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Editorial

Journal of Teacher Education and Training (JTET) welcomes all the readers, authors and Editorial Board on the publication of sixth issue of JTET.

On behalf of Institute of Sustainable Education and Faculty of Education and Management of Daugavpils University, I express our appreciation to the authors, Editorial Board, Council of Science of Daugavpils University and printing house for successful teamwork, perseverance and valuable support to the continuation of this periodical.

The publishing of JTET traditionally coincides with the 4th annual International JTET Conference “Sustainable Development. Culture. Education”, which takes place at the University of Helsinki, May 31-June 3, 2006, Helsinki, Finland. First three conferences were organized by Daugavpils University in 2003, Tallinn Pedagogical University in 2004, and University of Vechta in 2005. Many articles included in the sixth volume of JTET represent the most valuable and original contributions from the 4th JTET Conference participants.

Editorial Board for this issue of JTET includes the representatives from 16 countries who really are of great value for JTET due to their responsiveness, rich experience and expertise in the field of teacher education and training. JTET also welcomes the new members of Editorial Board and hopes for fruitful cooperation in years to come.

The 6th volume of JTET contains articles reflecting the research, practical experience and theoretical propositions originated in Latvia, Estonia, Hungary, and Malta. Since the main topic of the Conference “Sustainable Development. Culture. Education” this year is democratic education in democratic society, this approach has been integrated in many articles dealing with a wide range of issues in teacher education and training.

The volume 6th of JTET starts with the research on the ways and means of improving the teacher education programme and also the teacher feelings as full-time graduates. Using the example from Malta, this research provides direction as to how the education authorities, teacher education institutions and schools can support beginning teachers. Researchers from Latvia reflect on their experience while exploring the teachers’ views on sustainable development, educational aims in the view of students, mentors and teacher trainers, and changes in rural schools illustrating their orientation toward the sustainable development. Next article, originated in Hungary, tells a story about the field studies, so necessary for the methodological preparation of the teachers in environmental sciences. Fresh and challenging approach for JTET provides the article on the adult educators’ professional identity as reflected in narratives and pictures. The research team from Estonia brings us a quantitative overview of democratic approach to school development by involving all interest groups. The article of diversity of early childhood education theories poses the perennial questions about the making of right choices. The journal concludes with the articles on phenomena hardly connected with any normative approach in democratic society: giftedness and evaluation of art works.

The renovated website of Institute of Sustainable Education www.dau.lv/ise/ is available for a further acquaintance with Journal of Teacher Education and Training and, as usual, it informs about the annual JTET conferences “Sustainable Development. Culture. Education”. The Institute of Sustainable Development invites you to follow the information about the next Conference and submit articles for this event.

Editor-in-chief: Anita Pipere
Beginning Teachers have a Voice

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Abstract
The Maltese Government, being concerned about the quality of school education, is attempting to increase teacher effectiveness and student learning. To achieve these goals, it is argued, that current in-service programmes need to be improved and focused, especially by giving due attention to the induction phase. Schools need to devise appropriate professional induction seminars and workshops for new teachers to extend their professional knowledge and skills acquired during the pre-service stage. This paper presents part of a research study that explored two main areas: teacher preparation and professional development. Through this study we hope to shed light on ways and means of improving the current B.Ed (Hons) teacher education programme and also point out how teachers feel once they are full-time graduates. This will provide direction as to how the education authorities, the respective teacher education institutions and schools in particular can support beginning teachers. The essential link between pre-service and continuing professional development is explored and identified as key to quality improvement at the school level.

Key words: pre-service teacher training; induction; continuing professional development.

Introduction
This article explores the climate and synergy created within the Faculty of Education, at the University of Malta, in order to affect teacher education reform in Malta. The current educational climate within the Faculty of Education is one of collaborative enquiry. Various initiatives have been undertaken (e.g. Faculty of Education, 1997) which have helped both the individual members within the Faculty and the Faculty’s own identity and character to grow. Initiatives undertaken to improve the initial teacher education programme, include work in the areas of assessment and portfolios, an improved academic programme linking theory with practice, improved links with schools, reviewed teaching practice evaluation sheets, and mentoring courses for heads and envisaged ones for teachers.

The Faculty, at the same time, encourages and supports undergraduate and post-graduate studies in various areas that have to do with teaching practice (e.g. Bezzina & Stanyer, 2004; Lia & Mifsud, 2000). These provide us with valuable information as to how we can improve our programmes. Over the last few years there has been a concerted effort to encourage undergraduate students to explore areas of study that look into specific aspects of our course.
This article reports one such study (Bezzina & Stanyer, 2004). Understanding what teachers experience once they have embarked on a teaching career as well as their perceptions regarding their preparation and ongoing professional development will help not only the Faculty of Education in its drive to constantly evaluate and improve its courses but also to present findings to substantiate concerns that have been presented over the years for the need of induction and the continuing professional development (CPD) of teachers to be seriously addressed by the education authorities (Bezzina, 2002, 2003).

This article will shed light on what beginning teachers experience in their initial years of full time teaching, how the teacher education courses in the island state of Malta can be improved in order to help newly qualified teachers settle down in schools, and identify what schools can do to support the induction and CPD of beginning teachers. The study focuses on four questions:

- What are the current perceptions about the teacher training programmes given the experiences gained in school as full-time teachers?
- What problems do teachers face once they commence full-time teaching?
- What qualities or skills do they value as beginning teachers?
- What opportunities do teachers have to develop professionally?

Induction and Ongoing Professional Development: A Brief Review

Over the years various studies have highlighted how the quality of a teacher’s experience in the initial years of teaching is critical to developing and applying the knowledge and skills acquired during initial teacher training and to forming positive attitudes to teaching as a career (e.g. European Commission, 2002; Scherer, 1999). The purpose of induction is recognised as the further development in newly qualified teachers (NQTs) of those skills, knowledge, attitudes and values that are necessary to carry out those roles effectively. Induction forms a transitional process between the initial teacher education programme (i.e. pre-service phase) and getting fully established as a confident and competent practitioner.

Whilst there is a general acceptance of the value of good induction processes for the beginning teacher, though, as Coolahan (2002) argues, there tends to be a lack of coherent policy on its implementation. Often, the reality in many countries, Malta being no exception, is that beginning teachers are often “thrown in at the deep end”, with a full-teaching load and associated responsibilities. They often have limited support structures to draw upon and they can feel isolated, stressed and anxious. Research shows that whilst poor induction can have serious consequences (Freiberg, 2002), beginning teachers who are provided with a system of support are able to overcome initial problems of class management and planning and focus on student learning much sooner than others (e.g. Breaux & Wong, 2002; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Lieberman, 1995).

Hopefully, the recent studies conducted by the OECD (e.g. Coolahan, 2002) into “Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers” across a number of European countries will help countries like Malta to address
this area. We also hope that the study reviewed here will help to cultivate a discourse that will influence our policy makers and politicians to invest their time and money in the area.

Methodology
A questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews was undertaken. The teachers involved in the particular study were selected from the cohort who graduated between 1999 and 2001 by adopting a random sampling procedure. There were 978 beginning teachers in the cohort (B.Ed, PGCE, primary and secondary teachers). Questionnaires were sent by mail during February 2003 to 480 teachers. 261 (i.e. 54.4%) teachers filled the questionnaire.

After the questionnaires had been analysed, 18 interviews were conducted. The interview questions were chosen, in order to elaborate on information derived from the questionnaires. This article presents only some of the main results and corroborates these with information obtained through the interviews.

Findings
Pre-service phase
Over half of the respondents describe the BEd (Hons)/PGCE programme as effective. Similarly, half of the beginning teachers interviewed expressed positive opinions. The following quote sums up the general feelings of respondents:

*The course provided me with quite a lot of materials, ideas and most of all a positive attitude which helped address the challenges of my initial years (T1).*

Most respondents spoke about two distinct dimensions. First, the content knowledge required by beginning teachers. No respondent complained that they were not prepared in that domain. Second, they spoke of the importance behind having the right frame of mind and disposition to handle the ever complex and challenging secondary school environment.

Although the respondents described the teacher training programme as effective, they felt that the courses in itself, did not make one a professional. A teacher is always in the making. This resonates with studies abroad (Tabachnick & Zeichner, 1984). As another teacher pointed out:

*Teaching is so complex, the environment is so fluid that it is practically impossible to know how to handle every situation, how to teach every item (T2).*

Furthermore, as T4 said: “Students have different needs, different learning patterns. We are learning new ways of teaching as we go along”.

Similarly, the majority of interviewees viewed the teacher training programme as being different from the reality in schools. In spite of so much exposure in schools through their field practice and other activities (23 weeks in schools over 4 years), they still experience what Veenman describes as ‘reality shock’, that is “the collapse of the missionary ideals...
formed during teacher training by the harsh and rude reality of classroom life” (1984: 143). I would add, the realities of school life and what the world of teaching embraces.

Beginning teachers feel that there is quite a gap between theory and practice. As one teacher stated:

*Once you become a full time teacher you start to realise that there is quite a difference between what you are taught at university and the reality of school life. Any form of initiative, creativity and move that challenge the status quo is often nipped at the bud* (T3).

“The course is too idealistic”, said another (T6). What is interesting to note is that teachers with more years of experience emphasised that the course was too idealistic more than their colleagues with less years of teaching experience. Although teachers thought the teaching programme at university was different from the reality in schools, they were confident that differences could be minimised.

The interviews identified a number of suggestions in order to address and hopefully minimise this apparent gap. “I believe the teaching practice component needs to be extended. Six weeks are just a period not long enough” (T6). This opinion resonates the research findings made by Grudnoff and Tuck (2001) in their New Zealand studies.

“Engagements in schools may be the most demanding and at times the most frustrating, but in the long term they help me to get a good feeling of what ‘reality’ may or will be like” (T5). This opinion helps to reinforce the arguments that one of the best and probably enduring methods to adopt is to expose student-teachers to varied engagements in school. They feel the need for more practice so as to see how different pedagogies, concepts and theories may be applied in different school situations. Respondents also felt that more practitioners need to be involved in teaching at the pre-service stage: “More teachers, more practitioners need to be involved in delivering courses. Their firsthand experience can provide us with insights that few lecturers can provide” (T8). This idea reflects the concept of the clinical faculty as described by Cornbleuth and Ellsworth (1994). Earley’s teacher-2-teacher programme (Earley, 2001) which involves teachers mentoring beginning teachers, could also help support those at the pre-service stage. Beginning teachers also identified the need for varied engagements in school, trying out different pedagogies, concepts and theories in different school and classroom situations.

Asked to react to the various components student-teachers are exposed to during the course respondents tended to emphasise the need for components to be practical in orientation and that things covered during the course needed to have an immediate sense of application and therefore impact in their day-to-day teaching. Hence, the question of relevance and, more so, the level of relevance depended on what respondents deemed as important at their stage of development. Beginning teachers are mainly concerned with surviving since, as Ryan points out, “the psychological reality of teaching is very different from one period in a career to the next” (1986: 10). Hence the response one gives is intimately linked to the stage in the career one is in. So, response on the question of relevance is very much
tied to experience. The following quote helps to illustrate this point: “I did not like philosophy as a subject. I do not feel that it helped me in any particular way. In a practical sense I feel that it did not help at all” (T9). Respondents found psychology to be more relevant to their teaching than either sociology or philosophy.

Respondents identified methodology courses as the most relevant. Some argued that in some of the schools they were posted in they found it difficult to use or integrate particular methodologies they were exposed to at university. Similarly, in relation to subject content the point emerged that some of the content they were exposed to was irrelevant to schools and what they needed to teach. Again, the beginning teacher thinks of the immediate, finds it hard, if not impossible, to relate certain course content to a deeper understanding of the area and purely focus on what needs to be taught in class.

Certain subject areas that we are exposed to, such as some of the areas in mathematics, are so abstract that they are never taught in schools. I just can’t understand why they are part of our programme (T10).

Such feedback helps in our discourse as to what should constitute a teacher education programme. Commenting on the wide variety of programme structures in Europe, Buchberger (1992) concludes that there is simply not enough evidence to suggest that there is any “one best model” of teacher education. This applies both to the relationship between subject content knowledge and methodology in the campus experience, and to the percentage of time allocated to the different elements that make up the programme, i.e. to subject-matter studies, foundation of education studies, professional studies (including methodology, curriculum courses, and courses based on knowledge generated through research on teaching), and field placement (including school experiences and teaching practice) (Sultana, 2005, in press). This feedback allows us to appreciate the current debate between those proposing the consecutive and those proposing the concurrent model to initial teacher education. But, what is interesting and useful when relating current issues and trends in initial teacher education (ITE) to this study is that whilst there is much that is debated and debatable in the field of ITE, there is practically a consensus around the fact that the various forms of school experience and field placements constitute the main elements in preparing to become a teacher (Ben-Peretz, 1995; Moon, 1996).

Whilst this article is not intended to enter a researched debate as to what could constitute an ITE programme, it is important to place the research findings of this study within such a context. Clearly, the value of school placements and the adoption of a more hands-on approach to ITE depend on the kind of preparation provided to students before they are sent to schools, the kind of support and feedback they are provided with throughout their field experience, and the quality of theoretically-informed reflection that students engage in as they go about their work in schools and classrooms.

Results from the questionnaire showed that 83% of the respondents had identified field practice as the most relevant component in their ITE
programme. However, the interviews enlightened the discourse and supported concerns about the assumptions that field experiences provide only valid and good experiences (see Edmundson, 1990). The responses given by all interviewees do help to reinforce points raised in other studies, both locally and internationally (e.g. Corcoran, 1981; Lia & Mifsud, 2000; Vassallo, 2000; Veenman, 1984), about the discrepancy between the beginning teacher’s vision of teaching and the real world of teaching.

So much is expected of us during those six weeks. Once you graduate you tend to relax as schools tend to be less demanding in areas such as lesson planning, the reflections and profiling... However, other things creep in... (T12).

School-based approaches that support mentoring and the setting-up of Professional Development Schools are considered as attractive ways of responding to often contrasting demands made by universities on the one hand, and schools on the other. Teacher education is a continuous activity and certification should mark only the beginning of a career as a professional educator. Furthermore, researchers (e.g. Bullough & Gitlin, 1994) argue that ITE must be lined with CPD so as to challenge training assumptions. Cochran-Smith’s concern that ITE generally neglects to prepare “prospective teachers to negotiate the treacherous waters of proving themselves competent in first-time teaching positions while at the same time challenging some of the assumptions and action that others take for granted” (2001: 180) shows the type of dialectical relationship that needs to be nurtured and thus lead to meaningful reform for both schools and teacher education institutions.

Transition

Asked to choose qualities or skills that teachers should possess, the majority of teachers felt that a teacher, above all else, needs to be one who is capable of motivating others, is well-organised and prepared, and who has good people skills. The area of motivation was identified as central to a teacher’s role. The interviews reinforced this point and showed that teachers felt that motivation was key to learning. “If you manage to motivate the students, they will enjoy the lessons and as a result learn” (T4). Another respondent felt that “If one is not capable of motivating students why become a teacher in the first place” (T12).

Linked to this is the area of relationships. Teachers with one year of experience emphasised qualities related to having good relationships with students. However, teachers with two or three years of experience focused more on the importance of organisational skills and character. Perhaps teachers with more experience find it easier to build relationships with students. Relationships were identified as “indispensable if you want to pass your interest and enthusiasm for a subject” (T7). If a teacher expresses a genuine interest in students a rapport will develop. A good relationship can minimise disciplinary problems. However, the respondents did show that relationships alone are not enough. A good level of preparation, care and commitment is essential. Such qualities are behind motivation and the establishment of good relationships. The respondents do believe that a teacher’s enthusiasm for learning and for the subject matter are important fac-
tors leading to students’ motivation, which in turn is closely linked to students’ achievement.

Caring surfaces as an important quality. Obviously, caring goes well beyond knowing the students to include qualities such as patience, trust, honesty, and courage. Specific teacher attributes that surface in the interviews include listening, gentleness, understanding, genuine interest, warmth, and encouragement. “One needs to realise that the student is, first and foremost, a person. Often, we tend to be bogged down with bureaucracy, with mere coverage, with syllabi, textbooks and what not. We avoid the real issue, the care, the understanding that makes teaching, the teacher a true educator” (T6). Being available, being there is so important. Students value those teachers who are kind, gentle, and encourage students to give of their best.

Asked to identify the major challenges they faced as beginning teachers, the main ones included class discipline, coping with mixed abilities, curriculum demands, school culture and physical exhaustion. “I found it quite demanding when I first started to accept that schools tended to be so different from the expectations that we have nurtured at university. The culture of the school tends to lack the cooperative and collegial culture” (T14). Respondents also highlighted that talking about how to handle discipline is different from actually encountering it in class and dealing with it. “I encountered students whom I never imagined existed. They were abusive and challenged even mature teachers. I immediately realised that I was in for a hard time” (T9). Teachers, especially those in specific state schools, felt the challenges of discipline and the sense of surviving from day-to-day as a key concern. The more challenging schools will not be easy for any teacher to settle in, let alone a beginning teacher. Survival becomes the main concern and this point relates to the importance that respondents gave to establishing relationships with students and also more experienced, mature teachers. This point helped to highlight one way of addressing this challenge. The BEd (Hons) course needs to get closer to schools so that students at the pre-service stage observe, talk, and see discipline in action. This could be reinforced at the transition phase/CPD phase as beginning teachers have time allocated so that they can share their concerns, which, as one respondent noted, cannot always and only be addressed in the classroom. “Discipline, or rather its manifestation in class, is only the tip of the iceberg. We need to get closer as adult to get to grips with the concern and involve others to help us address whatever is leading to this situation” (T2).

Suggestions as to how curriculum demands could be met very much centred around two levels. On the one hand, how the school itself responded to student needs and how each school/teacher implemented the curriculum. Secondly, the need to link credits covered at the university, especially those related to pedagogy, with real class situations.

With regards to physical exhaustion, most of the teachers interviewed admitted that there is not much the course can do. “Teaching, by definition, is stressful and not much can be done” (T2). Another argued that “The course could try to address this by introducing credits in areas like stress management and teamwork” (T3).

This point leads to the next area, that of professional development.
Professional Development (PD)

The majority of teachers expressed the desire for more support. This is in line with a similar study conducted in Malta by Astarita and Pirotta (1999). However, as noted in the survey and interviews, private school teachers did not feel the need for support as much as the state school teachers.

According to this study, the most helpful means of support were resources, teamwork, and the help of an experienced colleague. Teachers with one year of experience identified the need for support from an experienced colleague more than teachers with two or more years of experience. When the results were compared with regards to course undertaken at university, PGCE graduates chose support from a mentor or tutor more than the BEd (Hons) respondents. PGCE graduates have had less experience with a tutor and therefore it makes sense that they feel the need for a mentor more than the BEd (Hons) who have had tutors throughout the four-year programme. In the case of female and male teachers, females gave more importance to teamwork than their male counterparts.

Specific reasons were identified for the lack of support. It was felt that teachers with experience are often jealous of beginning teachers and make demoralising or sarcastic comments implying that students do not care or take notice of a teacher’s hard work: “No one is going to take notice of what you do, no one will even say thank you” (T1). Other respondents argued that beginning teachers are often given the most difficult classes “It can be quite demoralising having to handle the most difficult of classes” (T8).

Beginning teachers identified other possibilities for support, including support from subject specialists, guidance teachers and family members (especially if they are teachers themselves). Workshops and follow-up courses were seen as essential for CPD purposes. However, one teacher expressed the opinion that one has to support oneself. One cannot expect to receive everything on a silver platter – “One needs to play his role too…” (T6).

The majority of teachers believed that PD was necessary to keep up-to-date with developments in the teaching profession. The best way to implement PD is through cooperation. Cooperation was viewed by teachers as a two-way street where participants are involved in “giving and receiving” (T4). Cooperation may lead to greater depth in subject and pedagogical knowledge, and the acknowledgement and nurturing of different perspectives or view points. However, teachers interviewed remarked that cooperation is only possible if all the teachers work together. Although teachers admitted that cooperation was not always possible, the best thing is to try: “... whether cooperation between teachers is always possible is hard to say. What I do believe is that one should never give up. If you don’t try than you can never say that things can be improved” (T14).

Teachers with different amount of experience considered cooperation to be the best way to improve professional development. However, the enthusiasm for cooperation decreased with the amount of experience one has. In the case of teachers who followed the PGCE course, self-evaluation was considered the best way to improve professional development rather than cooperation. This could be since PGCE graduates may not have had enough exposure to the benefits of working in teams when compared to
B.Ed (Hons.) graduates. Teachers in private schools also gave more importance to self-evaluation than their colleagues in state schools. In this case, the choice could be related to the fact that teachers in private schools may be the only one teaching a particular subject, therefore they need to be independent.

The respondents identified INSET courses, seminars, and meetings as the three main ways that PD was being addressed. However, the percentages are not very high. The current options available to teachers are few and most of them are not offered within the school context. A quarter of the teachers interviewed felt that in-service courses were of a good quality and provided them with the opportunity to meet with colleagues they hardly have time to meet during the school year.

