or her work, I don’t. Let the child speak to the best of his ability” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

“I never correct errors during bilingual lessons. I only correct the students in their written work when the issue is terminology, the things that they need in the specific lesson” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

“In terms of terminology, especially when they draw maps – I have to correct errors, if they write the word ‘Rīga’ without the diacritical mark on the ‘i’, for example. There are some kids who have written the word without the diacritical mark for four years in a row. Then I not only have to correct them, I have to chastise them, as well” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

People at several schools – both principals and teachers – feel that the quality of Latvian language teaching must be improved at minority schools.

“There is a great need to improve Latvian language teaching as a subject” (a principal in Rīga).

“The children need to learn Latvian folk songs, they have to know what they are, but the teacher must not spend too much time on the folk songs, or on an epos” (a principal in Rīga).

“Modern conversational Latvian provides very little, we also have to teach them to write – they need grammar, and this conversational language is needed in that respect” (a principal in Rīga).

“Perhaps the methodology has to be changed a bit, perhaps the textbooks need to be changed, because the ‘Riti raiti [valodiņa]’ is useless in terms of learning the Latvian language” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

Parliamentarians from a party which defends minority interests object to bilingual education. They think that students who hope to work in government structures in the future should simply attend Latvian schools.

“There is a great illusion in this area – the desire of students to study in their native language is interpreted as a desire not to learn the Latvian language” (a representative of an opposition party).

“People who want to work in government structures, in the bureaucracy of the state – they can choose the Latvian language” (a representative of an opposition party).

A school principal in Latgale, where there is virtually no Latvian language environment, had this to say about studies at Latvian schools: *“Some children who have attended Latvian schools have a surprising lack of desire to learn – they know the Latvian language, but they know nothing about mathematics or the natural sciences”* (a teacher in a school in Latgale).

A principal in a town where most people speak Latvian: *“Even in Soviet times our children successfully entered Latvian secondary schools and handled the program easily. That really does prove that even in the 1980s we were largely using the Latvian language in teaching specific subjects”* (a teacher in a school in Zemgale). We see, in other words, that the level of Latvian language learning is different in regions where most contacts take place in Latvian and in those where people mostly speak in Russian.

The quality of education

One of the problems which emerges when a teacher must teach in two different languages is a lack of time. Many teachers stressed that this has an effect on the quality of learning:

“There are 40 minutes for each lesson – divide that by two” (a principal in Latgale).

“I think that if we are expected to teach perfectly bilingually, they should add at least one more lesson in biology every two weeks” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

“It is in the area of subject-based knowledge that we are lagging behind the planned program. At the end of the year, of course, we will do lots of things in a very hurried way” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

Many teachers were quite insistent about the problem – students can either learn the subject, or they can learn the Latvian language. Teachers, who work bilingually have difficulties in finding the right balance between the two. This suggests that Latvian language teaching often occurs at the expense of the teaching of specific subjects.

“Not to teach the subject, but to start with the Latvian language. That’s not our goal – that is the goal for Latvian language lessons. The main thing for us is to teach our subject and not to take away time from the subject so as to teach the Latvian language” (a teacher in a school in Vidzeme).

“The lessons take place once a week. There is a choice – either to learn the Latvian language or to learn the subject” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

“What should be the focus of attention – the language or the subject at hand? What is the goal for my lessons?” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

“For the time being, the situation in these subjects [those that are taught bilingually] is that we spend more time in teaching the language than the subject. Maybe that will change, but that’s the situation right now” (a principal in Rīga).

“I suddenly came to understand that I wasn’t teaching the natural sciences – I was teaching the fourth declination of the Latvian language” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

Some teachers claimed that bilingual education lowers the level of knowledge among students in minority schools.

“It is absolutely clear that as bilingual teaching expands, the level and volume of the subject matter decline. That is absolutely clear” (a principal in Rīga).

“The average level of knowledge is preserved, but the level of higher knowledge declines– good levels of knowledge are reduced to average levels of knowledge” (a principal in Latgale).

“The main thing is that when students learn in a language other than their native language, they receive poorer knowledge, and that threatens their professional opportunities” (a representative of an opposition party).

“I’m sorry, but we cannot talk of results if a teacher who speaks Latvian poorly teaches geography, biology or chemistry in the state language to children who do not have a sufficient command of the Latvian language. Then the children don’t learn the language, and they don’t accumulate knowledge in the subject area” (a representative of an opposition party).

Some teachers see a link between the quality of knowledge and the level of complexity in each subject area – simpler and more practical subjects can be taught bilingually without harming the content.

“The easiest situation exists in shop class, in art class – those are easy subjects to teach bilingually, there are no problems because this involves a process. The teacher talks, the teacher demonstrates the issue. Children have a clear sense of what is happening. Music, gym – these courses can easily be taught bilingually. It is, of course, harder to teach mathematics in that way” (a teacher in a school in Kurzeme).

Some respondents said that there are no clear criteria in terms of determining whether the quality of knowledge is improving or worsening.

“The evaluation [of primary schools] is very general, it proves nothing” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

“On the basis of grades alone, one cannot say whether quality is improving or worsening– that’s not the only criterion” (an Education Ministry official).

“Demonstrate the way in which the teachers are working – the methods are probably incorrect. If a teacher works with the wrong methods, no matter whether it is in one language or two, in the student’s native language or another language, the result will always be poor” (an Education Ministry official).

The attitudes of parents

It is very important to ensure that the attitudes of a student’s parents are positive with respect to language learning and bilingual education. Some principals and teachers say that parents have positive views about the bilingual teaching process at the school which their children attend.

“It’s hard to say what the students think, but many parents are very happy about the situation” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

“The attitudes of parents toward bilingual education is also gradually shifting in the positive direction” (a principal in Latgale).

Teachers say that parental attitudes toward bilingual education are related to their expectations and plans with respect to the future of their children. The language skills of the parents are also of great importance.

“Those parents who want their children to earn a higher education usually have a positive attitude. The parents of children who are not good students, however, can also express negative views” (a teacher in a school in Zemgale).

“When we made the transfer in the 1999/2000 school year, we gathered together all of the parents, and the administrators of the school explained the changes and the new law. Parents who speak Latvian poorly, of course, have the same difficulties, and their attitudes, of course, are not positive” (a teacher in a school in Latgale).

Parents often reject the bilingual teaching process outright.

“There are parents who are convinced that we should not be teaching their children in Latvian or bilingually” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

“Most parents object to the idea that basic subjects should be taught in Latvian” (a principal in Rīga).

“I basically think – and maybe I’m wrong – that the attitudes of parents are negative” (a teacher in a school in Latgale).

Statements by teachers and principals indicate that parents are well informed about the study process, but in some cases there are also problems.

“Everyone should know about this, because I have provided them with information myself– maybe someone didn’t understand it, but everyone must be informed” (a teacher in a school in Latgale).

Some school representatives said things to suggest that administrators take the views of parents into account when organizing the educational process.

“If parents demand it, we are prepared to implement a different model, one which will promote the level of knowledge among the students” (a principal in Zemgale).

Students

One must agree with something that an expert said: *“Is a strong school one in which there are strong teachers or one in which there are strong students? Students are the ones who shape a school’s image”* (an NGO representative).

Speaking of changes in minority schools, pedagogues have emphasized that as the transition to teaching mainly in Latvian is implemented, differences among various cultures must be respected and nurtured: *“The transition must be introduced in a calm way, and the transition must be one in which we are not immediately transforming children into Latvians, but one in which we understand that children must preserve their mentality, they must preserve the feelings that they have toward their native language”* (a principal in Kurzeme).

Teachers have said that the general level of readiness among students, as well as a high level of knowledge in their native language – these are the key prerequisites for successful studies in a bilingual system.

“Those children who are intellectually developed and who are well prepared for schooling in their own native language will be able to study bilingually as well” (a principal in Zemgale).

The level of a child’s Latvian language knowledge upon entering school is important if the educational process is to be successful. The fact that children have differing levels of language skills can cause difficulties.

“The Latvian language skills of children are much higher now than they were a few years ago” (a teacher in a school in Kurzeme).

“About one-half of the children who understand the language and can even speak the language a little bit in the first grade, while the other half do not know or speak the Latvian language. It is hard for teachers to work with them for this reason” (a principal in Rīga).

Teachers have also said that the level of Latvian language skills in a child is usually commensurate to the child’s success in other subject areas: *“If they [the students] are strong, they are strong in language skills, too. If they are weak, then they are weak in all subjects”* (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

“There are children who are simply motivated to learn. Everything is interesting to them. They find it interesting to look up a word in the dictionary, they are interested in hearing how the word sounds in Russian and Latvian and why it sounds the way it does. They are interested why the word ‘belka’ in Russian means ‘vāvere’ (squirrel) in Latvian. They are interested in coloring in a map and writing place names in Latvian, because they are interested in knowing where Alūksne is located. These things cause the child no problems, because he is successful in his Latvian language lessons, too” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

Negative attitudes among students when it comes to learning bilingually can be caused by language difficulties, and such difficulties can slow down each lesson.

“I haven’t asked, but I think that most of the students don’t like [to study bilingually], because they have less time to do things. They’re children, after all – they need clear, understandable and brief instructions so that they can get to work as quickly as possible. If I give the instructions in Latvian, they don’t understand everything. Then we have to translate the material. This is largely based on the fact that they must understand that they need this process, they need it. But they don’t like it” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

Language skills

Among students

Teachers often express well-founded worries about the native language skills of schoolchildren in Latvia.

“The situation is one in which Russian children speak half in Latvian and half in Russian. They have problems in Russian, too – they mix up letters and words. When they write a composition, they use a Latvian word here and there. There are difficulties, we lack time” (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

“There are now fewer lessons in the Russian language and in Russian literature. I don’t think that Russian children should forget their culture, but they don’t manage to learn the language during the time that they spend in school, while at home they don’t have time

because they have to translate something. The result is that they don't read Russian books from beginning to end" (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

"Even in the 3rd or the 4th grade I see children mixing up Latvian and Russian letters. The letter "n" in Russian – they write it in the Latvian way. When I started to speak with them in Russian – I teach drawing and shop, and I teach them a lot in the Latvian language – I feel that the children can't even say certain words in Russian any more. In a lesson, for example, he hears the word 'gadalaiki' (seasons of the year), and he can't translate it, he can't tell me what the word means" (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

"There are fewer lessons in the Russian language and more lessons in the Latvian language, and we do not even have time to complete the Russian language program" (a teacher in a school in Rīga).

A Soros Foundation-Latvia expert says that native language skills are decisive when it comes to the quality of education, and they are also important when it comes to learning subsequent languages: *"Bilingual education doesn't mean that we don't care about or that we forget our native language – on the contrary, the native language has to be nurtured in a particularly careful and beautiful way, it has to be a complete, rich and literary process so that the Latvian language can be learned later. The more developed the native language, the higher will be the quality in learning the second, third, fourth and other languages."*

Among teachers

Nearly all teachers in minority schools have received third-level certification of their language skills. A representative of the Naturalization Board, however, says that these certificates do not always really conform to the language skills of the teachers. The difference between what is said on the certificates and what are the real language skills of the teachers – this is one of the key problems in implementing bilingual education.