Reasons identified as to why PD is not implemented at the school site are time constraints, reluctance to change, lack of financial resources, and the desire for uniformity. Time was identified as a major constraint, especially at primary level, with classroom teachers practically involved with their assigned class throughout the whole day. Currently schools have been assigned a number of hours per term for PD with limited flexibility. School development cannot work within set parameters. School leaders need to be allowed to develop their own plans of action based on a clear vision of where they want to go. Within a framework that is still technically determined by central authorities schools cannot establish the learning communities that are necessary if they are to focus on learning (Bezzina, 2005a, b).

Related to this is the determination of school members to take the school forward. Conviction, or what Sergiovanni (2004: 33) describes as “faith”, needs to be behind any realistic restructuring. Unless that inner conviction is there, it is next to impossible to establish a context for both the school and the individual members to realise their full potential and achieve lasting improvement.

Teachers were also asked to give their opinions regarding what could be done in order to improve PD. Suggestions included the possibility of decreasing the size of classes and making changes in the syllabus in order to make it easier for teachers to try out new methods. Another suggestion was to make sure that people in charge of making decisions are aware of school realities and to introduce change according to school needs. As one teacher put it, resources need to be provided before one can implement new ideas: “It is not just a question of being told what to do. If the resources needed are not there, and often they are not, then we are stuck and feel helpless” (T9). A need was felt for subject coordinators to be attached to each school. This would facilitate teacher collaboration, discussion, and focus on curriculum development, implementation, and review. As one teacher noted “Teaching can be lonely and lead to frustration and stress when you do not have someone with more experience to relate to” (T7). And, as two of the respondents said: “What worries me is that it can turn into complacency, and then teachers become sarcastic and take things lightly” (T11). “There is too much lethargy around and that is suffocating at times” (T8). These points helped to reinforce the argument for teachers to have mentors or more experienced teachers who could induce them into the profession rather than being faced with a full teaching load as is cur-
rent practice. Others acknowledged that whilst it is essential for schools to nurture a culture of collaboration in the end improvement must start from within each person.

Conclusion
This study, although far from conclusive, has helped to identify a number of issues that will help the Faculty of Education in its discourse (Bezzina & Camilleri, 1998, 2001) and also reinforce concerns and proposals that have been made over the past few years in relation to induction and CPD (Bezzina, 2002, 2003).

This study has shown that there are a number of discrepancies between initial teacher education and the realities of school life. Teacher education is continuous and certification marks only the beginning of a career in education (Bullough & Gitlin, 1994). Teaching is formative in nature. The need to link the pre-service stage with the induction phase and CPD is identified as crucial and reinforces the conclusions of research studies that call for mentoring schemes and other forms of professional support for beginning teachers (OECD, 2003).

At the same time, whilst the realities of school may be different from what is taught and learnt within the Faculty, it is the author’s opinion that whilst we need to adequately prepare prospective teachers to face the challenges and difficulties in schools they also need to be able to challenge “the assumptions and actions that others take for granted” (Cochran-Smith, 2001: 180). Linked to this point is the recommendation that the B.Ed programme needs to be reviewed so that various courses are carried out within school environments so that particular pedagogy and subject courses are tackled within a real context.

Furthermore, upon graduation beginning teachers should be provided with professional support at the school site. At the same time, the education authorities and the school head need to create a culture of professional discourse in their schools so as to nurture a culture of collaboration amongst all teachers.

Overall, this study has provided the Faculty of Education with insights which can help us not only improve the teacher education programme from a number of levels, but it also helps to highlight ways and means of bringing the Faculty of Education closer to schools, identifies areas for further research, and also indicates to the education authorities the need for the induction phase to be formally introduced and a system of support institutionalized leading to a programme of CPD.

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Aspects of Sustainable Development from the Perspective of Teachers

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Abstract
Research aims to analyze the content and contexts, identified by teachers, relevant to the interrelationships of aspects of sustainable development (SD) as it is pictured in a Venn diagram.

In-service teachers studying at Daugavpils University participated in workshops designed to collect teachers’ views on the content of economic, social, and environmental aspect of SD, integration of SD aspects (economic/environmental, economical/social, social/environmental), and integration of all three aspects of SD.

The elements of three aspects fostering/inhibiting the SD were discussed during the workshops as well as tools necessary for the transformation of current aspects toward the more sustainable state. Research data was analysed both quantitatively and qualitatively. The variations of manifold content and the diversity, intensity, and integrity of main categories developed from the interrelationships between the aspects of SD were shown. Besides, the essential categories of education for sustainable development discerned from the teachers’ answers were determined during the data analysis.

Key words: teachers; aspects; contexts; sustainable development; economical; social; ecological.

Introduction
Sustainable Development (SD) and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) have become increasingly influential concepts in policy and (educational) policy making at all levels. Furthermore, their influence is only expected to rise over the coming years as the United Nation’s implements a ‘Decade of ESD’ (2005-14). Moreover, teachers and teacher education have been widely identified as playing a key role in making progress towards SD, not least by UNESCO, through the development and delivery of ESD (UNESCO Education sector, 2005).

However, such concepts, and associated events, remain contested. As a result, the existence of a variety of interpretations regarding sustainable development and education in relation to sustainability may be viewed both as a stimulus for diversity and development, and also as an issue to be dealt with. To date, there have been only a few studies about how teachers understand the notion of sustainable development (Salite, 2002; Kudiņš & Klepere, 2004; Nikel, 2005; Pipere, 2006).
As the research in UK shows, many teachers and lecturers feel alone and unsure about the meaning of the words “sustainable development” (Parkin, Johnston, Buckland, Brookes & White, 2004:10). There is a little understanding of the current language used to communicate sustainable development with the result that educators couldn’t grasp what it encompassed (Quadrangle Consulting Ltd, 1999). Majority of educational researchers related to ESD would agree that, “many teachers have little idea of what ESD is; most have not even heard of the term. They are aware of Environmental Education, which they understand to mean both nature study and activities such as recycling. Only staff involved in Environmental Education/Development Education/Citizenship seems to have heard of it” (Sheridan, 2005).

Quadrangle research (1999) concludes: “The best way to educate people about SD is to help them discover what the term encompasses, what it means, and how it should affect the ways they live their lives... By helping people to understand and engage with the concept... they will discover SD for themselves and begin to apply it within their world, thus establishing a basis on which to describe it in their own words”. The present research aims to help teachers to monitor their awareness of SD and this will urge them to apply this awareness in their professional and personal lives.

The framework used to elicit teachers’ believes on SD within the research is grounded on the Venn diagram traditionally applied to explain the essence of SD.

Figure 1. Venn diagram of Sustainable Development

Figure 1 pictures the three interrelated rings each representing single aspect of Sustainable Development: Economy, Environment, and Equity. Three inter-locking rings as a symbol for sustainability is not just a simple Venn diagram relationship. Actually, the rings are what mathematicians call Borromean’s rings, i.e. the three rings taken together are inseparable, but remove any one ring and the other two fall apart. The idea is that the attainment of sustainable development implies the balance between these three aspects, in other words, their simultaneous achievement.

In different sources the content of single aspects of SD usually coincides and depicts one or other side of the aspect. For instance, Ecological...
aspect is explained as environmental and resources management process, unpolluted environment, availability of resources, ecosystem health, Social aspect is revealed through negotiation processes, inclusion, equity, human health, Economic aspect demonstrates materialization processes, material goods and services, employment, and wealth creation.

Recently the geography and science student-teachers were asked about the categories to capture features of SD. About the third of them mentioned all three aspects of SD while a further third mentioned two of them. At the same time the large numbers of students recognized the centrality of environmental (87%), economic (69%), and social (49%) aspects (Summers, Corney & Childs, 2004).

The problem is that “we are not in the habit of thinking about the economy, the sort of society we would like, or the sort of environment we would like to live in at the same time” (Parkin et al., 2004: 5).

Through the gradual complication of tasks teachers in our research will be leaded step-by-step to the ever more integral thinking about sustainable development. The aim of the research was set to analyze the content and contexts, identified by teachers as relevant to the aspects of SD.

Methodology

Sample
In-service teachers from part time professional teacher training programs “Preschool teacher” and “Primary teacher” were engaged in the research (N=144). The workshops were organized in four study groups at Daugavpils University and it’s branches outside the Daugavpils. Prior to the research the teachers have been exposed to the study course “Environmental Education” provided within this study program.

Procedure
The research data were elicited within a study course “Education for SD” where the constructive task was assigned in a form of workshop. Teachers provided their associations on maintenance and development of sustainability drawing on their life and professional experience as well as from the study courses in the teacher training curriculum. Identified items were evaluated in dialogue with the partner (working in pairs). Using Venn diagramm for SD, each pair chose five most typical features for ecological, social, economic aspects, for the integration of two aspects (ecological/social, social/economic, economic/ecological), and for the integration of all three aspects (ecological/social/economic) of SD.

The qualitative content analysis of research data obtained from one group of students (N=36; 18 reports) was conducted; the adequate way of data coding was selected, the coding of elicited features of SD was made, and the potential of this coding for data analysis obtained from other three teachers’ groups was assessed. Afterwards the all data were submitted for quantitative analysis adhering to the dimensions constructed in qualitative analysis. This allowed for the total view of teachers’ essential beliefs on SD or, in other words, the holistic framework of teachers and evaluation of this framework.
Qualitative Research Data: Content Analysis of SD Aspects

Research data provided by one group of teachers (N=36) were obtained from the reports designed by 18 pairs of teachers. These reports contained 630 items elicited for separate, double, and triple aspects of SD. Collected data were used for content analysis of SD aspects and compilative design of conceptual sustainability model.

Content analysis of single aspects of SD

Analyzing the large number of diverse items, initially the things teachers need and want for themselves stood out as well discernable features. The deeper look revealed that teachers also emphasize what has to be done in order to get what they want and need, and, at last, also the individual attitudes were noticeable in the list of items.

Therefore, all aspects of SD will be analyzed qualitatively through the two key concepts: needs and possibilities to fulfill these needs. Needs will be divided into two groups: primary needs for the relevant aspect of life and needs necessary to satisfy in order to carry out one’s activities in the lifeworld. Possibilities will be divided into actions and attitudes. Actions in some aspects will be divided into actions for the development of considered aspect per se and actions for the SD.

Ecological aspect. Figure 2 shows the general picture of teachers’ views regarding the ecological aspect of SD. As usual, it is the most recognized aspect of SD and, besides, the ecological education also has been rather well integrated in educational system of Latvia. Therefore, one can see well-balanced and clearly sustainability-oriented picture obtained from the teachers’ answers.

Social aspect. Figure 3 shows the general picture of teachers’ views regarding the social aspect of SD. Again, like in the case of ecological aspect, the obtained picture seems to be quite balanced and detailed, as teachers are usually well informed about the social issues in the society.
Economic aspect. Figure 4 shows the general picture of teachers’ views regarding the economic aspect of SD. The picture does not provide the balanced view between the main blocks of figure. The economic survival needs prevail as well as the activities oriented not toward SD but toward the economic growth. This situation indirectly points to the current economic situation in the country and indicates the idea that before making economy into sustainable sphere, it has to be developed enough to fulfil people’s primary needs.

Several items prevail in two or three aspects of SD, for instance, ‘education’ is mentioned both in economic and social aspect, ‘ecological safety’ in ecological and economic aspect, ‘waste processing’ in ecological and economic aspect, ‘empathy’ and ‘biotism’ in ecological and social aspects, ‘care’ of different natural systems can be traced through the all three aspects of SD. Evidently, teachers see the necessity for the integration of aspects to reach the real sustainability, besides, the care of different natural systems is unifying link, which teachers have acquired through the
previous study course as one of the prerequisites for SD in each of its aspects.

**Content analysis of integrated aspects of SD**

All integrated aspects will be presented and analyzed qualitatively through the same two key concepts: needs and possibilities to fulfill these needs (see Figures 5, 6, 7, 8). To make the picture clearer the items are divided in three groups: the items relevant to two single aspects and the items relevant to integrated aspect positioned in between the other two. There is a difference in the items in some content blocks. The items brought unchanged from the previous tasks of single aspects are typed with regular letters, while the new items which appeared first time for case of integrated aspects, are typed in italic.

**Economic/Ecological aspect.** Figure 5 shows the general picture of teachers’ views regarding the integration of economic and ecological aspect of SD. It is well discernible that in this integration items from economic aspect dominate over the “ecological” items. In this integration economic aspect contains even more items in the group of needs and activities than before. There is some controversy in the items provided by teachers: from one side, they urge for economic growth (e.g. technology, plants), from other side, they suggest natural economy, decrease of technology usage, and use of organic materials. These two trends: to make the human life more comfortable as soon as possible (in Latvia’s case – to survive financially) and to limit the industrialization and technologies taking care of nature are still hard to coordinate and reconcile. Care, which was an important item within the ecological aspect, is repeated also in double economic/ecological aspect. Also, important item health, which initially appeared in the social aspect, now appears also in all double aspects of SD.

**Economic/Social aspect.** Figure 6 shows the general picture of teachers’ views regarding the integration of economic and social aspect of SD. And again, economic aspect dominates also over the social aspect of SD. Only in this pair of aspects, the number of combined items that can be related to both aspects is larger. This means that links between these two aspects are tighter than that between economics and ecology. The joining of these aspects elicited a huge number of items related to the needs and activities. The block of “activities” shows serious inclination toward the sustainable orientation both in economic aspect and also in the items related to both aspects. In Figure 6, similarly as in Figure 5, the items related to safety needs, health, and different kinds of education can be observed as a permeating link.

**Ecological/Social aspect.** Figure 7 shows the general picture of teachers’ views regarding the integration of ecological and social aspect of SD. In this double aspect of SD all four focal points are well discernible: teachers repeatedly mention care, safety, health, and education as prerequisites of SD. And again, this pairing rises many new items of needs and activities like in case with economic/social aspect.

**Ecological/Economic/Social aspect.** Figure 8 shows the qualitative presentation of teachers’ views on ecological/economic/social aspect of SD and crystallized model of sustainability. Care, safety, health, and education...
Figure 5. Economic/Ecological aspect of SD: Qualitative presentation of teachers’ views
Figure 6. Economic/Social aspect of SD: Qualitative presentation of teachers’ views
Figure 7. Ecological/Social aspect of SD: Qualitative presentation of teachers’ views
Figure 8. Ecological/Economic/Social aspect of SD: Qualitative presentation of teachers’ views and crystallized model of sustainability
are items maintained through all tasks and appearing in the final combination of SD aspects. The task to provide items for the combination of all three aspects of SD allows designing an integrated model of SD consisting from the items provided by teachers solely for this combination. Model defines the individual and his/her life, quality of such an individual, as well as the ways to ensure such quality of individual. All three aspects overlap emphasizing the individual discourse. It is a promising fact that teachers could not find another focal point than the individual Self to integrate three aspects of SD.

Quantitative Analysis of SD Aspects

Research data provided by 144 teachers were obtained from 72 reports each containing 35 items. These reports comprised 2520 items altogether elicited for seven (single, double, and triple) aspects of SD.

2520 items were divided in four content groups (blocks) which were elicited during the qualitative analysis:

1. Primary survival needs;
2. Needs important for the activity in lifeworld;
3. Activities oriented to sustainability;
4. Individual attitudes oriented to sustainability.

Items from each content group were categorized accordingly to the contexts in seven aspects of SD: ecological (A), social (B), economic (C), ecological/social (D), social/economic (E), economic/ecological (F), ecological/social/economical (G).

There was identical number of items (360) in each aspect, but the distribution of items in each content group was different, therefore, to visualize the data the percentage of items was applied.

Distribution of items and specific aspects of SD in content groups

Percentage of items in each of seven aspects of SD is presented on radial rays with the symbols mentioned above (Figure 9: 9.1., 9.2., 9.3., 9.4). This percentage of items in each of four content groups is essentially different.

Considering the number of items in each of four content groups, we can notice that the smallest content group is primary needs (223 items). The largest percentage of items for this content group belongs to economic (C) and social (B) aspects, therefore, the position of this group in the framework is not central, and it is moved toward the economic and social aspects (Figure 9: 9.1.).

The largest number of items was found in the content group “Needs important for the activity in lifeworld” (1053 items), which belongs mostly to the social/economic aspect of SD (Figure 9: 9.2.).

Content groups connected with activities and attitudes to sustainability were in a middle considering the number of items (641 and 603 items), though with the different distribution of SD aspects (Figure 9: 9.3., 9.4.). Activities oriented to sustainability were characterized by items relevant to ecological/economic and ecological/social/economic aspect of SD, but sustainable individual attitudes were featured by the items belonging to ecological and ecological/social aspects of SD.
9.1. Primary survival needs (223 items)

(A) ecological 11%
(B) social 16%
(C) economic 17%
(D) ecological/social 8%
(E) social/economic 4%
(F) economic/ecological 2%
(G) ecological/social/economic 5%

9.2. Needs important for the activity in lifeworld (1053 items)

(A) ecological 17%
(B) social 18%
(C) economic 18%
(D) ecological/social 25%
(E) social/economic 19%
(F) economic/ecological 49%
(G) ecological/social/economic 32%

9.3. Activities oriented to sustainability (641 items)

(A) ecological 39%
(B) social 27%
(C) economic 17%
(D) ecological/social 32%
(E) social/economic 11%
(F) economic/ecological 18%
(G) ecological/social/economic 24%

9.4. Individual attitudes oriented to sustainability (603 items)

(A) ecological 39%
(B) social 27%
(C) economic 17%
(D) ecological/social 32%
(E) social/economic 11%
(F) economic/ecological 18%
(G) ecological/social/economic 24%

Figure 9. Percentage of SD aspects in four content groups: 9.1., 9.2., 9.3., 9.4.

Items related to primary survival needs and needs important for the activity in lifeworld illustrate the urgency of survival needs and quality of life. It allows concluding that participants feel unsafe and worried about everyday survival in several aspects important for SD, targeted as the most significant ones.
Overlapping of items in content groups in relation to aspects of SD

Figure 10 shows the total or partial overlapping of quantitatively different four content groups. Survival needs in this figure are totally covered by other three content groups.

In this structure the survival (223 items) and lifeworld needs (1053 items) represent about 50% of all items. These are different types of safety, education, health, place of living, employment, etc., in other words, teachers need safety and appropriate quality of life.

As it is shown in Figure 10, these basic needs are overlayed by 641 items related to activities oriented to sustainability and 603 items of individual attitudes oriented to sustainability, which together also stand for about 50% of all items.

Generalizing the picture, one can discern two main complementary content groups: needs to survive in lifeworld and sustainable activities and attitudes.

Figure 10 reveals that sustainable attitudes in ecological aspect and sustainable activities in ecological/economic aspect overshadow the lifeworld needs. The figure implies that in the content of SD the teachers emphasize the needs in lifeworld which they see in the social/economic aspect of SD as the issues to be solved.

Overlapping of items in content groups in relation to single, double, and triple aspects of SD

Analysing the overlapping of four content groups in single ecologic (A), social (B), and economic (C) aspects (Figure 11), we can see that items of lifeworld needs dominate over the items connected to sustainability.

In social aspect sustainability is more visible in activities, in ecological aspect – in individual attitudes.
Analysing the overlapping of four content groups in double aspects (Figure 12), we can see that items of lifeworld needs also dominate over the items connected to sustainability, especially in ecological/economic aspect. In their turn the activities oriented to sustainability prevail over the lifeworld needs items in social/economic aspect.

Also in the triple aspect of integration between ecological, social, and economic spheres items orientated to lifeworld needs (38%) outnumber the items related to sustainable activities (33%) only by a little. In this aspect this is the smallest difference between the quantitative indices of these two groups.

**Contexts and aspects of SD dominating in content groups related to sustainable activities and attitudes**

Conducting the analysis of items from two content groups (III, IV), the items were categorized in seven aspects of sustainability using also the same seven contexts which can be more or less dominating and differently integrated in the peculiar aspects of SD.

In each of seven aspects the following contexts were discerned for sustainable activities:

1. in *ecological* aspect – *ecological* (44%) and *ecological/social* (41%) contexts;
2. in *social* aspect – *social* (43%), *social/economic* (32%), and *ecological/social/economic* (21%) contexts;
3. in *economic* aspect – *social/economic* (31%) and *ecologic/social/economic* (31%) contexts;
The percentage of single economic context in the content of sustainable activities was very small (only 0-16%), still in each of aspects double and triple contexts were found. In each of seven aspects the following contexts were discerned for sustainable attitudes:

1. In ecological aspect — ecological/social (52%) and ecological (22%) contexts;
2. In social aspect — ecological/social/economic (82%) context;
3. In economic aspect — social/economic (45%) and ecological/social/economic (22%) contexts;
4. In ecological/social aspect — ecological/social (39%) and ecological (30%) contexts;
5. In social/economic aspect — ecological/social/economic (54%) context;
6. In ecological/economic aspect — social/economic (40%) and ecological (20%) contexts;
7. In ecological/social/economic aspect — ecological/social/economic (45%) context.