"... if a principal is to sack someone whose certificate has been issued officially by the state and is not forged – the third level certificate indicates that the teacher can speak Latvian freely, but in fact the teacher can't get much beyond personal greetings. What is to be done with such a teacher?" (a representative of the Naturalization Board).

"We have quite a lot examples of teachers who present the third level certificate, they all have the third level. Then we see someone who comes in for naturalization but cannot pass the naturalization exam – an exam which, comparatively speaking, has much, much lower demands" (a representative of the Naturalization Board).

The situation with the Latvian language skills of teachers is also exacerbated by the fact that teachers need more than just the skills which are needed for a third level certificate. They must be able to speak the language in a literary and professional way. Insufficient skills can lead to a situation in which the teacher is mocked by the students.

"If you're going to teach, you need more than just the Latvian language as such, more than the third level – you need literary language skills. You have to know not only how to explain something in Latvian, but also how to find the words which the children will understand best" (a principal in Latgale).

"They often, not always, hear the Latvian language in less than the best version, and that can influence their own language skills, or it can cause them to laugh at the teacher. It's hard to say" (a University of Latvia instructor who is from a minority nationality).

Because there is a lack of qualified teachers in Latvia, principals sometimes have to choose between a professional teacher and a teacher who has good Latvian language skills.

“To give the opportunity to the strong teacher – you will surely agree that the professionalism of the teacher is most important, not the teacher’s language skills” (a principal in Latgale).

“You know, a Russian speaking mathematician, physicist or chemist has a very hard time in learning the language and then speaking in Latvian to children who have a better command of the Russian language. Speaking skills, language skills and the language in which a subject is taught – these are very different matters” (a principal in Rīga).

“I feel very sorry for teachers who are really excellent from the professional perspective but who have problems with the language” (a principal in Rīga).

The principal of a minority school posed this question: *“What will happen to the Latvian language if all of a sudden all minority representatives begin speaking the language incorrectly? What will happen to the Latvian language? Will it exist? This is a serious problem.”*

The Russian culture

An expert on the Russian language and culture spoke about the issue of the survival of Russian culture in Latvia: *“There is a certain unity which we call Russian culture. It is a book culture, not a folklore culture. If we determine that there is a folklore ensemble in a school, that does not mean anything in and of itself. As far as I am concerned, a Russian school is one which is focused on the Russian language and culture”* (a University of Latvia instructor who is from a minority nationality).

It is characteristic that principals who are Latvians and principals who are non-Latvians have very different thoughts about the effect which reforms in minority education programs will have on Russian culture.

“These reforms are a threat to Russian culture – there is no doubt about it” (a principal in Latgale).

“The culture is not being affected. Russian schools have their ensembles, they learn their own songs, they celebrate their own holidays – Easter, for example. I don’t think that anything is being influenced there. The same is true in homemaking courses – they sew things, they use their own ornaments, they know the difference between Latvian, Russian and Ukrainian folk costumes” (a principal in Rīga).

Some respondents talked of the need for peaceful co-existence between Latvian and Russian culture, and of the need for non-Latvians to become integrated into Latvian society.

“One of the main benefits here is understanding. People from various ethnic groups understand one another. One culture borrows from the other. Language skills – that is an aspect of culture” (a principal in Rīga).

“I think that a Russian must remain a Russian, no matter where he lives. He must accept the political life of the country in which he lives, he must respect the culture and people of that country, but he has to preserve his own culture. Will this continue to be true?” (a principal in Rīga).

“The state is helping them [Russians] to become integrated into Latvian society, but they must preserve their own culture” (a principal in Rīga).

“In this respect I really like the thinking of the Soros Foundation – they focus not on an introduction to Latvian culture, but rather on a multi-directional process in which Russians learn about Latvian culture and Latvians learn about Russian culture” (a principal in Latgale).

“For thousands of years, there has been not just Latvian culture in Latvia. In parallel, there has also been Russian culture” (a principal in Latgale).

Science

Many teachers said that there is a lack of any academic justification for bilingual education. Education Ministry officials don't agree, listing the achievements that have been made:

“In 1996 and 1997, the Education Ministry commissioned applied research from the Institute of Pedagogy and Psychology of the University of Latvia, and the lead researcher for Professor Irina Maslo” (an Education Ministry official).

“In addition to this and on the basis of that study, the Education Ministry in 1998 established a working group to establish sample minority education programs for the ministry” (an Education Ministry official).

“As a result of the study, there were eight recommended models, eight different sample programs that could be implemented in Latvia” (an Education Ministry official).

Statements by principals suggest that the results of this scientific research did not filter down to the schools, however.

“We have no institution to study, analyze and diagnose the entire situation. Nobody is doing that, we are doing some of it here at our school. It's hard for me to say what the results will be” (a principal in Rīga).

“We have seen nothing to indicate that the Education Ministry is studying this process” (a principal in Latgale).

“There are no parameters in terms of determining a school's readiness for teaching bilingually” (a principal in Latgale).

One researcher said that the pace at which bilingual education has been implemented in Latvia has not allowed specialists to evaluate and examine the bilingual education models to any sufficient degree.

“The shortcoming here is that the models have not been tested at the experimental level to see how they work. The models have been compiled from other language situations and simply applied in Latvia. We needed the models, they couldn't wait any longer, however. It is good that this has happened, but in the future we have to take these shortcomings into account” (a researcher).

Integration and one's native language

The concepts of “integration” and “native language” were often discussed in the interviews. The “native language” was mostly described as the “main loser” in the bilingual education process.

In interpreting the concept of “integration”, experts expressed two different views. In one case, experts related integration to the education policy in terms of a child’s being able to learn the Latvian language, to shape a career and to become a full participant in Latvia’s society. Others said that “integration” is a threat against the survival of the Russian language and the Russian culture in Latvia.

“This is a difficult question, but I will try to summarize. Bilingual education, like educational reforms as such, creates a foundation for the integration of society, because only if one knows the language can one truly learn about culture and history and understand one’s country. Integration is needed to ensure harmony among people from various ethnic groups. What is being offered is an opportunity to obtain an education in two languages, which expands the opportunity of the student to shape a successful career or to pursue a higher education. These reforms ensure Latvian language skills that are close to the level of native language understanding, and this allows young people and adults to feel that they belong to Latvia, and it ensures that they all have equal opportunities in the job market” (a principal in Vidzeme).

“The primary duty for [the teacher] is to prepare students for integration into society. Such a teacher will deal with any negative emotions that may exist, he will do more to learn the language and the methods, he will ask the children to do more independent work” (a principal in Latgale).

“I have been in the West many times, you see, an integration is perceived quite differently there. Integration does not mean violence against another culture. It means an interest in another culture and the co-existence of many different cultures in one country. That is what integration really means. The point is not to subjugate a weaker ethnic group. Otherwise we will face the same situation as the one which existed in Soviet times, when the Russian culture ‘swallowed up’ the Latvian culture” (a principal in Latgale).

Appendix 1

Description of methodology

I. The section of the research project in which laws that regulate the operations of minority schools are reviewed focuses on the Education Law, the Law on General Education, and several normative documents that have been issued by the Ministry of Education. Experts were asked to interpret the documents for the purposes of our study.

II. The surveys covered the target groups of bilingual education policies – secondary school and elementary school teachers, principals, students and parents.

Teachers and principals were interviewed in a face-to-face setting, using a standardized questionnaire. Students filled out the questionnaire individually and without the presence of a teacher, but under the supervision of an interviewer. Parents were interviewed by telephone.

In terms of selecting respondents, the interviewers talked to the principals of 50 schools. At each school, we surveyed an average of three teachers from the 2nd and 3rd grade, four or five teachers from the 5th to the 9th grade, and five or six secondary school teachers. In those cases where a school had more teachers than was necessary for the interview, a random selection method was used (on the basis of a list of teachers drawn up by each school).

At each school, we interviewed an average of 20 students in the 6th and 7th grade, and once again, respondents were selected on a random basis.

As far as the cohort is concerned, we focused on 50 schools in Latvia where classes are taught in Russian. The schools were selected through a multi-level and stratified method so as to choose a representational cohort of minority schools.

The surveys covered

- 50 principals,
- 401 elementary school teachers,
- 200 secondary school teachers,
- 376 parents of children in the 2nd and 3rd grade,
- 391 parents of students in the 6th or 7th grade,
- and 1,150 6th and 7th grade students.

The surveys were conducted between January 16 and February 11, 2002. All respondents could choose to be interviewed in Latvian or Russian.

III. The expert interviews

The goal of the interviews was to learn about the attitudes and level of understanding among policy stakeholders when it comes to the content and process of educational reform. We also sought to learn the extent to which the implementation of the relevant policies conform to the interests of these individuals.

The expert interviews involved those who shape policies (Education Ministry employees, NGO representatives, politicians, etc.), as well as experts at schools – teachers and principals. The interviews were partly structured in the sense that the interviewer had a list of subjects that were to be discussed. Each interview took 60

minutes, on average. The interviews were recorded on audio tape and then transcribed.

The expert interviews with teachers and principals took place at 20 of the 50 schools that were involved in the survey, with proportional representation for schools from all of Latvia's regions.

School experts:

- 1) Twenty school principals from minority schools in all of Latvia;
- 2) Teachers who teach bilingually at 20 educational institutions. Most of them came from primary schools (grades 1-3), because that is the level at which bilingual education is mandatory by law. In the schools, which are using the 4th model, we interviewed teachers of various subjects who handle the process bilingually;
- 3) Thirteen experts from government institutions, non-governmental organizations, political parties and academic institutions.

Respondents had a free choice as to the language in which the interview took place. Most of the principals were interviewed in Latvian, although they sometimes resorted to Russian in order to express certain thoughts – in other words, these were bilingual interviews. Principals in Latgale chose to be interviewed in Russian more often than in other parts of the country. Most of the interviews took place in Russian or in both languages. Two of the principals did not want the interview to be recorded on cassette.

The experts from government institutions, non-governmental organizations, political parties and academic institutions were all interviewed in Latvian.

IV. The typology of schools in terms of their readiness to begin teaching in Latvian was determined on the basis of the following questions:

1) *“What do you think about this question – will your school be able to ensure the shift toward classes that are taught mostly in Latvian at the secondary school level in September 2004?”* (the question was posed to principals)

2) *“Do you think that the current teachers in your secondary school will be able to teach subjects that are not related to minority language and culture in Latvian?”* (principals)

3) *“Beginning in September 2004, classes in the 10th grade in all Latvian schools are to be taught mostly in Latvian, allowing students to learn their native language and culture in their native language. Do you support this move?”* (principals and teachers)

4) *“Do you think that most of the students who are in the 7th grade at your school right now will be able to handle classes that are taught in Latvian at the secondary school level?”* (principals and teachers)

5) *“How would you evaluate your Latvian language skills in terms of being able to converse, to read and to write?”* (teachers)

6) *“To what extent do you think that your Latvian language skills are sufficient to teach your subject in Latvian?”* (teachers)

7) *“Do you think that you will be able to attend a secondary school where most classes are taught in Latvian?”* (students)

When the answers were correlated, the average rating for each answer was calculated separately for principals, teachers and students. We used a scale from 1 to 4, where 4 meant a positive answer (*“definitely will be able to”, “completely support”, “very good skills”, etc.*), while 1 meant a negative answer (*“definitely will not be able to”, “completely reject”, “very poor skills”, etc.*). The overall index for each school

was based on the average indicators of principals, teachers and students. Each school was put into one of four groups:

- 1) A relatively high level of readiness (the overall indicator was above 3 points);
- 2) An average level of readiness (the indicator was between 2.5 and 3 points);
- 3) A relatively low level of readiness (between 2 and 2.5 points);
- 4) A low level of readiness (below 2 points).