Analysis of sustainable attitude items did not show the single social, economic, and double ecological/economic contexts or they were represented very poorly in some of aspects. These contexts were substituted by ecological/social/economic, social/economic, or ecological contexts. Also, the usage of triple ecological/social/economical context was analysed in the framework of sustainable activities and attitudes. In relation to activities this context is rather moderate; it is applied evenly (a little more than 30% of items) in almost all aspects of sustainability. In relation to attitudes the integrated triple context is more visible: in social aspect (about 80%), in social/economic aspect (over 50%), and in ecological/social/economic aspect (over 40%).

Discussion
People arrive at a personal understanding about the meaning of SD in many different ways, depending on their social and cultural experiences (Quadangle Consulting Ltd, 1999). The teachers in our sample represent the lower middle class of Latvia’s society, and their economic and social situation is one to be improved considerably. Therefore, their understanding of SD primarily comes from the critique of their current living conditions, but some of them also implement the elements or conceptual frameworks of the courses related to EE and SD they have acquired during their studies at the University.
The qualitative research data show that primary survival needs and lifeworld needs are represented almost equally with activities and individual attitude oriented to sustainability, in other words, they are in balance.

Though, the quantitative analysis testifies that the number of items related to sustainability (activities and attitudes) are smaller than the number of items of needs (for survival and lifeworld) in all single, double (except for social/economic), and triple aspects of sustainability. The data advance the question about the improvement of teachers’ quality of life, in order to free their energy, used up for daily survival, for the facilitation of sustainability in education.

There is a need for the further research on how to deal on the state level with the possibilities of teachers to introduce the education for sustainable development. Analysing the content of needs important for activity in lifeworld and its relationships with the sustainable activities and attitudes, we can say that the current situation is not favourable to teachers. This is rather a situation of moral perseverance test while coping with the survival problems. The studies are needed to answer the questions how long and what kind of changes teachers can initiate in such conditions as it is clear that to facilitate development the improvement of teachers’ quality of life is necessary or such development can draw on the self-sacrifice of teachers or their supernormative activities.

In the research the contents, contexts, and integrity of teachers’ views on SD in all its aspects (single, double, triple) were discovered. In single ecological, social, and economic aspects care of nature was find as a unifying link. Though, the care had the distinct conceptual backgrounds in different aspects of SD. In ecological and social aspects care had ecocentric background with the relevant terminology, but in economic aspect the anthropocentrism had been used as a conceptual background of care. Also, the content of aspects differs. In ecological and social aspects the content is focused more on the attitude and its quality while in economic aspect the emphasis is put on economic growth. In the content of single aspects of SD we can notice the influence of study course on Environmental Education (EE) where the concept of sustainability was introduced in the context of ecosphere. An action research conducted within the EE course guided toward the aim of sustainability articulated through ecocentrism, and allowed the conclusion that the ways of sustainability implementation, in its turn, have to be searched in anthropocentrism. The research data confirmed that part of teachers still use these ideas to justify their views after the end of the study course, transferring these views to the new course “Education for SD” which is more extensive in its content.

In double ecological/social and economic/social aspects of SD care of nature and its future still serves as a unifying link. This was illustrated by items oriented toward ecocentric and nature protection view. In ecologic/economic aspect this unifying link was lacking substituted by human needs as the foundation to consolidate the ecological and economic content. In the content of sustainable actions and individual attitudes economic and ecologic interests were hard to generalize under the single conceptual idea because of the diversity and ambivalence of the content. Evidently, the lack of conceptual clarity in economic aspect – the doubts on advanced
consolidation of the content and meta-content – could be one of the reasons prohibiting the development of more integral view on ecological/economic aspect of SD.

In triple ecological/social/economic aspect we can notice more extensive ecocentric view on the features of SD, at the same time focusing on the quality of person and his/her needs, as well as the ways to reach the necessary quality.

Existant view on activities and attitudes oriented toward sustainability already contains the content essential for sustainability. In the content of single and double aspects of SD integrated contexts or single ecological context prevale. Contexts of triple aspect of SD are mostly integrated.

This finding suggests that teachers already have their own perspective on the content of SD, they have grasped the meta-contentual essence of SD, and they use the integrated contexts to define the features of SD.

The teachers included in the research sample are ready to extend the content of SD and enliven this content in education. However, besides the above mentioned obstacle in form of teachers’ lifeworld needs there is also another impediment: in teaching standards and other educational legislative documents in Latvia there are no mentioning of sustainable development, sustainability, or sustainable education. Even in National Development Plan for 2007-2013 sustainability is mostly the catching phrase not the essential concept leading to the meaningful and responsible human development and sustainable education.

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Educational Aim in the View of Students, Mentors, and Teacher Trainers

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Abstract
Reflection on educational aim enables students, mentors, and teacher trainers to have a deeper view on problems of educational process and to evaluate existing and desirable conditions rather particularly. The formulation of an educational aim serves as a frame of reference that can be used to evaluate the entire educational system. Frames of reference imply changes that are facilitated by interest, needs, experience, attitude, and action of individuals involved in education.

This article claims that action research is applicable for study of an educational aim for it is based on reflection, participants’ interest to be involved, and a possibility of future-orientation. The article provides one case of action research from the study launched by Pacific Circle Consortium that illustrates students, mentors, and teacher trainers’ understanding of educational aim. In conclusion the overall situation about students, mentors, and teacher trainers’ understanding of educational aim in Latvia is discussed.

Key words: educational aim; reflection; frame of reference; action research.

Introduction
Each teacher is an educational philosopher. Reflective learning as a part of teacher formal education influences not only teachers’ professional activities and identity. Given that teachers’ conscious reflection on issues of educational theory and practice is directly connected with development of education, this article explores the understanding of educational aim in the view of students of teacher education programs, teacher trainers, and mentors.

The idea of research is based on possible difference between understanding of educational aim that is provided by external educational authorities and the one that is found within the immediate educational context by education practitioners themselves, or, as Dewey (1916/1966) observes, “the contrast which exists when aims belong within the process in which they operate and when they are set up from without” (p. 100). The Dewey’s (1990) suggestion that direction of an external authority even if it is logically formulated “is no substitute for the having of individual experiences” (p. 198) is observed as a theoretical outset of this article. Facilitating educational practice to be intelligent, critical, and embedded in educational
reality initiates “a protest against inert ideas” (Whitehead, 1957: 2) that affects education in its shift towards sustainable development.

Since the contextual, flexible, experimental, applicable, intrinsic, activity freeing/enabling, and outlook broadening nature characterizes the aim of a meaningful education (Dewey, 1916/1966: 104-106), educational practitioners are recognized to be a constitutive source of reconsidering not only educational aim, but also the nature, context, and direction of education. This argument is supported by Palmer (1998) who points out that “external tools of power ... are no substitute for authority ... that comes from the teacher’s inner life” (p. 33).

With emergence of sustainability-oriented educational philosophy alternative ways of looking at education theory and practice are crucial. Activities of reflection on educational aim can endorse the development of critical literacy that is a constitutive thinking skill in a situation with multiple and even diverse choices and their recognition in educational process. Educational activities aimed to expand educators and students’ professional outlook and surface their attitudes about education have significant potential of promoting sustainability-oriented thinking. Such activities are introduced on different levels of teacher training and education programs provided by Faculty of Education and Management at the Daugavpils University. These activities are based on the belief that reflection on educational aim enables undergraduate and graduate students of education programs to have a deeper view on current problems and new issues of education and to evaluate the existing and desirable conditions rather particularly.

Theoretical Background of the Study

Two interconnected concerns characterize the theoretical underpinnings of the research. The first is reflection on educational aim and the second is awareness of individual frames of reference. Both concerns have an important role and great value in formal teacher education and development.

Reflection on educational aim

Aims of education illustrate fundamental purposes of education (Winch & Gingell, 1999: 10). Understanding of educational aim is based on one’s educational philosophy. Teachers’ philosophic beliefs determine their understanding of educational aim. Critical surfacing of one’s understanding of educational aim in the period when sustainable vision is introduced in education is a crucial need for students. Walker and Soltis (2004) emphasize that educational aim “needs to be thought about, wrestled with, and seriously considered and debated with others” (p. 24). Thus, both – undergraduate and graduate educational programs have to find a way of assisting students in clarifying their thinking about their philosophical assumptions/convictions of education.

Reflection is one of the constitutive learning activities in teacher education. Reflective learning guided by learners’ internal experience implies the possibility of a dialogue (Alijevs, 2005: 196) and encourages metacognitive skills (Moon, 2004: 86). Reflection on educational aim modifies the aim from implicit to explicit one. This educational activity enriches
teachers’ examination of themselves as agents of changes (Palmer et al., 2001: 145) and imagination of alternative perspectives in education. It gives a deeper view on educational process and provides an evaluation of existing and desirable conditions. Personal-professional reflection, according to Zehm (1999), is one of the current trends and practices that support development of teacher education programs (p. 46).

University environment is rather open to reflective and critical learning. Rubene (2004) argues that since 1990-ies critical thinking in Latvia is a meaningful concern in educational practice. Reflection and critical thinking has a constitutive role in implementation of the main principles of activities at the universities (p. 102) and in accomplishment of the conceptual changes connected with the creation of European Higher Education Area and reorientation of teacher education towards sustainable development in Latvia. Study process at university that provides critical self-reflection about philosophical, theoretical, and practical issues to students of undergraduate and graduate teacher education programs contributes to the development of education. Thus, the development of education is connected with the reflection about educational aim.

**Awareness of individual frames of reference**

The content of philosophy cannot be taught, educators should be motivated to think and reflect. Aims that are consciously reflected on have an incentive character. So, as the aim determines individual activities, the constant development of aim and its connection to changes and emergence of new contexts should be ensured.

Nature of learning itself implies creation of different frames of reference (Moon, 2004: 25-26), thus, reflection on educational aim is an activity of actualization of educators’ professional frames of reference connected with philosophical background of a teacher profession. As it is emphasized by Mezirow (2000), a frame of reference is a symbolic model or form of meaning making that is “composed of images and conditioned affective reactions acquired earlier” (p. 5); it is a “meaning perspective, the structure of assumptions and expectations through which we filter sense impressions” (p. 16).

Frames of reference of both individuals and groups are inconstant. They reflect changes that are facilitated by both “knowledge of curriculum requirement, a briefing from a teacher” (Moon, 2004: 25) and interest, needs, experience, attitude, and action of individuals involved in education. They imply not only learners’ value systems and their sense of themselves (Mezirow, 2000: 18), but also their professional beliefs and expectations. These philosophical concerns reject the absolutes and the objectives, and, comparing with concerns of the second half of the previous century to analyze educational language and concepts (Noddings, 1998: 42), are rather imbedded into educational reality of a current postmodern time. That is a challenge to the traditional – individualistic understanding of epistemology that asks questions about acquisition, accessibility, and authenticity of knowledge.
Methodology

Participants and aim of research

This article introduces one part of results from the study “Teacher Education for the Future: Collaborative Research of Pacific Circle Consortium (PCC) Nations” that was accomplished by the Institute of Sustainable Education, Daugavpils University, Latvia in 2005. The general purpose of this study was to identify and analyze educators’ understanding of educational aim. Three groups of participants were involved in the study: 50 becoming educators — second year students of undergraduate professional study programs “Preschool Teacher” and “Elementary School Teacher” studying at Daugavpils University, 65 teachers — mentors of students’ professional practice at several primary and secondary schools of Daugavpils region, and 5 teacher trainers from the Faculty of Education and Management, Daugavpils University who were the participants of the PCC collaborative study. Students in this study were identified as educators because, as Zehm (1999) points out: “Teachers at every point in their careers are seen as builders of personal theories about professional matters” (p. 68). Thus, the sample of the study was 120 participants from three different yet interconnected groups of educators. These three groups of educators were selected (1) to explore the possible difference in their understanding of educational aim relying on their own experience and educational philosophy, and (2) to identify the suggestions for reflection on the understanding of educational aim.

Type of research

The research methodology selected for the collaborative PCC study “Teacher Education for the Future” was action research. Action research as a type of applied research (Wiersma, 2000: 10) is empirical, reflective, and interpretive approach to inquiry (Stringer, 1996: xvi) that implies “a search for meaning” (p. 158). Action research provides the connection of a research with practice (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2005: 227), “a construction of self in relation to the professional/social context we face” (Brown & Jones, 2001: 78). Emphasizing the tools of personal-professional reflection in teacher education, Zehm (1999) notes that besides individualistic tools — personal journals, self-assessments, visualization, etc. — there is a group of community based development tools — mentoring, learning communities, etc. — where action research belongs to (p. 47). Action research supports reflective learning (Moon, 2004: 160; Stringer, 1996: xvi). Thus, this type of research is applicable for the study of how educators reflect on educational aim.

Data collection and analysis

The data were collected by means of interviews and questionnaires, and analyzed according to three steps. The first step implied the reflection on educational aim for participants — students. At first, students formulated their individual understanding on educational aim, then they reflected and analyzed personal formulations in groups, and created common understanding of educational aim that was acceptable for entire group and inclusive
to understanding of each participant. The created understandings of educational aim were typed, coded, and analyzed by the researchers. The second step inspected the mentors’ understanding on educational aim. The students – participants of the first step – were involved in questioning of mentors. Mentors’ answers were analyzed same way as the students’ answers. The third step was a survey of teacher trainers’ understanding on educational aim. The same students were involved in questioning. The answers from teacher trainers were also typed, coded, and analyzed. After these three steps we suggest the fourth step to provide the reflection activity for all participants. In the given period of research only the first three steps were carried out with the strong intention to move on with the fourth step.

Although the aim of the study indicated the priority of the qualitative data analysis, mixed approach (Johnson & Christensen, 2004) of the qualitative and quantitative data analysis was employed. The mixed approach provided the possibility to identify both the range of educators understanding and its quantitative relations within each group and between the groups of participants.

It is important that the data collection and analysis according to three steps of research was done by students on the regular basis of study process. Students were involved in two types of activities: conscious reflection on their educational philosophy and practice-based development of research (particularly, data collection) skills.

Findings: Review, Reflection, and Reaction

Review, reflection, and reaction are three major activities that are continually repeated in all stages of interacting spiral of action research (Stringer, 1996: 17). In the article these three activities represent the main touchstones of findings of action research. The findings of the study will be described according to three steps of data collection mentioned above.

Students’ review of their understanding of educational aim

The first activity of action research was students’ reflection on their understanding of educational aim. Students’ review was based on their educational philosophy and experience, on their individual frames of reference. Three groups of codes that described students’ understanding of educational aim were elicited during the process of coding. These codes were: (1) notions based on practical use, (2) emotion-based notions, and (3) growth-based notions. The group that represented students’ understanding of educational aim to serve one’s practical use included the following notions: time consumption, advantage-disadvantage, pleasure-dislike, self-benefit, and usefulness. The notions of this group were based on individualistic epistemology, practical application and usefulness, pragmatic trends, and consumer’s interest (22%). The group that represented students’ understanding of educational aim as to be emotion-based included the following notions: need and necessity, habit, satisfaction, and interests (6%). The group that represented students’ understanding of educational aim as to be growth-based included the notions directed towards others and directed towards self (72%). These notions were based on holistic epistemology and balance between the subjective and the objective significance.
Thus, students mostly agreed that educational aim should be meaningful for development and growth of person able to self-actualize within a changing world. They emphasized that experience-based self-education has a constitutive role in the process of development.

**Mentors’ understanding of educational aim**

Mentors were asked to review their understanding of educational aim connected to school environment. The collected data were coded, and two groups of codes that characterized mentors’ understanding of educational aim emerged. These groups were: (1) notions based on practical use and (2) growth-based notions. The group of codes that represented mentors’ understanding of educational aim to serve one’s practical use included the following codes: practical application, successful involvement in society, and self-survival in a changing world (48%). The group of codes that represented mentors’ understanding of educational aim to be growth-based included the codes that were directed towards others and self (52%).

In general, mentors’ understanding of educational aim, similar to students’ understanding, indicates the concern of holistic epistemology. However, educational aim is mainly highlighted in connection to individual context. New category that emerges in mentors’ understanding of educational aim is correspondence with the requirements of society.

**Teacher trainers’ understanding of educational aim**

Teacher trainers were asked to reflect on educational aim, its perspective and priorities in teacher education. Their understanding of an educational aim implied four aspects: (1) development of particular personality, life and professional skills, way of thinking, values, attitudes, characteristics, experience; (2) development of a whole person and culture; (3) actualization of one’s own abilities; and (4) encouragement to find ways towards meaningful and successful living. These aspects highlight that teacher trainers’ understanding of an educational aim ranges from the reference on the particular to the reference on the global traits.

Teacher trainers’ perspective of education implied three aspects: (1) education should be connected with environment and particularly with students’ motives and interests; (2) education is a joint search of spiritual, cognitive, and physical development (especially openness, care, flexibility, reflection, sharing and discussions); (3) education should be based on love towards teacher’s profession, on the balance between requirements, duties, resources, and abilities.

Teacher trainers’ priorities of educational aim in teacher education implied three aspects: (1) experience of life (not just narrowly defined basic skills); (2) systemic thinking/balance between content (what you teach), process (how you teach), and results (what you get from it); (3) construction of personal frames of reference; (4) openness (I know that I do not know anything, learning in action), optimism, acceptance, understanding, integration.

At the beginning of the study according to some students’ view, teacher trainers’ understanding of educational aim was still considered to be more important than understanding of educational aim of other groups. It was even mentioned that teacher trainers should model the necessary exam-
The review of teacher trainers’ understanding was a significant learning activity for students. As students explained, this activity provided not only a possibility to work with the data or to get to know teacher trainers’ view on educational aim. One student affirmed that here the students’ view “was of the same importance as teacher trainers and mentors’ view. This situation initiated the feeling that all these groups of educators had different positions, yet very necessary to hold the whole picture together”.

**Reaction: Towards the creation of an educator’s profile**

Reaction – the third major activity that characterizes action research – is considered to be the last touchstone in description of findings of this research. Reaction can provide a possibility to make a synthesis of students, mentors, and teacher trainers’ understanding of educational aim. This activity represents the focused efforts to integrate the understanding of educational aim of these three groups. As the result, an educator’s profile should be created. Although objectified, this profile implies philosophical concerns that characterize all groups of participants of action research. We suggest the creation of an educator’s profile for defining and redefining of the joint strategies to reach the particular outcomes that are significant for all the groups of participants.

What makes this action research to be collaborative dialogue and critical thinking based is this concluding participatory activity. It brings together different views on the same situation, different individual frames of reference that co-exist in the common field of education. This synthesized educator’s profile would extend educators understanding of general situation about implication of contemporary educators’ philosophical considerations in educational practice and provide the overview of their particular educational context that hides misconceptions and problems to be solved.

**Conclusion**

Educational philosophy not only embodies “the search to explicate, understand and criticize the foundational ideas” (Winch & Gingell, 1999: 172) of the field of education, but also characterizes teacher’s nature. Each teacher has her/his own interpretation of an educational aim that motivates her/his professional mastery and characterizes her/his professional identity. Each teacher is and should be an education philosopher.

Education is guided by teachers’ philosophical assumptions of what education has to aim at and what it is for, or, as Chartock (2000) asserts, “what and how we chose to teach is based on our beliefs about what constitutes the truth about good teaching, the purpose of education, and the nature of the student-teacher relationship” (p.61). Knight (1989) also emphasizes that philosophic beliefs and educational practice are interconnected, this is why all educators need “a consciously examined and thoroughly considered philosophy of education” (p.137). Thus, the formulation and reflection of an educational aim serves as a frame of reference that can be used not only to evaluate the entire educational system and to indicate the possible course of its further development, but also to approach/study/consider the professional identity and educational philosophy of a teacher.
References


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Teacher Competence and Further Education as Priorities for Sustainable Development of Rural Schools in Latvia

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Abstract
Knowledge society that can ensure its sustainability and well-being by means of education is one of the imperatives of the European Union member states. Every person in knowledge society should become an educated, versatile, and coherently developed, competent personality. Reaching these goals, the balanced development of educational environment both in cities and in the countryside is required. Therefore, the problems of quality, supply, and availability of education have to be considered. Access to qualitative further education, within the framework of lifelong and life-wide education/learning, should be provided for the professional development of everybody willing to improve his/her competence. Particularly at small rural schools teachers need to perfect their competences within the process of formal and non-formal further education. The perfection of teachers’ competences, including professional competences, facilitates the sustainable development of rural schools under the current conditions of competition and demographical crisis. The research shows the changes in the educational environment of rural schools in Latvia.

The authors substantiate the concept of teacher’s competence, comparing it with the concept of qualification, consider the processes of teachers’ further education within the context of lifelong education, and evaluate the results of research on rural elementary school teachers’ competences and further education.

Key words: sustainable development; rural school; teacher’s competence; further education.

The importance of education becomes very topical and significant nowadays alongside with the processes of globalisation and integration. The education in the European Union (EU) is considered to be an effective means of the promotion of sustainable development, competitiveness, and well-being of the society and individuals. The education should be the main priority of every nation. The attention should be focused on individuals, their development, since the individual is the creator of knowledge (The Lisbon Strategy, 2004).