In 1999 study 'Learning of Latvian language at schools with Russian language of instruction' was taking place. The aim of the research was to clarify attitudes of teachers, students and parents toward bilingual education, as well as readiness to implement it. Researchers were interested in attitudes toward Education Law norm about transition to teaching mainly in Latvian in minority secondary schools in 2004. Research was conducted in 50 schools: 50 principals, 801 teacher of 9th and 11th classes, 1090 students of 6th and 7th classes, 1012 parents of 1st, 9th and 11th classes were interviewed.

One should take into account that the 1999 survey was focused on students in the 9th and 11th grade, while here we were dealing with students in the 6th and 7th grade. Hence one must take into account the different level of intellectual development among respondents. 1999 research results are available in portal 'www.politika.lv'.

Appendix 2

List of the schools, which participated in survey

1. 1st Aizkraukle secondary school
2. Audriņi secondary school
3. 3rd Daugavpils secondary school
4. 4th Daugavpils secondary school
5. 9th Daugavpils secondary school
6. 10th Daugavpils secondary school
7. 13th Daugavpils secondary school
8. 15th Daugavpils secondary school
9. 17th Daugavpils secondary school
10. Dobeles secondary school
11. Ilūkste secondary school
12. Indra secondary school
13. Jaunogre secondary school
14. 5th Jelgava secondary school
15. 6th Jelgavas secondary school
16. 2nd Liepājas secondary school
17. 11th Liepāja secondary school
18. Mežmala secondary school
19. 3rd Rēzekne secondary school
20. 6th Rēzeknes secondary school
21. 13th Rīga secondary school
22. 15th Rīga secondary school
23. 16th Rīga secondary school
24. 17th Rīga secondary school
25. 18th Rīga secondary school
26. 21st Rīga secondary school
27. 30th Rīga secondary school
28. 34th Rīga secondary school
29. 46th Rīga secondary school
30. 51st Rīga secondary school
31. 53rd Rīga secondary school
32. 55th Rīga secondary school
33. 57th Rīga secondary school
34. 60th Rīga secondary school
35. 61st Rīga secondary school
36. 63rd Rīga secondary school
37. 65th Rīga secondary school
38. 68th Rīga secondary school
39. 71st Rīga secondary school
40. 72nd Rīga secondary school
41. 80th Rīga secondary school
42. 86th Rīga secondary school
43. 95th Rīga secondary school
44. 96th Rīga secondary school
45. Rīgas Russian gymnasium
46. Rīga Lomonosova gymnasium
47. Rīga M. Lomonosova secondary school
48. Salaspils secondary school
49. Svēte secondary school
50. Zolitūde gymnasium

Conclusions

Data from the research indicate that bilingual education reforms in Latvia are being pursued quite successfully. The Latvian language knowledge and skills of students in minority schools have improved over the last several years, and there has been greater interest at these schools in the Latvian language.

At the same time, however, the research does reveal a series of problems which are hindering the pace of reforms. First of all, there is a lack of consistency at the legislative level. There are contradictions between norms in the Education Law (1998) and the Law on General Education (1999). The Education Law says that beginning on 1 September 2004, all classes at the 10th grade level in state and local government secondary schools will be taught “exclusively in the Latvian language”, while the Law on General Education says that general secondary education programs can be merged with minority education programs. Many education policy makers and employees believe that the norm in the Education Law which speaks to the exclusive use of the Latvian language in minority secondary schools after 2004 is a mistake. This “mistake” has not been reversed, however, and this creates serious complications and misunderstandings in the entire process of bilingual education.

Bilingual education in the eyes of principals, teachers, students and parents

1. 86% of principals and 78% of teachers say that the Latvian language knowledge and skills of students who attend schools where classes are taught in Russian have improved. Two-thirds of surveyed principals and 43% of teachers say that the desire of students to speak Latvian has increased. These are facts which confirm that the direct goal of bilingual education reforms has, generally speaking, been reached – the reforms are promoting the learning of the Latvian language at minority elementary schools.
2. At the same time, however, the bilingual education reforms are a complicated process which cannot be judged unilaterally. There have been losses along with benefits. Nearly two-thirds of surveyed principals and 51% of teachers are worried about the idea that bilingual education is having a deleterious effect on the knowledge which students possess in study areas which are taught bilingually. Far fewer teachers (19%) argue that the bilingual teaching method does not influence the level of knowledge among students. Another 16% of teachers think that it promotes increased knowledge.
3. It is important to note that the study did not confirm frequently heard concerns that bilingual education will threaten the positions of the Russian language. Nearly one-half of teachers (48%) believe that the reforms are not having a direct effect on the native language skills of their students. True, 33% of teachers believe that the skills are worsening, but 8% are convinced that they are improving.
4. Approximately one-half of parents (51%), students (51%), teachers (54%) and principals want there to be an approximately equal number of classes that are taught in Latvian and in Russian in elementary schools. This suggests that they indirectly support the existing bilingual education models, which are based on the idea that the Latvian and Russian language should be used as the language of

- instruction in elementary schools at an approximately equal level. At the same time, a significant number of students (41%), teachers (37%), principals (34%) and parents (31%) think that most of the classes should be taught in the minority language (i.e., the Russian language or another minority language). A total of 7% of students, 4% of teachers, 10% of principals and 14% of parents think that the Latvian language should dominate.
5. Support for the current process is confirmed by the 59% of parents of children in the 2nd and 3rd grade who think that the number of subjects that are taught in each language is “sufficient”. Nearly one-quarter of parents think that there should be more classes that are taught in Latvian, while only 10% of parents argued that there are insufficient numbers of subjects that are taught in Russian.
 6. Insufficient Latvian language skills among teachers at schools where classes are taught in Russian continue to be the main problem in the area of bilingual education. Only some 10% of teachers whose native language is not Latvian rated their Latvian language skills as being in line with the highest level of language skills. More than one-half (53%) said that their skills conform to the second, or medium level, and more than one-third (36%) said that their skills conform to the lowest level of skills. Nearly one-third of teachers (29%) said that their conversational skills in Latvian can be described with the words “I can speak a little bit”. The fact that 71% of teachers chose to be interviewed in Russian also indicates that they do not have a sufficient command of the Latvian language to feel comfortable in a conversation that takes place in that language. What’s more, a bit more than one-third of teachers at schools where classes are taught in Russian (35%) are not citizens of Latvia, and although 73% want to obtain citizenship, that is evidently not possible because of inadequate Latvian language skills.
 7. There are relatively few teachers who are critical in terms of evaluating their professional readiness for work at a bilingual school. Only 6% of teachers say that their readiness is at a low level – at a ranking of 1 to 3 points on a 10-point scale. Approximately one-half of teachers rate themselves at a ranking of 4 to 7 points, while one-third of elementary school teachers give themselves 8 to 10 points in terms of their readiness. It should be added that 12% of teachers did not answer the question. It is likely that their readiness to work bilingually is not equal to or does not reach the medium level.
 8. At the same time, however, more than one-half of the teachers said that teachers who teach bilingually lack Latvian language skills in particular. One-third of teachers argued that there is “insufficient knowledge about bilingual pedagogy”. Asked about the things which teachers lack the most when it comes to being able to teach bilingually, principals most often pointed to insufficient Latvian language skills and to inadequate knowledge about bilingual pedagogy.
 9. Students in the 6th and 7th grade, for their part, rate their Latvian language skills at a high level. 68% of students say that they have no problems in communicating in Latvian. Another 20% can discuss “only the simplest issues”, while 2% are “unable” to communicate in Latvian. Although parents, principals and teachers rate the Latvian language skills of students more humbly (59% of teachers, for instance, feel that students lack the Latvian language skills that are necessary for bilingual education), we can say that the fact that students are convinced that they

- can speak in Latvian is a positive thing. It should be added that parents and teachers lag behind students when it comes to Latvian language skills.
10. A majority of teachers (68%) think that the attitude of students toward an education in two languages is positive. 70% of teachers think that the attitude of children toward classes that are taught in Latvian is positive. True, 21% of teachers say that the children have a negative opinion of this situation. This was said more often by teachers with medium or poor Latvian language skills. 83% of the teachers who have been involved in the Soros Foundation's "Open School" project have positive opinions about the attitude of their students.
 11. One-half of parents are convinced that their children like to study in Latvian. One-quarter think that the attitude is neutral, and only 17% say that their child "does not like" to learn in Latvian. 69% of the parents whose children are studying in the context of the first model are convinced that the children have a positive attitude. 18% of parents objected to bilingual education – they want all classes to be taught in Russian. This attitude was found more often in relation to those schools which are using the fourth model or which have developed their own bilingual education model.
 12. One-fifth of teachers whose native language is not Latvian can freely shift from the Latvian to the Russian language and vice versa. 41% of teachers say that they have few problems in using both languages, and one-third say that it is "quite difficult". 3% of teachers said that it is "very difficult" to shift to and from the Latvian and Russian languages. Fully 80% of students said, however, that moving from one language to the other is not particularly difficult for them.
 13. 79% of teachers at the 2nd and 3rd grade level said that the bilingual education model which is being used in their classroom or school is the appropriate one, while 10% of teachers argued that it is not appropriate. This answer was given more often by teachers with the lowest level of Latvian language skills (17%). Only a few teachers said that the model which has been selected by their school is the inappropriate one. Asked why this is so, teachers most often mentioned weak Latvian language skills, the idea that children should study in Russian, and the fact that children lack a Latvian language environment.
 14. The linguistic environment in Latvia is a very important aspect of language policy. People whose families do not speak Latvian at home have few opportunities to practice speaking in Latvian, because they spend most of their time in an environment where the Russian language dominates. Most teachers whose native language is not Latvian speak the Latvian language ("mostly or exclusively Latvian" or "Latvian more than Russian") at government institutions, while in other situations (at work, with acquaintances, on the street or in stores) they mostly speak Russian. The principals of minority schools speak Latvian considerably more often. The fact that teachers speak the Latvian language infrequently at work means that very little is being done to promote Latvian language learning among students in an informal environment. It is no accident that many teachers say that the Latvian language is most often linked just to their work and their obligations.
 15. Asked what keeps students from learning the Latvian language to a greater extent through Latvian language lessons, 83% of teachers stressed the lack of the proper