In the report “Education for the 21st Century” (Nākotnes izglītības..., 1998) of the International Commission of UNESCO it is stressed that edu-
Education is a continuous process of the improvement of knowledge and skills and the substantial means for the development of a personality and the establishment of relations among individuals, groups, and nations. The idea of the continuously learning society (knowledge society) becomes topical, the essence of which is the acquisition of knowledge, its deepening and application (Teaching and Learning ..., 1996).

The approach that is based on an individual as a value and his/her knowledge is the dominant in the long-term (2005-2025) conceptual documents affirmed by the Parliament of Latvia in 2005 (The Model of Latvia's Development: An Individual as a Priority). The aim of this development is to improve the different aspects of life quality, and this can be achieved by the active use of “knowledge potential accumulated by the population of the state” (Latvijas izaugsmes modelis..., 2005).

In the Conception on Education Development for 2006-2010 (Pamatnost'dnes..., 2006) elaborated by the Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia the aim of modern education is defined as follows:

*to develop the balanced educational system that ensures long term development of a democratic and socially integrated society, which is based on knowledge, promotes the increase of the competitiveness of the population and national economy of Latvia through integrating in the educational field of Europe, as well as maintains and develops the cultural values characteristic to Latvia.*

In order to implement the above-mentioned aims the following has to be ensured: 1) the harmonious, balanced development of educational environment; 2) the enlargement and access to the educational supply; 3) the quality of education in cities as well as in the countryside. Therefore, the teachers' professionalism and their different competences have to be in focus. Today the problems of teacher education, including the availability of formal and non-formal further education within the context of lifelong education, have gained a special importance.

Latvia already has been one of the member countries of the Association of Assessment of International Education Achievements (IEA) for twelve years and has successfully implemented 10 surveys at the international level together with 30-45 countries in the field of education quality measurements. In 1998, Latvian researchers were invited to represent Latvia in the OECD new International Program of Assessment of the Achievements of Students (PAAS), within which two research cycles have already been implemented together with all 30 OECD countries and 14 non-member states of OECD. The OECD program is one of the worlds’ most qualitative programs in the field of education indicator determination (Broks un citi, 1998; Geske, Grinfelds & Kangro, 1997). The results of these surveys focused the Latvian scientists’ attention not only on diagnostics of the pupils’ competences and alongside with that – the evaluation of their competitiveness, but also on the teachers’ professional competences, which vastly influence the quality and results of education process. Educational process, including the teaching/learning process at school, is primarily a pedagogical interaction, where the teacher has several roles: 1) planning, organization, management, and assessment of pedagogical process; 2) in-
vestigation, consulting, and influencing the pupils’ thinking; 3) promotion of pupils’ self-development, socialization, and acquisition of culture.

The results of comparative international research were evaluated also at the national level through comparing the pupils’ competences in different spheres in cities and in the countryside. Then conclusions particularly indicated the problems concerning the quality of education at rural schools and the ensuring of rural pupils’ competitiveness (Kangro, 2001).

There is another aspect of the educational quality. According to the OECD’s Education at a Glance 2003, the shortage of teachers may become a challenge for many OECD countries in the years to come, as student enrolment levels increase, while older teachers retire and insufficient number of younger people joins the profession. In 15 out of 19 OECD countries for which the data are available, most primary school teachers are at least 40 years old. This problem becomes more acute also in the countryside of Latvia.

In Latvia, the demographical problems have an impact on educational processes not only in the aspect of teachers’ age, but also because of migration from Latvia to other countries, from rural areas of Latvia to the cities.

The social environment of small rural schools in Latvia features the small number of pupils, the number of classes determined by the demographical situation in the countryside. The state legislation on the number of lessons per week in every subject determines the small number of teachers in a rural school. Under these conditions, the rural teachers have taught several subjects, irrespective of their major, as well as have worked in the sphere of interest education for many decades in order to ensure the sufficient work load. We can say that many of the rural teachers have actually acquired their second or even the third major in the process of non-formal or/and informal education. The accumulation of the rural teachers’ pedagogical experience, the exchange of experience, the improvement of professional skills was at the same time also the process of professional self-education in the view of epistemology.

In order to exist nowadays, the small rural schools had to evaluate the situation, their resources and determine their perspectives of sustainable development. Our survey (Katāne, 2005a, 2005b) shows that the priorities of a modern rural school are: 1) the perfection of the rural teachers’ competences they have acquired during an extensive pedagogical practice; 2) the formal evaluation, equalization, and professional certification of the teachers’ competences by granting the state acknowledged professional qualification; and 3) the ensuring of teachers’ further education.

The content of surveys performed by the researchers from the Institute of Education and Home Economics of the Latvia University of Agriculture is closely interrelated: 1) the substantiation, diagnostics, and evaluation of the fluctuations and changeability of modern rural schools as the self-developing and self-assessing educational environment systems within the context of rural teachers’ pedagogical competences, as well as in the context of further education; the theoretical substantiation of adult education, including teachers’ education and further education, within the context of lifelong education in connection with the broadening of the functions of rural schools and the enlargement of target audience (I. Katāne); 2) sub-
stantiation and research of teachers’ competences (Z. Beitere), 3) the teachers’ further education in Latvia: analysis of situation and the development of further education programs within the context of higher education supply (A. Aizsila). The results of surveys determined the content of present article, maintaining a holistic view on problems under investigation.

The aim of research was theoretically substantiate and empirically define the current changes in rural teachers’ competences and further education within the context of the sustainable development of rural schools.

Theoretical Substantiation of Teacher’s Competence

Teacher in-service training and their further education should be considered as a united system within the development of teacher’s competences in the lifelong educational process, i.e. the person’s ability to integrate in the society, freeing oneself from the conditions that restrict his/her activities. In this case, freeing oneself in order to make an independent, responsible decision and to be able to act independently (Molenhauer, 1973). The aim of the teacher training institution is to promote the development of a competent, creative, humane, democratic, communicative teachers’ personalities, their readiness for motivated pedagogical activities. Only the confident, persistent, and professionally competent teacher can encourage pupils to see the sense of life, develop their skills to analyze and assess their own and other people’s activities, as well as to plan and implement the set aims (Stabiņš, 2001).

The term ‘competence’ has appeared in use only recently. It comprises a multifunctional conceptual meaning. The term is originated from the German term ‘kompetenz’, which means: 1) the amount of the empowerment of officials or institutions; 2) proficiency, deep knowledge, insight in a particular area or matter. In Latin the word ‘competent’ is ‘cometo’, i.e. to be useful, appropriate (Svešvārdu vārdnīca, 1999).

During 1970ies in the educational documents of English speaking countries instead of the concept ‘skills’, the term ‘competence’ was used denoting the skills acquired upon the completion of certain stage of studies. Nowadays competence is also defined as the set of knowledge, skills, and experience necessary for future, which manifests in activities (Tiļa, 2005).

Competence is to be regarded as a procedural, integrating concept that comprises the cognitive and social aspects of individual’s activities. Within the research we have indicated different classifications and divisions of competences.

Many authors distinguish the competences of a particular content of teaching/learning and methodology, the social competence, and self-competence (Briede, 2003; Klippert, 1996; Stabiņš, 2001; Špona, 2001; Maslo & Tiļa, 2002; Шишов & Кальней, 2000). Keller and Novak (2000) define three competences necessary for the pedagogical activities: social, professional, and methodological. The German scientist Aregger (1997) suggests the following competences necessary for the successful socialization of an individual: self-competence, social, value, responsibility, surviving/self-maintenance, innovative, cultural, and natural competence.

All the competences mentioned above develop and exist within interaction and create the teacher’s socio-cultural competence: the skill to un-
nderstand the people and the world as a whole, the cooperation and teamwork skills, skills to make social contacts and decisions. The development of socio-cultural competence is connected with the transition of teaching/learning process from the theoretical acquisition of knowledge to scientific research within the studies. The social competence is considered to be a part of the maturity of a person, characterized by the ability to judge, make decisions and act considering specific conditions of social situations and matter-of-fact areas, as well as a talent to play different social roles, including the role of a grown student, since the society, able to learn, cannot exist without a teacher, who is able to learn. In a democratic society the communication – exchange of information, interaction – is an important prerequisite of development and should be considered as a component of social competence. It includes also the orator’s skills that are necessary for every teacher. Only a teacher who analyses and is able to evaluate the existing interconnections between teaching, his/her own learning, and pupils’ learning can teach the pupils how to learn by promoting the increase of pupils’ competence level (Keller & Novak, 2000; Fulans, 1999).

The methodological competence comprises the competence of thinking (logical, systematic, creative, and original thinking) and the competence of activity (self-confidence, concentration, ability to cope with the amount of work) (Briede, 2003).

The professional competence includes professional knowledge, skills and reflection, which are evaluated at two levels: 1) at the higher educational institution during the state examinations, and 2) when working at an educational institution. The teacher’s work is evaluated during the teaching/learning process, educational process, pedagogical communication, and pedagogical activities (Zóds, 2002).

Up to 1990ies the competences or qualifications, necessary for carrying out professional activities, were indicated in professional education. Erpenbeck and Heyse (1999), trying to distinguish between both notions, emphasized that the qualification is the externally determined demand of society, but the competence should be dealt with at the level of subject. Henschel (2001) also mentions that the competence is related to the understanding of personality as a whole, while qualification defines necessary knowledge and skills in the sphere of professional activities. Besides, the qualification is related to certified activities, but the competence includes unlimited disposition of activities and their traits. Lichtenberger (1999) describes the qualification as requirements for knowledge and skills that are related to a definite learning/study subject.

Thus, the competence is a totality of personality’s qualities, manifesting itself in the actual pedagogical activities (de facto), but the teacher’s qualification is a formally (de jure) acknowledged and evaluated teacher’s competence that can be proved by a document officially affirmed by the state (diploma, certificate).

Berliner (1995) has developed a five stage model of teacher’s proficiency (competence) development: 1) the beginner’s level at which the teacher becomes acquainted with the pedagogical environment; 2) the highest initial level is reached in the first to the third years of working; 3) the competence level – in the third to the fifth years of working, however, it still does not ensure sufficient fluency and flexibility, when implementing
teaching/learning process; 4) proficiency level is reached after approximately five years of work, the experience has enriched the intuition and given so many reinforced skills that the insight of holistic general solution of situations has been developed; 5) at the expert level the teachers become intuitive and rational. They are performing freely in qualitatively different ways. This model clearly approves the results of research by Maslo and Tilija (2005), that the competence is an individual combination of skills and experience based on the opportunities to gain experience; competence grows continuously, because the skills can be developed during all the lifetime, the experience enriches and more new opportunities of gaining the experience emerge, the competence is set towards the improvement of the quality of actions.

The professor of the Institute of Education and Home Economics of the Latvia University of Agriculture Briede (2003) emphasizes the idea that an essential issue is the studying skills or learning to learn. Everybody should understand in what way it is better to acquire the competence, therefore the combination of formal and non-formal education is important. More attention should be paid to every student’s responsibility. The students should be able to evaluate the situation, plan and anticipate their own activities; besides, the competence requires an active stand, not to be only a passive observer. It is important to evaluate, how to use the non-formal education for the development of the competence.

**Teachers’ Further Education in Latvia: Analysis of the Situation**

In the educational system of Latvia radical reforms have been made in all its sectors, new educational philosophy, new content of education and methods emerge. The openness and multi-dimensionality of educational system are one of the preconditions for the obtaining of qualitative education. The issues of educational process and the quality of result are especially important for the changing society of Latvia. In the global space of education, where the educational system of Latvia is an integral component, the new terminology has appeared together with the changes in the aims of modern education: the sustainability of society and/or education, continuous education, lifelong education, etc. There are the following terms used in several sources: ‘lifelong education/learning’ and ‘life-wide education/learning’ (Learning the Treasure Within, 1996; A Memorandum on..., 2000; Teaching and Learning..., 1996). The process of lifelong education is characterized by three basic categories: formal, non-formal, and everyday or informal education (Colletta, 1996: 22-27; A Memorandum on..., 2000; Tuijnman, 1996: 3-8).

In Latvia, since the beginning of 1990ies the diversity of the education supply, quality, and access, including adult education, both in cities and in the countryside became one of the priorities for the development of educational system. At the same time there is still a disharmony in the development of educational environment in two dimensions (Katāne, 2005a, 2005b): 1) Riga as the capital of Latvia and regions of Latvia; 2) city and the countryside. Therefore, it is important for every member of the society, especially for the teachers, to participate in the studies and resolution of educational problems, discussing the educational aims of Latvia, the openness and quality of education within the context of knowledge society. At the
same time, alongside with the studies and aim setting for modern education, one of the topical issues of educational policy at state level is the teacher pre-service education and further education, as well as the ensuring of the quality and supply of teachers’ education within the context of lifelong education. The involvement of Latvia in the global processes of the modern world requires the essential re-evaluation of the aims and the objectives of educational system – to ensure the modernization of educational system, to introduce the new content of education and new methods. The above-mentioned activities are related also to the education of future teachers, paying special attention to the further education of in-service teachers. The higher education institutions have actively started to: 1) take part in the elaboration of educational supply for the teachers; 2) develop new study programs; 3) perfect and formally assess the teachers’ competences that would serve as the basis also for the advancement of their social status (Aizsila, 2004a, 2004b).

The Ministry of Education and Science of Latvia is the leading state administration institution in the field of education that implements a uniform state policy and strategy in education. The main objectives of the educational policy in Latvia are (Pamatnost’dnes..., 2006; Anča un citi, 2002): 1) the improvement of educational quality; 2) the effective application of the resources; 3) the harmonization of the legislation of the EU and Latvia; 4) the participation in the educational and scientific programs of the EU; 5) the international equation of obtained education. The most important legislative acts that determine, influence, and regulate the ongoing processes in the education in Latvia are: the Law on Education of the Republic of Latvia (LR Izglıtıbas likums, 1998) that determines the basic principles and procedure of educational system, Law on General Education (LR Vispărējās izglıtıbas likums, 1999), Regulations on the Requirements for the Teachers on the Necessary Education and Professional Qualification (LR Ministru kabineta noteikumi, 2000), The Procedure of the Improvement of Teachers’ Professional Skills (LR Izglıtıbas un zinātnes..., 2004), The Memorandum of Lifelong Education (2000), and other normative acts.

In Latvia the teachers’ further education becomes a united, sustainable, purposefully organized process directed to ensure high quality standards at all stages of education. The society needs the larger number of teachers, ready for continuous changes, able to perfect and continuously advance their competence levels. It is the further education that is and will be the means promoting the implementation of educational basic approaches. The main strategic aim of further education is to create a scientifically substantiated, sustainable, stable system for the teachers’ further education and methodical support, that can ensure coordinated, purposeful improvement of teachers’ professional skills and facilitate their motivation for further education.

Further education in Latvia is defined as: 1) continuation of education after obtaining the formal education and starting to work (Skujiņa un citi, 2000: 172); 2) continuation of the obtained education and improvement of professional skills in compliance with the requirements of a particular profession; the improvement of professional skills at different courses within the lifelong educational process (Lieģeniece, 2002; Pamatnostādnes...,.
In the conception of adult education it is indicated that the main aim of further education is to ensure the opportunities to improve knowledge and skills in accordance to the individual’s interests, needs, age, and the level of educational level reached before (Nacionālās izglītības..., 2000). The teacher is a regulatory profession in the country, and the state provides the requirements for education, qualification and its improvement.

In Latvia, the relatively stable long-term strategy for teachers’ further education has been developed. Further education is one of the factors facilitating the personality’s professional development and competences. This idea becomes more and more popular in Latvia, as well as all over the world. The social development requires serious consideration of the issues of further education and the search for the most efficient solutions, how to organize and ensure the opportunities of lifelong education for a wider range of people (Koče, 1999).

One of the main trends of academic and research work at the Institute of Education and Home Economics of the Latvia University of Agriculture is: to improve the already existing and develop new educational and further education programs, studying the rural educational environment and the needs of rural population, including the rural teachers’ educational needs. Our research (Aizsila, 2004b; Katāne, 2005b) shows that the conceptions and theories of several authors could serve in the studies of teachers’ further education:

- Ideas of social and educational psychology on the necessity and facilitation of the personality’s development and self-actualization (Bruner & Anglin, 1973; Deshler, 1996; Maslow, 1968; Rogers, 1996, etc.).
- The theories of andragogy (Dewey, 1929; Jarvis, 1987; Knowles, 1980; Koče, 1999; Liegeniece, 2002; Lowe, 1982, etc.).
- The typical approaches and methods of adults’ further education, selection of the contents of education, development of new programs, etc. (Burge, 1988; Fulans, 1999; Koče, 1999; Kolb, 1984; Lonstrup, 2002; Liegeniece, 2002; Pask, 1976, Prets, 2000, etc.).

Our research (Aizsila, 2004b; Katāne, 2005b) shows that there are also problems in the teachers’ further education in Latvia, which should be solved. Until now the attention in Latvia was mainly focused on the teachers’ formal further education. At the same time the mechanism of equation, evaluation, and certification of teachers’ non-formal and informal education has not been elaborated and approbated at the state level yet. The teachers, especially the rural teachers, still have to search for the opportunities to obtain the qualification on teaching the study subject/subjects by means of formal education (full-time, part-time, or extra-mural studies) that gives the right to continue work at school. And it is in spite of their rich pedagogical experience, the competences acquired during long years of work, good outcomes of work: academic achievements of their present and former pupils, who are studying at higher education institutions, and positive references from the pupils’ parents.

Besides, the society, including also the teachers, is poorly informed on the further education opportunities. The quite complicated process of fur-
ther education can be implemented successfully only by ensuring the co-
operation between the politicians of education, education managers of all
levels, scientists, and school teachers themselves. Regional school boards,
methodical associations, and the heads of educational institutions should
take an active part in teachers’ further education, because they are fami-
lar with their teachers’ educational needs (Mana skola..., 2004). It is im-
portant that the school as a self-evaluating and self-developing educational
system becomes an organization that learns itself, ensuring both formal
and non-formal, and informal opportunities for the teachers’ further edu-
cation. It is very important to: 1) develop the teachers’ critical and system-
atic thinking, 2) to promote the teachers’ motivation to search for their
own ways of self-realization, were the education is of great value, as well
as to be open to the ongoing changes and to be able to change themselves
(Katâne, 2005a, 2005b).

The teachers’ attitude towards the changes is essential. The process
of teachers’ further education should change the way of teachers’ think-
ing, their attitude and develop their competences, including co-operation
skills (Aizsila, 2004a, 2004b).

Traditions and Innovations in the Educational Environment of
Rural Elementary Schools: Rural Teachers’ Competences
and Further Education

From 2000 to 2005 at the Institute of Education and Home Economics of
the Latvia University of Agriculture a research (Katâne, 2005a, 2005b) on
internal expertise of rural elementary schools was performed with the aim
to evaluate the educational environment of the rural elementary schools of
Latvia from the evolutionary, structural, and functional aspect.

The research sample comprised 33 rural elementary schools repre-
senting all four regions (Kurzeme, Latgale, Vidzeme, and Zemgale) and 15
districts of Latvia. The minimal number of pupils in rural elementary schools
was 73, the maximal number was 234. The average number of pupils in
school – 131. The minimal number of teachers in rural elementary schools
was 12, the maximal number was 24 (15 teachers on average). 105 rural
school internal experts took part in the research. Each elementary school
was evaluated by a group of 3-5 experts, headed by the chief expert.

The author of the research (Katâne, 2005a, 2005b) worked out a sys-
tem of indicators for the expertise of educational environment of rural el-
ementary schools, as well as the expert worksheets on the basis of educa-
tional ecology. The biometric techniques from the field of natural sciences
were applied to obtain the selection of the different characteristics (in total
128) of the educational environment of rural elementary schools on di-
chotomous (0;1) scale. 26 indicators out of 128 were related to the rural
teachers’ competences and further education.

The expertise was carried our between the years 2000 and 2004. It
was important to evaluate in the educational environment of the rural
schools: 1) the processes and phenomena of past years that had emerged
due to innovations, qualitative and quantitative changes in the educational
environment of rural elementary schools, including the areas of teachers’
competences and further education; 2) the pedagogical culture of rural
schools preserved for centuries, including the characteristics of teachers’ competences.

Research data was obtained through the method of expertise and analyzed using SPSS software (Binomial test, Wilcoxon’s test, Sign test, MacNemar’s test). After the collection of the data, the coefficients regarding the indicators in the years 2000 and 2004 were specified. We have summarized and systemized the research results in Tables 1, 2, 3.

The Indications of the Rural Teachers’ Competences

Since the 17th century, when the rural schools were established in Latvia, teachers at rural schools have taught several subjects (Katāne, 2004). During the expertise, the evaluation of this feature shows that also during the past years nothing has changed in rural schools; still the majority of rural teachers teach more than one subject (Table 1, indication 1.1). At the same time this feature reflects the areas of rural school teachers’ professional activities. A feature of professional competence has been diagnosed that the rural teachers are competent to teach one subject in primary/elementary school, but another subject in elementary/secondary school (Table 1, indication 1.2). The characteristic trait of the environment of rural schools was and is that there are teachers, who continue to teach the same subjects at primary and elementary school. For example, a phenomenon of the rural school environment is that the teachers of sports and music continue to teach in all or almost all classes, which enables them to get to know and evaluate all pupils and to follow the dynamics of their development (Table 1, indication 1.3).

Table 1. The indications of the rural teachers’ competences (N= 33)

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<td>1.1.</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>a. 1</td>
<td>b. 1</td>
<td>c. 31</td>
<td>a. p=1.00 &gt; α = .05</td>
<td>b. p=1.00 &gt; α = .05</td>
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<td>1.2.</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.45</td>
<td>a. 1</td>
<td>b. 2</td>
<td>c. 30</td>
<td>a. p=1.00 &gt; α = .05</td>
<td>b. p=.564 &gt; α = .05</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.3.</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>a. 1</td>
<td>b. 0</td>
<td>c. 232</td>
<td>a. p=.317 &gt; α = .05</td>
<td>b. p=1.00 &gt; α = .05</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.4.</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>a. 1</td>
<td>b. 1</td>
<td>c. 31</td>
<td>a. p=1.00 &gt; α = .05</td>
<td>b. p=1.00 &gt; α = .05</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.5.</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>a. 0</td>
<td>b. 0</td>
<td>c. 33</td>
<td>a. p=1.00 &gt; α = .05</td>
<td>b. p=.317 &gt; α = .05</td>
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</table>

Sequel to Table 1 see on p. 51.
In the teaching/learning and educational processes the teachers of rural schools: 1) appreciate the individually differentiated approach to each pupil, 2) start to ensure the versatile development of all children, both achievers and underachievers. The specificity of rural school environment enables the teachers to respect the holistic approach in the evaluation of pupils’ development dynamics and learning results. It is possible due to the intensive methodological work of rural teachers, as well as their experience gathered while working in classes with a small number of pupils (Table 1, indication 1.4).

It has always been typical to the rural school environment that the teachers have several pedagogical roles, which is proved also by the results of expertise. For example, the same teacher is a teacher of a school subject, a teacher of interest-related group, class teacher, and/or also the member of school administration group (Table 1, indication 1.5).

The rural teachers’ professional and social competence is proved also by the fact that the teachers, including class teachers, in addition to their formal responsibilities non-formally perform also the social pedagogues’ functions to solve both pedagogical and social problems (Table 1, indication 1.6).

It is also usual for small rural schools that their teachers also perform other social roles and carry out functions connected with them. This feature characterizes the rural cultural environment and proves to the rural teachers’ social competence. For example, the teachers are their pupils’ parents, relatives, family friends, neighbours, teachers of the pupils’ parents, pupils’ collaboration partners in sports trainings, different art collectives (choirs, dance groups, community theatres), different courses, events, etc.; many teachers have graduated the school they are working (Table 1, indication 1.7).

The democratic style of pedagogical interaction, informal, humane, on mutual understanding based relationships between pupils and teachers are typical for the pedagogical environment of rural schools (Table 1, indication 1.8).

The professional competence is proved by the fact that the teachers, who worked and are still working at rural schools, have received different awards, bonuses on regional and/or state level for the creative innovative
The Indications of the Rural Teachers’ Further Education

The ongoing process of changes in education today, the formal requirements for the teachers’ professional education influence also the rural teachers’ way of thinking, as well as the process of their professional improvement. The following characteristics prove this fact. Rural teachers have obtained several specialties and qualifications at the formal further education courses and within the study programs of higher education institutions, which authorize them to teach several subjects (Table 2, indication 2.1). All the rural teachers have acquired or in the nearest future will acquire (within next 1-4 years) higher pedagogical education (Table 2, indication 2.2).

Table 2. The indications of the rural teachers’ further education (N= 33)

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<tr>
<td>2.1.</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>1.0</td>
<td>a. 0</td>
<td>b. 22</td>
<td>c. 11</td>
<td>a. p=.000 &lt; α = .05</td>
<td>b. p=.000 &lt; α = .05</td>
<td>c. p=.000 &lt; α = .05</td>
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<td>2.2.</td>
<td>.42</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>a. 0</td>
<td>b. 19</td>
<td>c. 14</td>
<td>a. p=.000 &lt; α = .05</td>
<td>b. p=.000 &lt; α = .05</td>
<td>c. p=.000 &lt; α = .05</td>
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<td>2.3.</td>
<td>.58</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>a. 0</td>
<td>b. 10</td>
<td>c. 23</td>
<td>a. p=.002 &lt; α = .05</td>
<td>b. p=.002 &lt; α = .05</td>
<td>c. p=.002 &lt; α = .05</td>
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<td>2.4.</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.39</td>
<td>a. 0</td>
<td>b. 8</td>
<td>c. 25</td>
<td>a. p=.008 &lt; α = .05</td>
<td>b. p=.005 &lt; α = .05</td>
<td>c. p=.008 &lt; α = .05</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.5.</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>a. 1</td>
<td>b. 1</td>
<td>c. 31</td>
<td>a. p=1.00 &gt; α = .05</td>
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<td>2.6.</td>
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<td>b. 11</td>
<td>c. 22</td>
<td>a. p=.001 &lt; α = .05</td>
<td>b. p=.001 &lt; α = .05</td>
<td>c. p=.001 &lt; α = .05</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.7.</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.97</td>
<td>a. 0</td>
<td>b. 1</td>
<td>c. 32</td>
<td>b. p=.317 &gt; α = .05</td>
<td>c. p=1.00 &gt; α = .05</td>
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The rural teachers have improved their professional competence during last five years or are improving it now by studying in the Master and/or Doctoral study programs (Table 2, indication 2.3).

In order to ensure the qualitative and sustainable education under the conditions of competitiveness, the rural schools as self-evaluating and self-
developing organizations care for their teachers’ further education and offer: 1) different kinds of practical seminars, courses, and lectures, inviting guest lecturers from different formal and non-formal educational institutions, etc. (Table 2, indication 2.4); 2) exchange of experience among the teachers, for example, visiting of open lessons, their analysis and evaluation; pedagogical lectures, etc. (Table 2, indication 2.5); 3) the teachers participate and initiate themselves international projects where they can exchange their pedagogical experience (Table 2, indication 2.6); 4) the subject related commissions of teachers, the commissions of primary school, elementary school, secondary school teachers and, if necessary, also the subject related small associations of separate classes, as well as commissions and departments, which work on regular basis (Table 2, indication 2.7).

The Indications of Qualitative and Quantitative Changes in the Rural Teachers’ Competences

Due to the teachers’ competence levels and formally obtained qualifications the rural schools are able to offer more than one licensed and accredited educational program. Nowadays the rural teachers’ competences enable them to implement not only the general elementary education programs, but also preschool, pedagogical correction, and other educational programs (Table 3, indication 3.1).

Table 3. The indications of qualitative and quantitative changes in the rural teachers’ competences (N=33)

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<td>3.3</td>
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<td>.94</td>
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<td>3.4</td>
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Sequel to Table 3 see on p. 54.
More and more rural teachers: 1) participate in the elaboration of the didactic models relevant to the rural educational environment, as well as the pupils’ needs and those of all the rural community (Table 3, indication 3.2); 2) apply the alternative teaching/learning organization forms and methods, including outdoor teaching/learning process in the natural environment (projects, field trips, etc.), outdoor activities of non-formal education, including cultural and sports events outside the school premises (Table 3, indication 3.3).

Due to the demographic crisis in the countryside and the process of urbanization, the number of pupils started to decrease in the rural schools. Therefore the rural teachers have started to develop the didactic models of merged classes (Table 3, indication 3.4). When organizing the teaching/learning process in the merged classes, the teachers ensure both the individual and differential approach. At the same time they respect the holistic principle, organizing the teaching/learning process of two different classes within the framework of one subject, when using the same space and time.

The increase of the pupils’ competence also proves the quality of the rural teachers’ professional work: 1) the pupils from rural schools improve their results in several subjects year after year (Table 3, indication 3.5); 2) the rural pupils win the subject competitions, contests, shows, and other competitions at the district level (Table 3, indication 3.6).

Due to their competences, as well as considering the sustainable development of a school, the rural teachers start to extend their functions and professional spheres of work by offering: 1) non-formal family education (Table 3, indication 3.7); 2) the second opportunity general elementary education and/or secondary education for adults, because the rural schools have started to implement part-time and even extra-mural general education programs (Table 3, indication 3.8); 3) in collaboration with the local government and regional centers of adult education the rural teachers have started to offer formal and non-formal education, including professional education for the adults, for example, by organizing the driving

### Table 3

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<td>3.7</td>
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<td>b. 4</td>
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<td>c. 29</td>
<td>c. p=.125 &gt; α = .05</td>
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instruction courses, computer studies, Latvian and foreign language courses, the courses of applied arts, etc. (Table 3, indication 3.9).

Due to the high level of teachers’ competences, the rural schools are able to start the implementation and planning in the nearest future of more and more higher education distance programs for adults by contracting with higher educational institutions and opening on school basis the informative/methodical centers supplied with information and communication technologies. The advisers at these centers are the rural teachers. Mostly these responsibilities are performed by the teachers of computer studies (Table 3, indication 3.10).

Discussion and Conclusion
Still different opinions are presented in literature and the concept ‘competence’ is used in different fields and contexts. The teacher’s professional competence is a totality of the qualities characterizing the professional activities: the spheres of activities and responsibility, the level of knowledge and skills, the entire development of personality, including the formation of attitude and value system, which is lifelong and life-wide. In spite of the fact that research on the differences of ‘competence’ and ‘qualification’ was carried out at the end of the last century, the conceptual meaning and interaction of these terms are still topical also today for the determination and evaluation of teachers’ competences within the context of non-formal and informal education. The concept ‘teacher’s competence’ is closely related with the concepts of teacher education and further education.

There are different kinds of lifelong and life-wide education offered in Latvia. At present the teacher formal education environment is developing in Latvia. The higher education institutions actively work to ensure the quality of teacher education and its offer. At the same time there is no work carried out to equate, evaluate, and elaborate the mechanism of formal certification of the competences the teachers had acquired in non-formal and informal education. It could be the alternative solution for the full-time, part-time, and extra-mural studies and would enable the rural teachers to receive the necessary qualification and the right to continue their pedagogical practice. The solution of this problem is especially expected by the rural teachers, since they are teaching several subjects in the small country schools and they are performing different teachers’ roles and functions.

During research we have found that the teachers’ competences and further education are the priorities for ensuring the sustainable development of rural schools. Having explored the areas of activities, functions, and roles of rural teachers, their professional and social competences, as well as the processes of teacher education and further education within the educational environment of rural schools, we have established: 1) indications, which prove the invariability of rural school educational environment (traditions); 2) indications, which prove the qualitative and quantitative changes (innovations) in the educational environment of rural schools.

The research results prove that the rural teachers’ formal, non-formal, and informal pedagogical education raises the level of their competence, they obtain several formally acknowledged qualifications that ensure: 1) the
quality improvement of education offered by the rural schools; 2) the extension of the educational offer (educational programs) and functions of rural schools; 3) the enlargement of target audience; 4) the sustainability of small rural schools; 5) the increase of rural pupils’ competence and achievement, as well as their competitiveness not only in the educational environment of Latvia, but also in that of the European Union.

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The Role of Field Studies in the Methodological Preparation of the Teachers in Environmental Sciences

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Andrea Kosáros, and Gyula Lakatos
Debrecen University, Hungary

Abstract
In the teaching and learning process, the teachers have a responsible task. While forming the skills necessary for teaching, the general and specialized methodological foundations and knowledge are essential elements, where several scenes can be differentiated. Nowadays, the most important task of the teachers is to form the environmental consciousness of the next generation and educate for sustainable development.

The legal acts regulating education in Hungary made the school program for environmental education obligatory, however its framework (basis) as an obligatory subject has not yet been established. Therefore in the schools, the out-of-school or out-of-class forms of environmental education are more significant than the formal environmental education. The teacher performing the environmental education must be prepared for this situation in the general and specialized methodological training. For this reason, field studies have essential significance in teacher training.

In this paper, field studies are analysed in how they can contribute to the pedagogical-methodological preparations of future teachers in environmental sciences.

Keywords: field studies; competence; training of teachers in environmental sciences.

Introduction
The system of teacher training in Hungary these days is about to experience fundamental changes. As a result of the so-called Bologna procedure, it will be possible to obtain specialised teacher training only within the master-level (MSc) training. Hopefully, the requirement that the personal ability, as well as professional and methodological training of future teachers should be the best will thus be enforced more than in the present system. One of the dominant factors of the teaching/learning process is the teacher: the education and training of future generations, the formation of their attitude to the world, and their approach to the triple system of nature/society/economy depends on teachers.
The training of environment protection and ecology major teachers is a complex task. Society expects the analysis of environmental problems, the preparation for their solution and prevention, that is, the formation and socialisation of environmentally conscious behaviour from them. In Hungary, the legal documents regulating education have made environmental education the obligation of public education. However, the basis of its appearance in public education as an obligatory subject could not be established either as an independent subject, or a curriculum module. In this situation, the formation of the environmental awareness of the future generation might not be emphasised enough.

The need of and real demand for education for sustainability is indicated by the fact that the UN has designated the period between 2005 and 2014 “Decade of Education for Sustainable Development”. Therefore, in the environmental studies teacher majors, practise-oriented training is especially important, thus the principles of practicability, the applicability of knowledge and relevance are to be guaranteed (Hopkins & McKeown, 2005). Field practice, which, in addition to the extension of professional knowledge and the practical appliance of the theoretical knowledge obtained also constitutes an important element of methodological preparation, belongs to practical training. A part of the professional literature emphasises professional contents rather than methodological ones, though there are also examples to those who find the teaching profession of equal importance (Jakucs & Lakatos, 1990; Lehoczky, 1998; Kárász, 2001).

The aim of the present article is to emphasise those elements of obligatory field practices in the curriculum of students of environmental protection major at Eszterházy Károly College in Hungary that, in the opinion of the authors, are very important for future teachers. Whether, after they have obtained their degrees, they will work as teachers or perform environmental educational tasks in national parks or for civil organisations, the field practices serve to obtain the skills and knowledge that are necessary for both. The authors have written another report about the comprehensive pedagogical and professional role of practical training (Jakucs & Lakatos, 1990; Zoller, 1990; Bowe, Ball & Gold, 1992; Inman & Wade, 1997; Palmer, 1998; Kárász, 2001; Katona, Kárász, Izsó & Lakatos, 2005).

The State of Environmental Education in Hungary

The management and documents of public education

We distinguish four tiers within the management of Hungarian public education: central or state, regional, local or settlement, and institutional tiers. In practice, at the local and regional tiers, the management of education is integrated into the general system of public education. It does not have a separate education policy document. The following elements regulating education can be connected to the state or national and institutional tiers:

- **State level:**
  - The law on public education;
  - The National Curriculum;
  - Framework curriculum;
  - School-leaving examination regulations.
Institutional level:
- Pedagogical program which is constituted by
  - Local curriculum and
  - Educational program;
- Organisational and operational rules;
- Rules of the house.

The presence of environmental education in decision making
The laws on the protection of the environment and nature that have been in force in Hungary since 1995/96 already contain regulations with respect to environmental education. At this time, the law on education and training (the Public Education Law) indicated environmental education as a compulsory task for every public educational institution. The earlier content of regulatory documents for education also provided an opportunity for the realisation of environmental education. This, however, did not constitute the formation of a nationally uniform approach to environmental education.

The first education policy document that made environmental education compulsory in public education was the National Curriculum (NAT), published in 1995. The National Curriculum is the central element of curriculum regulation, which divides the common requirements of domestic teaching and educational work prescribed for all the schools into ten cultural areas (Mother tongue and literature, Living foreign language, Mathematics, Man and society, Man and nature, The Earth and our environment, Arts, Computer studies, Way of life and practical knowledge, Physical education and sports) and establishes the materials for the ten years of public schooling (Scheibert, 1997; Vásárhelyi & Victor, 2000).

In addition to the requirements of the individual cultural areas, the National Curriculum also contains so-called cross-curricular requirements (Self-image and self-knowledge, Knowledge of the country and the people, European identity awareness, Environmental education, Information and communication culture, Physical and spiritual health, Studying, Career orientation). These are the common requirements of the teaching in all the cultural areas. The objective, contents, and topics of the common requirements were also prescribed, which meant a significant step forward as compared to the regulation of earlier documents.

In possession of the experiences following its introduction, a significant fault of the National Curriculum was that it is a very loose regulatory device. Furthermore, it does not penetrate between institutions of similar types either, as the institutions – due to the loose regulations – would rather strive to form their own interpretation. Thus the already diverging school system was only strengthened (Vásárhelyi & Victor, 2000).

To eliminate the errors, in addition to the National Curriculum, another central, content regulating document, the Framework Curriculum was introduced. The schools must prepare their local curriculum on the basis of these documents. With the introduction of the Framework Curriculum, environmental education may lose some of its position in the National Curriculum as the number of lessons of natural science subjects has dropped, even though they are the most suitable platforms of forming en-
environmental consciousness. The most recent – 2002 – modification of the Public Education Law has somewhat strengthened the position of environmental education because it declared that schools are mandated to prepare the institutional health education and environmental education program, which forms a part of the pedagogical program (Higher Education Law, 2005).

According to the content elements of the documents in force, schools have the following possibilities to realise institutional environmental education (Havas, 2003):

- curriculum contents supplemented with environmental contents;
- an independent environmental subject within the freely planned timeframe;
- creation of an integrated subject, which strengthens the emergence of a global/comprehensive approach through integration;
- inclusion of the topic – connection between humans and their environment, connection between the topics of the form-master’s lessons;
- the environmental approach to the health; knowledge of the country and the people; knowledge of humans and society; ethics; motion picture and media knowledge curriculum module;
- a subject curriculum of an independent environmental education approach, authorised during the course of a separate procedure, teaching according to a school program;
- methods of learning organisation in harmony with the environment, different from the traditional activities during the lesson (e.g. forest school, topic of the day, lessons in the museum or the zoo);
- choosing school (educational) equipment that is in line with the pedagogy of sustainability.

The Role and Competencies of the Teacher

Whatever environmental education model is adopted, the educational or teaching process is constituted by the joint work of teachers and students. The teacher has a dominant role in this joint work. Teacher is the planner, organiser, manager, and evaluator of the teaching/learning process. This is a very complex and responsible role, thus the teacher’s professional suitability is the pledge of success. We usually distinguish three main components of the teacher’s professional (vocational) suitability: personal aptitude, teacher’s vocational knowledge, and his/her professional knowledge. These factors constitute an inseparable unit.

Personal aptitude characterises the personality. It is constituted by self-knowledge – based on which the teacher is aware of his/her abilities and limitations, independence and sensitivity, that is, he/she is able to process the information arriving from the environment quickly. Ambition and trust, empathy and congruent behaviour – these ensure authenticity through the fact that the teacher’s directions and emotional manifestations are in harmony with his/her acts – and unconditional acceptance are important. The simultaneous presence of these components at some level indicates the teacher’s aptitude; this, paired with a sense of vocation can also be the index of efficiency and success.

The teacher’s vocational knowledge component has several competence elements. These guarantee a successful educational process. The
Tasks of the Environmental Sciences Teacher within School Work

We can take into account the tasks of the teacher in environmental sciences – or as s/he is often called, the “green teacher” – by looking at the forms of school environmental education. These reflect almost all the tasksituations that the environmental studies teacher has to solve. We can divide the situations into two large areas: environmental education within and outside the school.

Within the first group, we can distinguish between areas within and outside the classroom. The forms outside the classroom can be regular (the activities of circles, elective courses, study walks, professional student circles, and voluntary groups dovetailing with the curriculum) as well as periodical and occasional (study trips, projects, school movements, special days, environmental competitions, environment and nature protection days, exhibitions).

A special school of this form is the forest school, which – according to the present public education law – must be organically integrated into the curriculum, and it is to be planned and realised during the course of the school year. However, its scene is not the school but other accredited institutions, the so-called forest schools. As, mostly for financial reasons, it is at present not in general or regular use, and it does not take place at the centre of the school, often it is considered a non-school activity.

The true forms of environmental education outside the school can be grouped according to the framework of the activity and the form of execution. The more frequent types of this latter one can be: hiking tour, field practice, camp, regular field observations, exhibition, environmental competition, professional conference, movement, or some other event (Kárász, 2001).

Of course, we do not think that the performance of these activities is the task exclusively of the environmental studies teacher or teachers teaching in the school. The Environmental and Health education programs prescribed as a legal obligation are to be developed by the whole teaching staff, at
least in an ideal situation. It is likely, however, that this is not the case in many schools. This task was assigned to those colleagues who found it their labour of love and whose qualifications are the most suitable for it. Thus, after all, it is the environmental studies teachers’ primary task to guarantee that these scenes appear and get integrated into school life. Usually, they ask their colleagues for help in execution.

For the purposes of suitability and the preparation for the work going on at the scenes listed, the materials of the theoretical professional and pedagogical/psychological subjects are equally important for the professional methodological preparation and practical training. The practical training is constituted by the field practices, which not only give professional practical knowledge but also help in laying the teacher’s professional methodological foundations.