- linguistic environment. Other reasons that were cited include insufficient material aspects (47%), a lack of methodological materials (43%), and the readiness of teachers (16%).
16. Students, for their part, speak “mostly or exclusively Russian” at home (73%), while 25% also speak in Latvian. Approximately one-half of students speak to their friends both in Latvian and Russian, and this is also true when they talk to people on the street or in shops.
 17. Most parents (69%) and teachers (62%), along with more than one-half of principals, believe that the most appropriate time for a child to begin learning the Latvian language is when the child is at the kindergarten age. Many respondents think that the language can be learned earlier – “from birth”, for instance (this was said by 42% of principals, one-third of teachers and 19% of parents). Only 4% of teachers and some 10% of parents said that Latvian language learning should be postponed until the child is of school age. 68% of parents, 60% of principals and 56% of teachers feel that children from minority families should attend Latvian kindergartens. These answers suggest that parents and teachers want children to learn the Latvian language as early as possible.
 18. The situation right now is quite different from the one that parents would like to see. Data from the research indicate that only 4% of children began to learn the Latvian language when they were very young, while 46% started to learn the language at kindergarten, and 58% began to learn it when they were of school age (the data are from parent surveys).
 19. Information about bilingual education was most often obtained by teachers from “colleagues at my school” (71%), at courses (54%), from “public information resources” (48%), “from specialized literature” (19%), “from colleagues at other schools (15%) and “from Ministry of Education employees” (10%). The research shows, therefore, that the ministry has virtually no direct contacts with teachers who are involved in the bilingual education. Principals face a far better situation – 69% say that they have had such cooperation opportunities.
 20. Exhaustive explanations about the use of the Latvian and Russian languages at school have been received by 40% of the parents of children in the 2nd and 3rd grade. Some 30% obtained incomplete information, while a bit fewer than 30% received no information at all. Most parents (69%) obtained information about bilingual education from “my child’s teachers”. Other information sources have been less important – only 23% of parents obtained information from public information resources.
 21. 91% of teachers in the 1st to the 3rd grade say that they have spoken to parents about the use of the Latvian language in the teaching process, while 64% of teachers and principals are convinced that parents are “completely informed” about this issue. If we compare these data to the claims which parents made, we see that despite discussions between teachers and parents, the issue of bilingual methods in the teaching process is not yet completely clear to many parents.
 22. A majority of teachers (58%) said that the quality of bilingual education at their school is “average”. One-third think that it is “high”. Very few teachers rated the quality of bilingual education as “very high” (1%) or “very low” (2%). Here, too,

- it is worthwhile to compare this evaluation to the Latvian language skills of teachers.
23. Answers from students in the 6th and 7th grade show that the classes that are taught most often bilingually are music, homemaking and crafts, biology, geography, history, the visual arts and mathematics. The fact that nearly one-third of students could not say which subjects are taught “exclusively in Latvian” suggests that there is a certain lack of conformity between the planned use of the Latvian language in the teaching process and the actual use of the language in that process. Experts and some principals admit that there is “double bookkeeping” – the education process at the school, in other words, is different from the process that is documented. This situation apparently has emerged because some schools are unable to meet the administrative demands that have been made.
 24. Many students in the 2nd and 3rd grade (39%) do their homework together with their parents. Approximately an equal number of parents said that they help their children if asked. Only 12% of parents said that the “child studies independently”. That happens more often when the parents have weak Latvian language skills. The data show that parents are active participants in bilingual education reform. Clearly, the role of parents in the implementation of bilingual education will not become less important in the next few years. That is not a process that can be evaluated in any unilateral way. There are several questions here. Are parents who are involved in their children’s homework compensating or trying to compensate for weaknesses in the pedagogical work of bilingual teachers at school? What is the level of success among children whose parents cannot or do not want to help them? Are they destined to failure from the very beginning for this reason?
 25. A majority of parents (69%) believe that the amount of work that their children have to do is “in conformity with the child’s abilities”. One-fifth of parents say that the burden is “excessive”. This opinion was expressed most often by parents who do not speak the Latvian language, by parents whose children are studying on the basis of the first or second bilingual education model, and by parents in Latgale.
 26. Given that there have been significant changes in minority schools as such, we have reason to ask about changes in the psychological mood at schools. Teacher responses indicate that the atmosphere “has become more tense and nervous” at quite a few schools (25%). A comparable number of responses, however, indicate quite the opposite – that the atmosphere “has become more free and nicer” (22%). The majority of teachers, however, said that the atmosphere “has not changed”. Teachers in Latgale were more likely (36%) to speak of greater tension and nervousness.
 27. 62% of teachers, 72% of principals and 42% of students believe that students are more worried about answering questions during bilingual lessons.

In the 2002/2003 school year, students at all minority elementary schools will be taught bilingually

In response to the question “In which school year will all of the elementary school classes at your school be taught on the basis of the minority education program that has been selected?”, one-half of teachers and principals said that this is already true. The Ministry of Education has mandated the use of bilingual methods at all elementary schools in the 2002/2003 school year, and that year was mentioned by only 14% of principals and 2% of teachers. Many teachers (24%) think that the changes will take place a year later – in the 2003/2004 school year. Another 18% said that they do not know when the changes will take place. This means that teachers and even principals do not have a clear view of the upcoming policies in the area of bilingual education. The research data confirm once again that the ministry’s bilingual education policies are still dominated by administrative norms, while opportunities for dialogue or even for regular exchanges of information between schools and the ministry are used infrequently.