Field Practices in the Environmental Studies Training

In Hungary, the situation of environmental education outside the lesson and school framework is gaining more emphasis in public education. Of these, the study trips, the theme days or theme weeks, and the field practices preparing the activities of the forest schools are the most frequent. The reason for this might be that getting to know environmental values, understanding of environmental problems, and clarifying the relationship between students and their environment can be ensured within the framework of the classroom situation only minimally or in a rather restricted fashion. In environmental education, activities organised in a non-traditional classroom framework provide the greater opportunities and guarantee results. Nothing can replace personal experience and practise gained out on the field. Therefore, it is necessary that environmental teacher training prepares the students for the tasks connected to these field-training forms (Vásárhelyi & Victor, 2000; Kárász, 2001; Lakatos, 2003).

Students in environmental sciences in their curriculum at Eger College in Hungary have the following field practice units outside the institution:

1) At the end of the second term, there is a 10-day environmental and/or nature protection camping practice. Within the framework of this, the students get a taste of the task of managing groups of children. In addition to the observation of camp activities, they get different tasks, among others – according to the discussion with the professional manager – for the organisation and execution of a group activity. Students register their experience and practice in minutes.

2) In the fourth semester, first, the students take part in a three-day environment protection study excursion; then a five-day field practice is organized for them. During the environment protection study trips, the students visit Aggteleki Nemzeti Park (Aggtelek National Park), Hortobágyi Nemzeti Park (Hortobágy National Park), and seven protected regions of Heves County of national or regional significance (Kerecsend Forest, Erdőtelek Arboretum and Égeres Forest, Kápolna Memorial Sites, Verpeléti Várhegy, Szőlőske Forest) with the help of the teachers of department and the professional leaders and experts of national parks. Students get acquainted with the management and nature protection activities and problems of the national parks.
When visiting Baradla Cave of Aggtelek National Park, the group proceeds under the guidance of a professional leader, who introduces the cave also from the aspect of nature protection problems. In Jósvafő, having visited the training centre of the national park, a colleague of the training centre takes the students down the route (Tohonya-Kuriszlán study path) that children’s groups take during the course of the forest school program or study trips. He introduces those methods, exercises, and tasks that are carried out – together with the children – on the field, and he also talks about the results and success of these.

Getting acquainted with Hortobágy National Park starts by visiting the exhibition established in Nyugati Fogadóház, located in the building of the national park, and observation of the surroundings of facility. The group receives information about the conditions of management, eco-tourism possibilities, and tasks. During the day, there is time to get acquainted with the fauna and flora (bird-watch station, Halastavak study path, Puszta animal park) and the cultural history values (Páztormúzeum, Kőrszin, Kilenclyukú Bridge, Hortobágyi Csárda), furthermore, in Máta, participants may also get a taste of the secrets of keeping horses and pottery.

3) The complex ecological and environment-analysis field practice takes place during the last week of the fourth semester. Participants spend a continuous five-day period at the Tiszafürdő field practice base of the institution, where they learn several methods to be used in the field circumstances: from digging out soil samples, through taking water samples by canoe, to the continuous measuring of the micro-climate, night and day. There are tasks to be carried out individually, in pairs, as well as in small and large groups: cooperation is necessary. Work is supervised by six teachers. The students get preliminary information about the objectives of the practice, necessary preparations, distribution of work and the local conditions, and they receive the practical package aiding preparation for the practice, which also contains the forms for the registration of the results of practice.

The first day is spent “checking into” and getting acquainted with the camp, and preparing the tasks for the next days (digging out soil segments, setting up micro-climate measuring stations, getting acquainted with and preparing the lab and other instruments). From the second day, work goes on in small groups. Five groups are working in a parallel fashion, rotating the tasks in the mornings and afternoons (measuring the microclimate, pollution of the air, studying fauna and flora, and making soil and water analysis). The last day is spent studying the urban area – this is when the minutes are finalised – and the camp is closed.

4) The “workshop” and professional management practice take place at the end of the sixth term. The aim of this practice is to give the students an insight into the environmental protection work that is not necessarily connected to school, education, and training.

The Role of Field Practices
During the field practice, professional experience is gained and the students’ knowledge is extended. In addition to that, the students get an example of how it is possible to apply theoretical knowledge in practical life.

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The field practices also contain methodological elements serving the execution of school tasks, thus:

- Through their own experience, students encounter the essence, components, complexity, and system characteristics of some scenes of environmental education;
- Future teachers get examples of the organisation of several activities, the planning and execution of tasks necessary for cognition;
- As active participants, students may try the different methods and work forms helping environmental education in the real environment, especially the cooperative solutions;
- Students can meet professionals performing their work as environmental educators, who give a report of their experience;
- At the sites of the field practices, future teachers can personally discover the practical implementation of the principle of sustainability and the efficiency of the pedagogical methods applied.

Such an experience reinforces those preparing to become teachers that their work will be useful and might inspire those who – by their own admission – do not want to teach. Close to 75% of first-year students do not want to teach. As a result of the positive experience gained in the methodological and teaching practices, by the end of the fourth year, the proportion improves a bit.

In their own educational work, future teachers make use of those methodological results of team work and learning by investigation, which are attained during practical field trainings. By the help of this experience, their educational activities become more realistic and relevant. They have had an adequate experience, which is needed to complete their future tasks, since they have attained organisational models, learned to make programmes or work out every single detail, and realized the importance of preliminary work.

Besides connecting the field results with theoretical knowledge, feedback and evaluation are attained as well. Independent work is important on field, but every single activity has to be a part of team work. During these field trainings, future teachers became experienced in identification and protection of species and learn to reveal connections between habitats and the environment as completely as possible.

Summary

The situation in teaching profession affects the development of the human resources of the whole society as the preparation of the future generation for responsible citizens’ conduct is in the hands of teachers. Thus, the suitability of teacher training is a key issue. Every teacher is to be given the opportunity to develop their competencies and to get ahead in their profession. During the higher education training, the development of the necessary teacher’s competences is to be fully served by every area and study unit.

Teacher training is of multidisciplinary nature. This ensures that the teacher is at disposal of:

- the knowledge of his/her subject;
- pedagogical knowledge;
the skills and competencies necessary for the management, assistance, and continuous modernisation of the procedure of education and training;

- the understanding of the social and cultural dimensions of education.

The foregoing are the common European principles with respect to teacher’s competencies and training. The realisation of these principles in the training of environmental studies teachers cannot be achieved without the field practices. They can support the methodological preparation of the environmental educator and the environmental studies teacher to a great extent. These practices ensure the acquisition of competencies necessary for the extra-curricular work forms, which are dominating in the work of environmental studies teachers.

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Educators’ Professional Identity
Development as Reflected in Narratives and Pictures

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Abstract
The ways in which educators understand their professional identity affect their efficiency, professional growth, readiness to accept changes, etc.

Several factors have an influence on the formation of an adult educator’s identity. Because most adult educators are specialists of another field of study and have worked in the field prior to starting work as educators, the educator’s identity is created next to other identities. Thus, established specialists of a field have to adjust to a new role and context, which means that new understanding of ideals and norms and changes in one’s professional identity take place. The development of an identity can be described as a narrative. On acquiring an identity, it is important to create a meaningful story.

The empirical part of article is based on narratives and photo-interviews of five adult educators from Estonia.

Key words: adult educator; professional identity; narrative; photo-interview.

The study of professional identity is a way of finding out more about adult educators’ development, growth, and satisfaction with work. The ways in which educators understand their professional identity affect their efficiency, professional growth, readiness to accept changes, etc.

Several factors have an influence on the formation of an adult educator’s identity. Because most adult educators are experts in another field of study and have worked in the field prior to starting work as educators, the educator’s identity is created next to other identities. Thus, established professionals of a field have to adjust to a new role and context, which means that new understanding of ideals and norms and changes in one’s professional identity take place. New experience gained from work as an educator affects self-conception and induces to re-assess one’s prior ideas of professionalism.

This article introduces research based on narratives and photo-interviews on adult educators’ views on teaching, occupational identity, and professional growth. The material presented in this article is a part of a larger study on professional identities and personal educational theories of adult educators in Estonia.
Different Approaches to Professional Identity

The approaches to professional identity differ from each other in the focus, i.e. which aspect is under consideration: whether the main focus is on the personal identity or social identity and what links are seen between these two (Kelchtermans, 1993), or what is the role of environment and context on the development of professional identity (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2003), or whether professional identity is seen rather as a permanent or changing construct, or what is the role of biographic perspective (Goodson, 1994).

Teachers during their career develop a professional self, a personal conception of oneself as a teacher and a subjective educational theory, a personal system of knowledge and beliefs about their job. Both the professional self and the subjective educational theory develop throughout the interaction of the teacher with his or her professional environment and thus are conceived of as developing (Kelchtermans, 1993).

Professional self discerns:
- Self image – how does the teacher describe himself or herself as a teacher?
- Self-esteem – how good am I as a teacher?
- Job-motivation – the motives someone had to choose the teacher job, to stay in the job, or to leave it;
- Task-perception – what is my job as a teacher? (Kelchtermans, 1993: 449)

From the biographical perspective, the professional behaviour and activity of the educator is determined by the experience gathered during the career. In order to understand the professional behaviour and activity of an educator one has to research their professional life (Kelchtermans, 1993).

Teachers’ experiences and background, teachers’ lifestyles, life cycles and career stages, critical incidents in teachers’ lives (Goodson, 1994) develop the understandings of teaching and being a teacher, and create the basis for practice.

An important aspect of professional identity is defining self as a member of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). In a community of practice, in real work situation and work context skills, knowledge, norms, routines, stories, discourse is learned (Wenger, 1998) and the occupational identity is established.

Adult educators are not linked with any specific community or area or profession that brings along partial, fragmentary, or impermanent identities (Malcolm & Zukas, 2002).

In many areas (health care, education, business) there has been rapid proliferation of job specifications, many new job descriptions have been added (Gleeson, Davies & Wheeler, 2005). For instance, people working with adults refer to themselves as lecturers, tutors, key skill coordinators, developers, work-based assessors, section leaders, progress tutors, advanced practitioners, etc. At the same time the character of work in education has changed as well. One can work full-time, part time or on contracts, people can teach different courses and be employed by different training organisations. The situation described above makes it relatively complicate to
analyse the adult educators’ professional identity and draw conclusions on that.

P. Hodkinson and H. Hodkinson (2003) focus upon the interrelationship between community of practice, individual learner dispositions to learning, and some wider contextual influences. They see the individual and social structures at the same time as integrated and separated. This is because educators have lives outside work, and because their biographies pre-date participation in their current workplace.

Organizations and institutions (with focus on learning needs, team learning, shared vision, workplace education) may promote professional development for teachers of adults (Ruohotie, 1996).

The formation of occupational identity is interconnected with more and more numerous interruptions and the identity is becoming increasingly varied and unstable. The following questions become important – how and through the implementation of which strategies people manage to compensate the instability, fragmentation, and uncertainty caused by work-related changes (Loogma, 2004). Adult educators have to find answers to the same questions, because being adult educator is their second chance and they need to adjust to the changes.

Professional Development and Learning
Adult educators’ theoretical professional preparation is usually linked with teaching content and the practical teaching skills are acquired through practical experience.

Becoming a school teacher means that the beginning teachers must negotiate at least three teaching identities: those they bring with them into teacher education (pre-teaching identity), those they develop while doing university course work (fictive identity), and those they develop during practice (lived) (Sumara & Luce-Kapler, 1996).

The career of an educator often starts with practical experience, which is followed by the studies to become a certified educator (lived identity precedes fictive identity), as beginners they are learning mostly from personal experience. The important point of experiential learning is that the learners must reflect on their experiences in a critical way (Mezirow, 2000; Kolb, 1984).

The reflection needs special conditions: time and space for reflection, the facilitators of reflection, the curricular or institutional environment, an emotionally supportive environment, broader theoretical viewpoint, and reflection skills (Moon, 1999). In their daily work, adult educators rarely have time and conditions for conscious self-analysis; they also lack necessary experience and habits.

Adult educators’ professional development can be understood as transformative learning. Transformative learning is a process by which previously uncritically assimilated assumptions, beliefs, values, and perspectives are questioned and they become more open and better validated (Mezirow, 2000). Central to Mezirow’s conceptualization of transformative learning theory is also critical reflection. Teachers then transform frames of reference through critical reflection on their own and other’s assumptions and beliefs about teaching. It is important to emphasize that this is
not about chaining one’s mind or adopting the “right” point of view, but becoming more open (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004).

Transformations often follow some variations of the following phases:
1. A disorienting dilemma;
2. Self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame;
3. A critical assessment of assumptions;
4. Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared;
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions;
6. Planning a course of action;
7. Acquiring knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans;
8. Provisional trying of new roles;
9. Building competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships;
10. A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s new perspective (Mezirow, 2000: 22).

Recent studies on transformative learning have shown that the process of transformative learning may be long-term and progressive process which involves emotions, intuition, soul, spirituality and which is affected by sociocultural context and person’s life-history (Dirkx, 2001; Mezirow, 2000; Taylor, 2000). Transformative learning process may be experienced as disorienting and confusing, and adult educators during these emotionally stressed periods need stronger support to continue their learning and self-development processes.

**Narratives and Photo-Interviews as Research Material**

In academic discourse concept of narrativity has been used in at least four different ways:
1) process of knowing, nature of knowledge (associated with the constructivist view of knowing);
2) the nature of research material;
3) narrativity as a means of analysis;
4) narratives as a practical tool: the writing and telling of life stories is applied in a number of practical ways of professional work (Heikkinen, 2002: 16).

In current research narratives are used as a research material. Narrative is a fundamental means through which people experience their lives and identity. All narratives, whether oral or written, personal or collective, are narratives of identity (Errante, 2000). Our identities go through the process of continuous reconstruction by means of the narrative, and the attention in narrative research is focused particularly on how individuals assign meaning to things through their stories (Heikkinen, 2002; Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995; Riessmann, 2002). In narrative research the location of the voice of the research subject is emphasised – the research subjects are given the opportunity to express their concepts in their own words (Heikkinen, 2002).

One type of narrative is life story, which is designed to explain, describe, and reflect upon a life, to make meaning of a person’s life as an
integral whole. The act of telling one’s story is an act of creating one’s self. Narratives focus more on how stories are formed and structured, on a style of telling, on a particular way of constructing the story (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995).

On acquiring an identity, it is important to create a meaningful story. Unconscious dimensions of professional identity and personal educational notions do not become obvious through the use of language alone. Narrative needs to extend its boundaries and incorporate arts based research methods, which stimulate reflection on dimensions of experience normally beyond conscious awareness (Leitch, 2004).

One powerful tool for the researcher can be photo-interviewing. Photo-interview is a technique that involves using photographs to stimulate the interviewing process. Photo-interviewing can challenge participants, provide nuances, trigger memories, lead to new perspectives and explanations, and help to avoid researcher misinterpretation. Photography as a research method can offer an assistance in the exploration of the unconscious teaching beliefs and shed light on the taken for granted or the unquestioned (Taylor, 2002).

Photo-interviewing is used in concert with photographs taken by the researcher or participant. Having participants take their own photographs ensures that they reflect the participant’s point of view, not the researcher’s one. As a part of the interview process the photographs can be interpreted by the researcher (direct analysis) or the participant (indirect analysis) (Taylor, 2002).

Methodology
This article is based on five educators’ narratives and photo-interpretations. A common feature characterising the five educators selected is that, according to background information, they can be deemed as successful educators (based on their managers’ opinion, volume of offers on their courses, feedback from learners, colleagues’ evaluations, etc). On the other hand, there are a number of differences, such as the way of becoming an educator, learning experience, the meanings they create in being an educator, etc. The material under analysis has been collected between 13 February 2004 and 9 June 2005.

First, the interviewees told or wrote their stories of becoming an educator, i.e. described how they became adult educators as well as their work and development.

The second stage consisted of a picture-interview. For that, educators were asked to find pictures as a response to questions related to learning, teaching and educator’s work (e.g. What is learning to your mind? Who is an adult learner in your opinion? Who is an adult educator? How you have developed and changed as an educator?) After that, interviews were conducted to give the educators the opportunity to explain their opinions, understandings, and views. This analysis is based on what the interviewees said, not on the interviewers’ interpretations of the pictures. If the interviewer noticed some contradiction between the image in the picture and the spoken word, additional questions were posed to get more information and clarification.
Before the second interview, the interview texts were transcribed from the tape and additional questions that came up while reading the transcripts were posed to the educators during the second interview.

The methods of content analysis, narrative analysis (Riessman, 2002), and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003) have been used to analyse the collected materials.

This article focuses on the interviewees’ interpretations of accepting an educator identity, their way of becoming an educator, learning related to educator’s work and professional growth.

Extracts from educators’ narratives are presented in italics; the words and expressions the interviewees stressed are underlined. The names used in the text are pseudonyms.

**Context as Reflected in Educators’ Stories**

The difference between a biography and other forms of narrative lies in connecting the events of personal life with social events. Life is viewed as lived at a specific time, in a specific place and within the framework of certain specific social conditions, not as a mere collection of events (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995).

The analysis of the interviewees’ stories gives reason to presume that context plays an important role in their becoming an educator. The 1990-ies were a period of substantial change in Estonian society and these changes affected adult education – international cooperation in the field of adult education was started, the percentage of private training organisations increased, and adults had more opportunities for continuing learning (Jõgi, 2004).

Changes in the economic life and adult education in the 90-ies in Estonia caused or made it possible that the interviewees became educators.

The interviews show that the changed circumstances enabled them to abandon work in their chosen area of specialisation which was becoming less valued by society and choose another area of activity which was connected with education.

*Thinking back at the time it actually seems a rather sad period where the Soviet money did not exist any more and the Estonian kroon came into use and musicians didn’t have much perspective (Marko).*

Opportunities to start work as an educator came from the new nationally established structures (National Defence League) and new popular areas of training (teamwork, sales).

Some started work as educators after losing their prior jobs because companies were closed down and organisation were reorganised.

In addition to that, several foreign training projects reached Estonia in the 90-ties; close contacts were created with adult educators in Denmark, Sweden, and Finland and many educational projects reached us from USA. Some interviewees were involved in the projects and continued independent training careers after the foreign educators had left.

The interviews reflect the way of thinking, characteristics of the skills and qualities valued in Estonia at a certain period and how it affected the interviewees’ options.
And then I was back on the labour market, but the situation was different since I had reached the age where the options to find work were limited and I couldn’t find a job. Such was the time in our Republic of Estonia guided by the principle that only the young can do something and the older are stuck in outdated ideas (Rita).

The analysis of educators’ stories showed that the choices made by the interviewees were affected by changes occurring in Estonian society in the 90-ties as well as by the widening areas of activity related to the adult educator’s profession.

Biographical Aspects as Reflected in Stories of Educators

The analysis of professional biographical interviews highlighted the same features described by Mishler (1999) in his studies: educators’ professional trajectory is not uniform, there are several disjunctions, discontinuities, and transitions in it. Describing their life as an integral whole, educators explain how they have come to discover their area of training. The areas that the interviewees have come across in course of their lives have provided them with the field they can share with others – the field they can teach.

Rita has studied accountancy, held the position of a financial manager and given accountancy courses to adults.

Sirle has studied psychology and educates adults in addition to working as a counsellor.

Often, the field of training has nothing to do with the acquired qualification; educators have reached the field through a newly acquired area of activity or hobbies.

Let us take Marko, for example. He is a musician who has worked as a salesman and is now conducting training courses on sales.

Tiit is an actor who now works as a leader of a theatrical organisation. As the representative of the organisation, he was invited to take part in the work of the Cultural Endowment. Experience gained from this work inspired him to carry out training projects.

Taimi has studied ethnology and has started work as an educator through her work at the National Defence League.

When the interviewees tell their stories, they interpret them from the educator’s aspect and give meaning to their prior life from the point of view of being an educator. Looking back, they see elements of teaching already in their prior professional activities or in relations with colleagues or friends.

And then I took on organisational tasks, which is very good – as I observed later – for work as a lecturer. I started to summarise laws to people and interpret them. This is what I did. I explained them what was meant with this or that sentence, why this or that has to be done and so on. And looking back at the time I must say that doing this work, in essence I was a teacher all the time, this is what the situation was like (Rita).

Another important thing is the effect of prior work and learning experience on the readiness to work as an educator and to acquire a new iden-
It transpired from the stories that the interviewees have had to change jobs, retrain, start from the beginning, and they feel they have coped with all this. They have experienced that it may be difficult at the beginning to take a new role and acquire new skills independently but at the end they can always manage. They take this experience and use it as a part of their educator’s identity—they consider it natural that it is difficult to start work as an educator, that they must learn independently and go through much, but they are certain that in the end they will succeed.

Oh yes, it was horrible, all this learning by myself, nobody was teaching me and I had to learn all by myself because they do not teach real life at school. But the work had to be done—to be done well and in time. And I made tremendous efforts. As the result of all this work I began to understand all these things (Rita).

They have experienced a number of setbacks and they have coped with them sometimes perhaps not even realising or analysing what helped them to cope.

The first three quarters of a year I worked here as a sales representative I was a complete zero. A total flop in the very sense of the word with capital F (Marko).

They have been brave in facing challenges already in their prior work (initiated reorganisations, participated in projects, etc.), done well, and been recognised.

After half a year of work, they started to look me up from the Ministry because I was making such innovative proposals, and not only practical but also feasible (Rita).

When describing their prior learning experience, they emphasise independence, consistency, and decisiveness in achieving set goals.

Today I happened to recall that every now and then there came a moment when the subject was beyond my understanding. A maths, physics, or chemistry lesson reached a level I could not comprehend. Then I used to concentrate on it, alone, and make it clear to me with the help of examples. I didn’t quit until I had made it clear to myself (Taimi).

When describing their prior life, the interviewees find elements that are related to teaching and they highlight personal qualities that, to their mind, confirm that the educator’s work suits them and the conviction that they can manage.

An aspect of professional identity is an evaluation of self as an educator (Kelchtermans, 1993). The interviewees like to highlight their strengths (I could sell ...extremely well) and they are convinced they can become very good teachers who are also acknowledged by their students.

So that they would want to come to listen to me again. Namely me and not anybody else. When next course is announced, the people come because it is me who presents and not anybody else (Rita).
At some point I became so vain that I endeavoured to make the audience applaud at the end of each lecture. Now I have grown over this sickness — it is not a theatre where the audience shouts “bravo” and stands to their feet (Tiit).

Interpreting their prior life from the point of view of educating practice, the interviewees bring out the aspects or qualities that confirm their suitability to work as the adult trainers and that the work suits them.

Meaning of Educating Practice as Seen by Educators

The meaning of educating practice differs by person:

- becoming an educator is viewed as an important progress in professional life (Taimi, Marko);
- educating practice is an interesting (and/or rewarding) addition to basic work (Tiit, Sirle);
- educating practice is a possibility when no better job can be found (Rita).

To the last minute, Rita tried to find a job similar to her previous one, but, having failed, in the end accepted work as an educator.

*When the danger of starving crawled in through the doors and windows, I happened to read a newspaper advert where a lecturer was needed* (Rita).

But this forced choice does not mean low commitment level — having made the decision, she made efforts to become a very good educator.

A common feature characterising the educators represented in the sample was that training for them meant creativity and self-realisation.

*Sell these things well, prepare thoroughly, develop constantly, and generate new tricks not used or known before to make things more attractive, you know. Constantly generate new content, you know, so that each course is different and always new* (Marko).

*The way I work is that I constantly generate new projects inside my head* (Rita).

Reflections of Learning to Become an Educator

Adult educators’ theoretical professional preparation is usually linked with teaching content and the educator’s skills are acquired through practical experience.

The interviewees said that in the beginning they had no idea of teaching whatsoever; they had no knowledge of the training process nor how to manage it; they had no clear understanding of teaching skills required or sometimes even of the subject they taught.

*I had no concept of the course, nothing to rely on or start from* (Taimi).

*I was not prepared for the work at all because being prepared for the work of a lecturer means that I have the neces-
sary learning materials and I have an understanding of the learning programme. But I had nothing (Rita).

One possible way for them to become an educator was following a model – by imitating a specific teacher, taking over his/her work strategies without thinking more thoroughly about the essence of teaching or training.

Head of my unit, a juicy fellow, former actor; he gave me a personal coaching, trained me how to perform. As I had no creativity in myself at the time and no idea how to interpret this, I learned his presentation by heart, word for word (Marko).

Another possibility is that they may have acquired a certain training model while taking part in the foreign projects. Foreign training projects often consisted of both content and methodology that had to be acquired and followed. A characteristic feature of foreign projects is that the trainers did not consider it necessary to explain the theoretical principles underlying the methodology. Therefore, the beginner trainers who took over the methodology may have felt insecure.

The programme originated from the US and it was basically structured according to the method that once you have gone through the whole process participating in its each step you understand how it works (Sirle).

The only thing I had was the experience of being a learner but a learner has a rather different understanding of the thing, isn’t it so? No knowledge of theory or the background, just go ahead and start doing things. But the process has taught me a lot because I had to learn since I needed to understand what we were doing (Taimi).

The interviewees stressed the importance of independent learning (“and then I started to read books, literature”) and learning from the personal experience: it is best to learn through teaching, through analysing one’s practice, and through feedback received. They emphasised the idea that if you cannot learn from your experience, you should not work as an educator.

I observed, analysed, and pondered. And then I observed the auditorium and always asked them what they liked best (Rita).

I started to put myself into the learner’s shoes – what would I do if I were the learner. I changed roles and it helped me a lot (Rita).

The interviewees also describe what they have learned analysing other educators’ work, their practice.

The third time I even started to prepare training materials beforehand – printed handouts to people. Interviewer: How did you come to do it? Probably by then I had seen how it is done elsewhere. I realised that these are a part of the correct managing of business (Tiiit).
... I think I have attended training courses or trained myself more than trained others. ...no matter how boring the seven hours may be, perhaps the last one of the eight hours is very interesting and useful ... I always learn something, sometimes perhaps just a little hint, it may be on how the presentation materials are formalised or how the presentation begins, or how the coffee breaks are arranged. Sometimes tiny details have a key importance. And if you manage to steal them in the good sense of the word, I find that I have learned something (Tiiti).

Although usually the parties involved in the above-described learning were not colleagues, this kind of learning from other educator’s work can be viewed as a community of practicing educators where certain understandings of training, work strategies, learning methods, traditions, values, etc. are carried from one person to another. On the other hand, it is a unilateral process not joint discussion, problem solving, or exchange of experience.

Learning can also take place in the form of mediated experiences – a colleague or friend talks about his/her learning experiences and the educator puts the heard ideas into practice.

Help came by chance.../ my daughter, Küllike, started work as a teacher and she participated in a teacher-training course on methodology. She came home and told me what she had done and heard, and I listened to her attentively and started using these things. It helped me tremendously, really a lot (Rita).

The narratives show that the interviewees yearn to create their individual and original teacher’s identity (Agee, 2004), which is why they have doubts about formal learning to become a teacher. They have created myths to support and prove their beliefs about how learning to become an educator creates routine, restricts and destroys personality.

Of course it would have been good if I had learned how to be an educator first, but on the other hand perhaps it would have limited me somehow. Perhaps I would not dare to try some things out or would be in a routine. It was good to start as a carte blanche; I have tried to avoid all kinds of influence and not to attend too many training courses (Marko).

One of the interviewees (Taimi) was a Master’s studies undergraduate on educational sciences. In her first interview (which took place half a year after her studies had begun) she interprets the effect of the studies on her understanding. She says that the theory learned made her concentrate more on the management of learning and on the individual features of an adult as a learner; she says she became more interested in generalising and now tends to guide learners to find solutions to problems rather than offer ready solution models. On the other hand, the studies caused confusion and aroused doubts in her understandings and prior ideas on the work of an educator, and she now feels that she lacks means to make the desired changes in work.
I do not want to offer ready-made models but do not know what to offer instead. I know that my understanding of learning has changed but I cannot relate it to my work (Taimi).

You know, they expect a clear, simple, applicable, handy thing. But I feel that my discourse is different but I cannot match it, I feel unable to oscillate between my level and theirs, I cannot do it, not yet (Taimi).

In the interview conducted after her graduation, Taimi repeatedly emphasises the importance of theoretical knowledge both from the aspect of reflecting on personal practice and gaining confidence as an educator. Taimi also says that the educator who masters theory has more options, freedom, and creativity.

In order to actually reflect transformatively (laughs), you simply need theoretical knowledge, and this theory must be acceptable for you, adopted by you (Taimi).

However, most patterns related to the acquisition of training skills by the interviewees reflect individual learning from practical experience with almost no guided learning based on theoretical underpinnings.

Theoretical knowledge of learning and teaching has been acquired randomly. Only few adult educators have systematic theoretical background knowledge for their teaching practice, which would provide them with more confidence (freedom and power of persuasion).

Ideal and Normative Self as Reflected in Narratives

For the development of professional identity and professionalism it is important to find balance between the ideal self, ought self, and actual self as well as to cope with the conflicts between the ideal, norm, and reality. Analysis of student teachers’ narratives shows that big conflicts between the ideal, norm, and reality cause emotional (fear, anger, insecurity, surrender, resignation) and motivational problems (through the feeling of competence) (Lauriala & Kukkonen, 2003).

Reflections of similar emotions are evident in our educator-stories. It is considered a norm that an educator must know everything and the fact that you do not know everything or may not be able to answer all questions causes fear.

You have to be well-informed, because the moments when somebody asks you a question and you do not know the answer are the most embarrassing and painful to a teacher (Tiit).

At first I was very nervous when I discovered that somebody knew more about a subject or asked questions (Tiit).

Conflicts between the ideals set and actual situation can sometimes even cause physical problems.

I had serious doubts. I began to lose health. Yes. Physical health. I was aching all over. Probably it was because of muscle tension. And I sweated, sweated horribly (Rita).
The following qualities are emphasised in the description of an ideal educator (Figure 1): behaving like an adult, life experience, horizon, personality, and mysteriousness.

**An adult educator must be a truly grown up person. You must have an experience of responsibility. In a given situation you feel responsible within the limits of your responsibility (Taimi).**

The following educator’s roles are emphasised: a friend, inspirer, and mentor.

*They support you; on the other hand, friends are the ones who honestly tell you things. But they do not make you feel bad or become enemies because of this honesty (Sirle).*

**The trainer lifts the learners to his/her shoulders so that they can get on their feet. On the feet that have grown due to the training. While moving on distances appear in the horizon (Tiit).**

**Reflections on the Sense of Belonging**

An important aspect of professional identity is defining self as a member of a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). Adult educators as representatives of a “new” profession lack a culturally and socially shared narrative to rely on in developing their identity (Filander, 2004).

In their educator-stories the interviewees used different terms to describe themselves: a lecturer, teacher, coach, educator, or they avoided defining themselves at all, which may indicate that in Estonia there exists no fully-developed and well-determined group of adult educators to identify with.

Several patterns characterise links between the interviewees and an organisation. Sometimes educators operate on their own without being members of any educational organisation; some educators cooperate with several different companies providing training; and some educators are members of an organisation whose main area of activity is not training. The latter may result in rather complicated situations because an educator who encounters a problem related to work may not receive support from the organisation regardless of being its member because the organisation lacks the means and skills required to provide help. It may also happen
that an educator’s teaching philosophy is in conflict with the organisation’s operating philosophy.

Educators’ Professional Growth as Reflected in Narratives

Viewing professional growth as an adult’s transformative learning, we can draw a curve of a learning route, where a person who faces a new situation at first feels confused as if fallen into a hole, and as they find support and help, they start to crawl out of this hole step by step. When we look at a picture sketched by an interviewee (Figure 2) about her professional development and analyse the comments about the picture, a similar curve appears whereas the comments relate to the stages of transformative learning as described by Mezirow. At first the educator feels that he/she is far from both the norm and ideal, this realisation causes confusion and dissatisfaction with self. Then the educator starts to explore possibilities of following different courses of action, to adjust the ideal and norm, or to continue learning in order to cope with the help of new work strategies.

Figure 2. My professional development (sketched by Rita)

Well, I will try to explain my development. When I first went there I was very serious, you know, because I didn’t want to be serious but I felt tense, and this is why I looked serious and I was trying desperately to demonstrate that I am not afraid of you. I am upright, I held myself upright all the time. And what made me so serious was that I didn’t dare to smile at all. And this was because I didn’t know the things I was supposed to know. I realised it inwardly but couldn’t say it to myself, even.

Then I started to shrink. Little by little. But I still stood upright because I began to realize what I hadn’t known first. It started to dawn on me. And then I reached a certain level where I realised that now I am exactly as tall as I truly am, precisely. Then I started to grow through learning, I learned new things independently and started to think about all these things. Then I started to smile. Recently I have been smiling. Now, I am able to smile everywhere and all the time. I can even smile when I cannot do something because this is the way that it should be – no person can do everything. It is natural, and I am an ordinary person standing in front of the class and the fact that I cannot do something is not embarrassing or my fault; maybe it is even a positive thing, my asset, that I cannot do it (Rita).
In her comments to the photo representing her development as an educator Sirle considers it very important to take time out in order to think about and analyse one’s work and to imbibe energy and new ideas. She says that the adult educator should be old and old in this sense means experienced; and professional development is about gathering experience in different areas and fields, not only in their own specific narrow field. Taimi compares professional development with hiking in the mountains (Figure 3). Often you do not see the peak, often you do not know, what challenges are waiting behind the mountain chain. The both respondents agreed that, for professional development one has to look at the previous activity from above or afar and see from there the beginning of a new path but not always necessarily to where it leads.

Actually I feel now that I would like to have a different kind of life experience, to imbibe it from somewhere else. Not just from the educating work but living a different kind of life, for example, from a different job (Sirle).

To conclude, the stories narrated by the adult educators show that the people who have chosen this profession and remained true to it describe themselves as independent people who can learn from their experience. They have experienced sudden changes and turns in their job-related activity, they have coped with these, learned in new situations, adapted well this far, and they see being a trainer/educator as another challenge.

However, they do not know exactly how to identify themselves. They do not see a problem in that. They commit themselves to their educator’s work in the way they see it and want to be the best. As the community with very clear boundaries has not been formed yet, they feel rather alone as practicing educators and do not know where to turn for help or share doubts and problems with. They discuss their activities more often with their friends and relatives than with other adult educators and this is the reason why critical reflection is not achieved.
Learning to become a legitimate participant in a community involves learning how to talk (and be silent) in the manner of full participants (Lave & Wenger, 1991) but adult educators in Estonia do not often have possibility for that.

Some factors supporting the formation and development of professional identity may be lacking or insufficient; therefore, adult educators may feel that learning and growth is difficult. Although the work of an adult educator is complicated, the studies to become one are often conducted unconsciously and lack systematic approach. If an educator does not think about self as an educator, i.e. does not identify self as an adult educator, it is possible that they do not pay enough attention to learning and teaching processes or personal learning and development as an educator.

Transformative learning may be experienced as disorienting and confusing process and during these emotionally stressed periods adult educators need stronger support to continue their learning and self-development processes. This means that educators need various support systems: communication within networks, clubs, organisation leaders’ improved knowledge of how to support educators’ growth, informative articles in the press, research, etc. Acknowledgement of personal identity is an important step for an educator fostering professional growth and helping to achieve emotional balance and professional well-being.

References


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Democratic Approach to School Development: Involving All Interest Groups

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Abstract
Democracy aims to achieve a shared understanding by involving all interest groups. In the process of school development democratic approaches embrace school administrations, teachers, students, and parents as participants in vision building and decision-making. This article provides a survey of some of the main building blocks of democracy in schools. Different aspects have been analyzed: values, rights, school climate, students' relationships, their certainty about the future, the role of teachers and also parental involvement which is considered to be one of the key elements of school development but has still been overlooked in many schools. The article is based on an extensive study carried out in Estonia. The results revealed several differences in values, in perception of school climate and certainty about the future between different parties at school: teachers, students, and parents; differences between Estonian and Russian students were also studied.

Key words: democracy; school development; parental involvement; school climate; coping.

The Importance of Democracy in Education
Democracy is traditionally viewed as a system in which policy is decided by the preference of the majority in a decision-making process. This simple concept has been interpreted and applied in various ways throughout history. Various mechanisms have been developed through which the people control (or are supposed to control) the government. There are several kinds of democracy: direct and indirect democracy (the most well-known kinds are representative and delegative democracy), plus alternative kinds of democracy such as bioregional, anticipatory, grassroots, and participatory democracy (Wikimedia, 2006). Participatory democracy involves consensus decision-making and offers greater representation. In current times the focus has turned towards wide participation of all interest groups and stakeholders in negotiation and decision-making. The growing positive attitude towards and use of participatory democracy has been the mainstream trend since the middle of twentieth century (Davis, 1999; Leftwich, 1996). Participatory democracy can play an important role in learning communities and learning organizations.

As Dewey (1966) already has pointed out, democracies depend on education – but only an education that itself incorporates democratic proc-
esses can truly serve a democracy. The growth of democratization reveals tensions associated with the concept and practice of democracy, particularly as applied to education (Haynes, 2000; Schou, 2001). On governmental level the democratization of education has been underlined by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports on education in different countries (for example, OECD report on Estonia, 2001). Here democracy means the wide participation in educational decision-making, including curriculum development, stakeholders, and especially – non-governmental organisations (NGOs). The democratization on school level depends on the democratic processes on state level but on some degree it is also the subject of inter-school culture of participation, empowerment, and cooperation. In resent post-soviet democracies that process has usually been pointed as “democratization, humanization, participation” (Ruus & Sarv, 2000).

Many theorists and philosophers in the field of education (Darling-Hammond, Lieberman, Wood & Falk, 1994; Dewey, 1966) have stated, that the democratization of education on school and classroom level depends on school culture and especially – on teacher. In his books on society and education, Giroux (1989) underlines that teacher as an introducer of democracy in classroom needs to obtain the experience and attitude at least from her/his initial teacher training. Democratic changes in higher school, especially in teacher training are mostly connected (especially since middle of nineties) with ideas of learning organization and knowledge management. As Fullan and Hargreaves (1996) have pointed out – the school (including university) and learning process (including teachers initial and in-service training) have to change towards system approach, knowledge creation, and teamwork/cooperation (Fullan, 1995; Hargreaves, 1999).

It is important to stress, that school culture, especially classroom culture and educational environment in higher schools during the Soviet system has always been autocratic and if ever there was some kind of democracy – it was mainly a strict “democratic centralism” – the power of majority over minority and expectation of obedience by minority without negotiations (Sarv, 1999). Educational renewal in Estonia began in 1987, during the “rush-time” of Perestroika in the Soviet Union. In education there was a “breaking of hierarchies” and a widely synergetic revolution. Today we see the integration of “top-down” and “down-top” reforms and wide participatory democracy in this (Ruus & Sarv, 2000).

The ultimate aim of school development is to transform the authoritative atmosphere of the school (Pshunder, 2005) to a democratic learning and decision-making community (Howard-Hamilton, 1995). And the change must come not only from the “outside” – ministry or academic scholars but from school-based educators who live the daily realities of school life (Darling-Hammond et al., 1994). When people working at school decide to change, they need to build their vision for change together, including all parties and their perspectives: district, administrators, teachers, students, parents, and community. While these participants are working to change, the efforts themselves become a form of learning that not only enhances a change effort, but results in the shaping of a community of democratic knowledge that can have lasting significance (Howard-Hamilton, 1995;
It is important to understand that there cannot be “one best system” for educating all people in all places around the world. In its place the concept of democratic practice in schools, communities of learning grounded in their own specific contexts and realities of their own society should be introduced (Lieberman, Wood & Falk, 1994; Schou, 2001). The recent years have brought many positive changes according to that concept into Estonian educational system: learner-centred curricula in most schools, enabling teachers to participate in collaborative problem solving and decision making, building partnership with parents and the attempt to try ideas as expanded functions of leadership, collegial decision-making, collaborative goal setting, interdisciplinary studies and others. The research on 60 school development plans in 2000-2001 showed, that schools can be differentiated into four directions according to their inclusiveness/participation-exclusiveness and innovations/noble values-conservatism/utilitarian values (Sarv, 2002). The schools with higher level of inclusiveness and innovations have more elements of participatory democracy on different levels, such as teachers cooperation in school curriculum creation, students and parents participation in curriculum development processes, the role of students' selfgovernment in decision-making in school (Sarv, 2002).

The Virtues of Involving All Parties in Democratic School Development

Democracy provides the means of communicating the vision of community and transforming that vision into reality. Democracy also serves as the link between individual and collective development (Beane, 2002; Howard-Hamilton, 1995). There are certain primary virtues that are advocated in the democratic approach to school development, such as caring, climate of trust, moral decisions and actions, respect, involvement, and unified responsibility (Landau & Gathercoal, 2000; Beane, 2002; Power & Power, 1992). These virtues are included in the rules adopted by all community members from all the involved parties. These new attitudes lead towards changed community in general, helping schools to develop towards learner-centeredness.

As a part of the changes in school organization, many schools have increased opportunities for teachers and also students to participate in the process of school governance and decision making (Lieberman et al., 1994; McCulloch, 1993). Expanded leadership roles for teachers, participatory structures, site-based management that allow school staff to have greater involvement in the life of school community have resulted in a richer learning environment for all. Involving students into school development is not a new idea and many schools expose democracy and community in their mission statements but very often it does not function in reality, the headmasters and teachers still govern autocratically (Pshunder, 2005). Few, if any, formal opportunities for students are available to participate in deciding what matters most to students – school discipline and social life (Pshunder, 2005). Although most schools have some form of student government, its function is typically and carefully confined to organizing social events mostly. Research consistently indicates that democratic framework at school for decision-making promotes moral character development and responsibility which leads to a decrease in dropout rates, in acts...
of violence in and around schools, and also results in an increase in levels of daily attendance (Kohlberg, 1981; Landau & Gathercoal, 2000).

When speaking about students’ democratic education it is important to notice that both the knowledge taught in the classroom and the school climate, the culture of school has a deep educative character. Implanti
ing the ideas of democracy into classroom teaching has to be assisted by gen-
eral school policy (Howard-Hamilton, 1995; Lieberman et al., 1994) – open
discussions and problem solving together with children, questionnaires for
children in order to get their opinion about important decisions to be made
in the school development process, and so on. Such systems help students
to understand that rights in a democracy must always be balanced with
social responsibilities.