Classes are to be taught mostly in Latvian at minority secondary schools after September 2004

1. One-half of parents and teachers and somewhat fewer principals say that young people who are currently being graduates from minority secondary schools have greater difficulty in being admitted to Latvian state universities than do young people who have been graduated from Latvian schools. 58% of principals, 39% of teachers and 35% of parents say that both groups have equal opportunities. A majority of principals (64%), teachers (59%) and parents (63%) believe that transition to classes that are taught in the Latvian language at minority secondary schools will increase the abilities of students to enter Latvia’s universities.
2. With respect to prospects in the job market, too, principals (44%), teachers (54%) and parents (55%) feel that minority and Latvian young people do not have equal opportunities at this time. 36% of principals and 32% of teachers, along with 28% of parents, feel that the opportunities for both groups are equal when it comes to the job market. A majority of principals (70%), teachers (54%) and parents (61%) think that an increase in the use of the Latvian language at minority secondary schools will increase the opportunities that are available to minority young people in the job market.
3. Existing education policies in Latvia say that beginning in September 2004, all state and local government minority schools will have to teach most classes in the 10th grade in Latvian. Students will be able to study their native language and subjects that are related to their ethnic identity in their native language. These changes are supported by one-half of surveyed principals, 42% of teachers, 42% of parents and 40% of students, while approximately one-half of principals and teachers (52%), as well as 48% of parents, object to the changes. 10% of parents have no clear opinion on the matter. The upcoming changes are more often supported by teachers with the highest level of Latvian language skills (46%), by teachers in the 1st to the 3rd grade (47%), and by teachers who work at schools

- where the first model is used (58%). Opponents of the changes are mostly teachers and parents with weak Latvian language skills.
4. The answers to the previous question indicate that a significant number of respondents support the intended transition, while a greater number of respondents oppose it. There is a certain polarity of views here. A similar situation is found in other cases, too. 41% of teachers, for instance, think that students who are currently in the 7th grade will not have much difficulty in studying in Latvian at secondary school, while 51% of teachers believe that there will be serious difficulties. Many teachers (41%) think that the bilingual method that is being used has no influence on the interest of students when it comes to their education, while one-third of teachers think that the interest of students in various subjects of study is declining. Some teachers (26%) are convinced that the bilingual method that is being used increases the attention which students devote to their lessons, while another 31% think that the level of attention is diminishing. Parental views about the number of Latvian language lessons each week also are split up into almost equal shares – 49% think that there are sufficient numbers of lessons, while 46% think that the number of lessons is “too low”.
 5. It is likely that the contradictions which exist in Latvia’s laws have had a significant influence on answers that were given to the question of the language of teaching at minority secondary schools after 2004. The interviews emphasized the transition to “mainly” (not “exclusively”) using the Latvian language at these secondary schools, but it is entirely possible that teachers perceived the question differently, e.g., in line with the formulation of this norm in the Education Law. This assumption is partly confirmed by the fact that more than one-half of secondary schools teachers (56%), when asked which subjects will be taught in Latvian at the 10th grade level after 2004, said that this will be true with respect to “nearly all subjects, except the native language and literature”.
 6. One-half of secondary school teachers (49%) and principals said that their school will be ready to start teaching mainly in the Latvian language in 2004, while 40% of teachers and 10% of principals said that the school will not be ready for the change. More than one-third of principals think that the situation will create great difficulties for their school, while 12% of teachers could not provide a concrete answer to the question. Here, too, greater optimism was found among teachers whose Latvian language skills are at the highest level (77%).
 7. A bit more than one-half of schools (56%) will be more or less prepared for the situation where most classes are taught in Latvian (16% will be fairly well prepared, and 40% will be at an average level of readiness). At the same time, however, 44% of schools will not be sufficiently ready for the changes, and 6% will face critical problems. In expert interviews, principals said it would be better to introduce the use of the Latvian language in secondary schools in the 2008/2009 school year, because that is when the students who began to learn bilingually in the 1999/2000 school year will be in the 10th grade.
 8. 41% of teachers and one-half of principals believe that students who are presently in the 7th grade will be able to study in Latvian at secondary school with some difficulty, while 51% of teachers and one-half of principals think that students will face serious difficulties. The conviction that students will be able to handle the

- situation was expressed more often by teachers whose Latvian language skills are at the highest level (58%), and by teachers whose schools use the first model (67%).
9. 25% of the parents of students in the 6th and 7th grade think that their children will unquestionably be able to handle the situation in which most classes are taught in Latvian in secondary school. 32% think that the children will have a few problems, while 38% claim that the children will face enormous difficulties or will be entirely unable to handle the situation. This means that a more or less optimistic opinion is held by 57% of parents, while 38% of parents have a pessimistic viewpoint. There are more optimists among those parents whose children are studying on the basis of the first model, while pessimism was expressed more often by those parents (57%) who do not speak the Latvian language.
 10. Approximately one-half of secondary school teachers (52%), asked whether they will be able to teach in the Latvian language, said that subject-based teachers will be able to do so with a few difficulties. More than one-third of teachers (37%) think that it will be very difficult or even impossible for subject-based teachers. Here, too, we found greater optimism among teachers with good Latvian language skills.
 11. Among teachers who think that secondary school teachers will not be able to teach their subjects in Latvian, 75% say that this is because teachers do not have sufficiently Latvian language skills, and 62% say that it is because students have poor Latvian language skills. Far fewer teachers pointed to the lack of textbooks (9%) or methodologies (5%), or to the idea that teachers are not psychologically ready for the change. Principals are more skeptical about the question of whether teachers at secondary schools where classes are now taught in Russian will be able to teach in Latvian.
 12. Only one-half of secondary school teachers believe that their Latvian language skills are more or less sufficient to allow them to teach their subject in Latvian. One-third of secondary school teachers (36%) think that their skills are “probably insufficient”, while 5% think that their skills are “very insufficient”. Another 9% did not answer the question. Only one-third of secondary school teachers (36%) are currently teaching at least one subject in Latvian. Thus, if we take the Latvian language skills of teachers into consideration, we see that approximately one-half of secondary school teachers at this time are not prepared to work in a classroom where lessons are taught in Latvian or in a bilingually.