One of the social democratic strategies at schools is parental involve-
ment (Vincent, 1996). Many schools have created close relationships with
parents, in which their commitment, goals, and strategies for children can
be shared. Such partnership helps to connect parents to schools in ways
that serve multiple purposes. Parental involvement in school may have four
different levels (Cheng, 1997; Shepard & Carlson, 2003; Eddy, 2004):
  * participation in educating individual students;
  * participation in parents organization;
  * participation in the daily operations of the school;
  * participation in school decision-making.

In current paper we concentrate on parents participation in the daily
operations of the school and in school decision-making. The reasons that
hinder the effective home-school cooperation are also discussed.

Parental involvement in education is associated with improvements in
students’ school behaviour, social competency, and school performance.
There are many substantial researches supporting the claim that parent
involvement leads to improved educational attainment (Garcia-Bacete,
2003; Hill & Craft, 2003; Peraita & Pastor, 2000; McNeal, 1999). These
findings have formed the basis for different educational reforms where
parental involvement is one of the key elements of the programs (Cassel,
2003; McNeal, 1999).

The Model for Assessing Democracy in Education
Educational researchers (Beane, 2002; Davis, 1999; Howard-Hamilton,
1995; Landau & Gathercoal, 2000; Patrick, 1994; Power & Power, 1992)
have outlined different building blocks of democracy which should be looked
at when comparing educational systems: values, rights, system structures,
school processes, learning content, balance, training, and outcomes. Here
are some key questions and statements to open up the meaning of these
eight points (Davis, 1999; McCulloch, 1993; Patrick, 1994):
1) **Basic Values**: Values associated with democracy are enshrined in a
   school development plan or mission statement. Both the students, par-
   ents, and support staff are involved in the policy formulation.
2) **Rights**: Do students and teachers have the same rights? Are rights
   bracketed together with responsibilities?
3) **System Structures**: This point embraces the cooperation between dif-
   ferent parts of educational systems.
4) **Structures Within Schools:** The general structure of school governance.

5) **Learning Content:** The curriculum and what is taught at school should involve the basic elements of democracy such as freedom of expression, the educational equivalent of the free press. However, the process of democracy in school cannot be limited only to that area, students should also have an opportunity to participate in decisions on the curriculum and its assessment, to feel that they are valued at school, resulting in an enjoyable school experience.

6) **Balance:** The balance between freedom and constraint is one of the key elements as well. The changes toward a democratic system have to appear in every level of educational system.

7) **Training:** The core questions here are: What training or rethinking is seen as necessary when democratising education? How closely are teacher training programs connected with their practical outcome – schools? Does the curriculum of these programs involve the elements of democracy like cooperation, effective decision-making; does it stress human rights and teach the political background of democracy?

8) **Outcomes:** A continual debate within this area is access to higher education versus lifelong learning. The educational system often stresses the importance of results or outcomes (the point of state exams) rather than the competences essential for successful adult life. How has this conflict affected the students’ certainty about their coping in their future life? What are the schools really preparing their students for?

Assessing an educational system according to these eight points gives a good general review of the current situation. Some of the sub-questions of different points overlap as they may measure different sides of one phenomenon. Democracy is a political culture that generally implies the simultaneous operation of several elements and therefore it is important to study different smaller units to get the entire picture.

**The Research Questions and Methods**

The focus of entire research this article draws on includes school factors that presumably could have a connection with either students’ truancy or their low academic achievement. The underlying question of the research was what schools can do to support students’ coping and prevent their dropping out and other unacceptable behavioural outcomes and to what extent this can be done. But the article presented does not give the whole overview of the results of the research as it concentrates only on the aspects related to the topic of democracy.

The basic data was gathered using self-report questionnaires for school leaders, teachers, students, and parents. Questionnaires used 5 or 6-point Likert-scale. Full anonymity was pursued for all participants (including teachers and students) and schools. It was an extensive cross-sectional study carried out in Estonia in 2004. The questionnaires to all examined parties (school administration, teachers, students, and parents) consisted of the same content blocks about the questions studied. The blocks embraced a wide range of different aspects connected to the school climate and learning.
environment. The thoroughness of the questionnaires enabled us to use the obtained data to study some of the elements of democracy in Estonian schools as well.

Content blocks of the questionnaires (* includes democracy related aspects):

- Teachers’, students’, and parents’ evaluation of school as organisation* – cooperation, leadership, information, goals, relationships in organisation (including values, participation in decision-making, learning motivation, innovations);
- Evaluation of reality of professional work* (including available technology);
- Relationships (between students, between students and teachers)*;
- Parent-school cooperation, parental involvement*;
- Questions about coping strategies;
- Personal data.

Main dimensions for data analysis:

- inclusiveness or participation versus exclusiveness;
- innovation and high values versus conservatism, passiveness, and narrow/utilitarian values;
- cooperation versus individualism;
- short term versus long term perspectives in educational process;
- teachers’ views on students’ participation and possible role in educational process and school life.

The sample consisted of 65 schools in Estonia (10% of Estonian schools). The sample forms the adequate representation of schools – geographically, by working language (Estonian or Russian), by results of state exams during last three years (best and weakest results in their area – county or city), by participation in innovative processes. The number of participants: 120 representatives of school administration, 624 teachers, 3838 students from 7th, 9th, and 11-12th grades, and 2048 parents. To analyse results f- and t-tests were used to compare means and dispersion, regression analysis was applied for a connection model, and cluster analyses for grouping.

These results are seen as a background for the next stage of the research – the qualitative part. The aim of the second stage will be to describe the school culture in order to analyse the aspects that could increase the effectiveness of learning process more thoroughly. In the second stage of the investigation an international comparative research is planned as well.

According to this article’s topic, the following phenomena will be analysed: 1) teachers’ view on students’ participation, 2) the differences in values of the main interest groups at school, 2) the home-school cooperation: the parents’ rights to have a say in decision making, their satisfaction with frequency and forms of cooperation, and the factors that hinder home-school cooperation, 3) school climate in students’ perception, and 4) the students’ certainty about coping in their future lives as a descriptive characteristic of the outcomes.
The Results

Teachers’ view on students’ participation and possible role in educational process and school life

In general teachers (52%) found, that students self-government has an important role in school and students could have a greater role in educational process (45-50%). As the students’ self-government and participation in decision-making are important factors for “schooling for democracy” it should be looked at more specifically.

In basic schools the Z-score for students’ participation was 0.02, in secondary schools – 0.10. This means, that in basic schools the participation in decision-making is somewhat higher than in secondary schools. For Estonian and mixed (both Estonian and Russian) schools the Z-score was positive (0.08 and 0.02), but for Russian schools – negative (-0.46). It means, that in Russian schools the role of students’ participation in educational decision-making is lower than in other schools and teachers in general value its growth less. This difference can be interpreted as a difference in democratic aspects of classroom level school culture in schools working in different languages. If we take into account, that teachers’ pre-service education in these types of schools differs as well (most of teachers of Russian schools have obtained their profession from Russian teacher training institutes or universities, teachers of Estonian schools – from Estonian higher schools), some influence of teacher training can be supposed here.

For democratic participation on school level (role of students self-government) the difference was lower – in secondary school this influence was higher than in basic schools, and no difference between Estonian and Russian schools was observed. But – male teachers estimated the role of students’ self-government much lower than female teachers, young teachers (age group 20-30 years) much lower than older ones, in cities – much lower than in countryside schools. Another important fact was that the higher the teacher’s qualification was, the more the teacher appreciated her/his students’ role in governance.

The analysis of answers revealed that the pattern of teachers’ views on students does not depend so much on teachers’ personality and pedagogical biography but on the school culture teacher is working in. The most effective student self-government and widely supported participation in educational decision-making appeared to be in these schools that had more qualities of learning organization and where the teacher cooperation and involvement in inter-school teamwork (including in-service further education) was the highest.

It has to be mentioned, that parents saw the role of students’ self-government higher than teachers. As we did not asked students themselves about the role of self-government, this is one of questions for further research. But it is quite obvious, that parents’ opinion reflects students’ attitudes and evaluations, to some extent of course.
The ranks of values of different parties at school

Table 1 shows the student’s, parents’, teachers’, and schoolmasters’ 1) ranking of values, 2) their mean values on a 5-point scale (in brackets), and 3) the percentage of students who considered the respective value important or very important.

Table 1. Comparison of value ranking of students, parents, teachers, and schoolmasters

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Schoolmasters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement</td>
<td>1 (3.35)</td>
<td>1 (3.34)</td>
<td>3-4 (3.45)</td>
<td>10 (3.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>81.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Politeness</td>
<td>2 (3.27)</td>
<td>4 (3.18)</td>
<td>6 (3.37)</td>
<td>8-9 (3.49)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honesty</td>
<td>3-5 (3.17)</td>
<td>3 (3.23)</td>
<td>2 (3.49)</td>
<td>2 (3.65)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A wish to improve oneself</td>
<td>3-5 (3.16)</td>
<td>6-7 (3.13)</td>
<td>not among choices</td>
<td>not among choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>64.2%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discipline</td>
<td>3-5 (3.15)</td>
<td>2 (3.24)</td>
<td>10 (3.25)</td>
<td>11 (3.40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>63.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extensive knowledge</td>
<td>6-7 (3.11)</td>
<td>5 (3.14)</td>
<td>8-9 (3.27)</td>
<td>not among choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60.1%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ safety</td>
<td>6-7 (3.11)</td>
<td>6-7 (3.13)</td>
<td>1 (3.54)</td>
<td>1 (3.79)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good relations with people</td>
<td>8 (2.99)</td>
<td>8 (3.11)</td>
<td>5 (3.43)</td>
<td>4 (3.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.4%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caring</td>
<td>9 (2.96)</td>
<td>9 (3.10)</td>
<td>7 (3.29)</td>
<td>6 (3.54)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>51.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ health</td>
<td>10 (2.94)</td>
<td>10 (3.06)</td>
<td>3-4 (3.45)</td>
<td>3 (3.61)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50.8%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance</td>
<td>12 (2.86)</td>
<td>13 (3.01)</td>
<td>not among choices</td>
<td>5 (3.58)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>45.6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct appearance</td>
<td>13 (2.80)</td>
<td>12 (3.02)</td>
<td>15 (2.98)</td>
<td>12 (3.28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46.9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity of thought</td>
<td>11 (2.88)</td>
<td>11 (3.04)</td>
<td>11 (3.22)</td>
<td>not among choices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46.0%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School enjoyment</td>
<td>14 (2.73)</td>
<td>14 (2.96)</td>
<td>12 (3.19)</td>
<td>7 (3.53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obedience</td>
<td>not among choices</td>
<td>not among choices</td>
<td>14 (3.03)</td>
<td>13 (3.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>not among choices</td>
<td>not among choices</td>
<td>8-9 (3.27)</td>
<td>8-9 (3.49)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Analysing the ranks of students’, parents’, teachers’, and schoolmasters’ values (see Table 1), it appears that in students’ and parents’ hierarchy of values academic achievement is most important, while in the opinion of teachers and schoolmasters this is much less so. According to the latter, most important value is the students’ safety. Students place polite-
ness in second position, whereas parents place discipline and teachers and schoolmasters’ honesty instead. Schoolmasters and teachers place children’s health in third position, which in the opinion of students themselves appears only in 8th place and in the case of parents even lower. Good relations with people and caring are in the opinion of students’ average values at their school. Teachers, but especially schoolmasters, give the named values a much higher place. Least important in the opinion of students are tolerance, activity of thought, and school enjoyment. School enjoyment for the schoolmasters appears to be much more important and can be found in the centre of the values hierarchy. Correct appearance belongs in the case of most respondents among the relatively less important values. Schoolmasters and teachers consider least important obedience, in case of parents and students, data about this is unfortunately lacking.

According to the main dimensions of the analysis, it may be said that the utilitarian values (such as academic achievement) are often higher than democratic values or the values of humanistic point of view. How the values differ between different clusters of teachers and types of schools is the question for further study.

The home-school cooperation

Half of the parents (51%) were satisfied with the frequency of cooperation and they assessed it with the index of 3.71 (on a 6-point scale), which means, that there is still a large number of parents who would like to cooperate with the school more often. The parents have started to understand the importance of parental involvement in school and they have become very active in reforming the school system: 80% of parents would like to participate in discussions about school development. Most of them are ready to join in the discussions both on a school (53%) and local authorities or even a country level (27%). But not all schools eagerly accept it. More than a half of parents (58%) were not satisfied with the school’s policy on involving parents in the decision-making process. The average index of parents’ assessment in that question was 3.1 (on a 6-point scale), which was the lowest among all asked questions about school’s policy in different areas.

The analysis of different forms of cooperation showed that in schools where more parents’ meetings and discussions about child’s improvement were held together with the child, students’ academic success was on average higher than in other schools (the difference was statistically significant; p < .001). Parents of students from these schools were more willing to participate in the meetings were the child could attend the discussion about his/her achievement. The traditional forms of parental involvement, like parents’ meetings (with parents and class teacher only) and the open-door days (the days when parents can visit classes), were also mentioned by many parents, but a research has shown that schools holding on to these forms only are not successful ones (Lukk, 2005).

The reasons that hinder the effective home-school cooperation were grouped by cluster analysis and four different groups of reasons were distinguished:
1. **Personal aversion**: this group is formed by the reasons that are connected with parent’s direct negative experience in the field of home-school cooperation (17.2% of cases);

2. **Problems of everyday life**: this group consists of reasons that are outside of school – problems at work, in family, lack of time and energy (22.2%);

3. **Senseless efforts**: some parents have tried to join in the decision-making at school but have seen their efforts as senseless; they have experienced the malfunction of the system and even noticed that cooperation with the school may have a bad side-effect on their child (35.2%);

4. **Keeping a distance**: this group of reasons shows the lack of parent’s interest towards the school and child’s studies, such kind of parents try to distance themselves from the problems at school (25.2%).

   These results show that in parents’ opinion the focus of home-school cooperation is more on exclusiveness than inclusiveness. The parents who have been ready to cooperate have lost their willingness because of the negative experience with school. The number of parents who either cannot find time or are not interested is quite large, but it still cannot be an excuse for no home-school cooperation at all. Knowing these facts, it is now school’s – both administration’s and teachers’ – obligation to become an active party of the process organizing the work in a way that would motivate parents to participate.

**School climate in students’ perception**

School climate is formed by various components, which are closely related to each other and therefore different correlations (all of them statistically significant: $p < .0001$) were brought out. The system of values at school correlates ($r = .406$) with the style of communication between students and teachers; it also correlates with the innovativeness of school ($r = .390$). The perception of school enjoyment or school optimism correlates with academic achievement ($r = .417$) and psychological well-being of students ($r = .366$).

The regression analysis, where probability of dropping out was viewed as a dependent variable, revealed that school optimism had the highest prognostic value ($\beta = .333$), the second important factor was family support ($\beta = .097$), and the third was coping or academic achievement ($\beta = .089$). When school optimism in turn was set as a dependent variable, current state of achievement had the highest prognostic value ($\beta = .255$), then came the relationships with the teacher ($\beta = .220$).

The relationships between students at school were different when comparing the two ethnic groups – Estonians (E) and Russians (R). Estonians had better relationships with their peers than Russian students (E-73.3% and R-69.9%), Estonians were also more eager to help others in a group-work and they got help from peers when asked for it more often (E-51.5%, R-37.5%). Russian students had more quarrels with their peers (R-21.3%, E-12.5%).

But in assessing the readiness of their school for changes, the results were quite the opposite. In students opinion the new teaching and learning techniques were more used in Russian schools (E-40.3%, R-52.6%). Esto-
nian students thought more of their schools as old fashioned and fixed to old traditions (E-43.6%, R-35.5%). All the differences between these groups were statistically significant, p<.01.

In relation to freedom of speech, according to students’ subjective observations, Russian students can express their opinion more often than Estonian students (R-57.3%, E-51.6%). Besides this, there are more students among Russians who find that teachers are really interested in their learning process (R-36.6%, E-31.8%). And two thirds of all students think that teachers consider students’ opinion and again the Russian index was higher than that of the Estonians (R-70.6%, E-65.9%).

These results show students’ opinion about the main dimensions of democracy at school describing the aspects of cooperation, inclusiveness, and innovativeness. The results support the need for a democratic, learner-centred environment at school that would guarantee the children their right to feel free and good at school. School optimism plays an important part in both students’ academic achievement and their psychological well-being. The low indices of cooperation in group-work and high occurrence of quarrels in Russian schools indicate the necessity to introduce the basic rules of democratic management in the classroom. As students feel their uncertainty about these questions it is important to teach them not only the problem solving techniques, their rights and rights of others, but also responsibilities. The prerequisite for changes has already been set, although Russian language schools are more open to implement innovations (in students’ perception), which may be the result of them being a minority group and therefore forced to struggle for their survival.

Students’ certainty about coping in their future lives

This part of research analyzes short term versus long term perspectives describing students’ certainty about their coping. A great number of students (81.5%) believe that they can cope well at school, they are not afraid of behavioural problems that may occur (82% of girls and 68% of boys are certain about that). Almost one fifth (18.5%) are worried about the graduation and two fifths about entering university. 62% of all students are sure of not being unemployed in the future, but there is a remarkably big difference between Estonian and Russian students (E-73.7% and R-17.9%; p < .01). Russian students seem to be much more worried about their future employment and coping in life. But the opinions about coping at school are absolutely different. Students of Estonian schools are more confident about managing well at school (E-84.7% and R-72.1%; p < .01). But at the same time they are more concerned about the incapacity to graduate (E-19.5%, R-15.4%; p < .01) and they are significantly more afraid of not entering university (E-41.6%, R-26.7%). These indices are not so high among Russian students at all, which may show that Russian students feel quite comfortable at school but they are uncertain about their life in our society in general.
Comparing the differences between students’ opinions and the opinions of their parents concerning coping at school (Figure 3), the most significant differences ($p<.01$) appear in certainty about graduation and general coping. There are no remarkable differences concerning behavioural problems. This shows that parents lack sufficient and true knowledge of their child’s academic potential, which is the result of a poor home-school cooperation. They know their child’s behaviour and therefore can draw adequate conclusions.

**Conclusion**

The process of building a democratic school is a complex one and requires an effort to maintain a delicate balance between the needs of individuals and the interests of the group, trying to reflect the different perspectives of people from different backgrounds and experiences. The problems in the process of change must not be viewed as inevitable failures but as challenges that can be met and overcome. All the tensions cannot be solved with a certain formula or prescription, but according to the principle of democratic community, the internal problems have to be solved based on individual and collective experiences which would lead to the forming of a democratically educated learner. In the changing world that requires workers with developed problem-solving skills, higher-order thinking processes, and citizens who share democratic values and practice, the move toward democratic practice in schools has to be considered as essential.

Speaking about Estonian educational system and schools it is important to notice that at present there are two contradictory aspects concerning democracy: from one side the decentralization, schools’ autonomy, right for self-government (including school curriculum development) are declared and introduced by the Ministry of Education; from the other side – the Ministry has created a system of centralized directives, control and standardization mechanisms (including state tests, state exams). So, the democratization on teacher level has increased in terms of curriculum creation and decreased in terms of directives about grading, documentations, etc. The participation of teachers (and their organizations) in educational decision-making on state level is almost nonexistent.
On school level in general Estonian schools share democratic values—headmasters and teachers value honesty, tolerance, good relations, and they understand the importance of involving all interest groups or parties in vision building and decision-making process. But students’ ranking of values is much different—when it comes to school the most important value is a utilitarian one—academic success, a wish to improve themselves. The parents’ opinion is very similar to that of the students—academic achievement is the most important and they have even more radical views giving discipline the second place. This raises the question of a gap between theory and practice, which may also be called a communication gap as teachers have not succeeded to pass their democratic view to the children and their parents. Parents should be guided on their way to close relationships with school. Most parents are ready to cooperate but they need assistance and, of course, they need to feel accepted and welcomed at school.

The changes in schools depend a lot on national education policy. If the education policy states that education should foster democracy, it is important to be sure that the teacher training programmes have been altered to promote trainees learning cooperatively, with the teacher training curriculum stressing decision-making and including knowledge of political education and human rights. The level of cooperation between schools and teacher training programmes has to be sufficient to prepare young teachers for democratic class management. Schools should play a large part in initial teacher training as full partners of higher education institutions. It helps to establish a democratic framework for the evolution of teacher education between partners with equal and complementary strengths in professional development. It also offers the possibility for more democratic modes of teacher education partnerships through the transfer of power between distinctive but complementary sets of experts. It permits curriculum to be extended beyond the classroom to the socio-political context within which schools, pupils, teachers, and parents operate. It incorporates democratic values and the notion of education as liberation thus maintaining congruence with the aims of education itself.

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Diversity of Early Childhood Education
Theories in a Democratic Society

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Abstract
In a democratic society different views and conceptions on educational theories are seen as acceptable and useful. It is asked here what kind of theories we really have and what kind of theories we still could have. The research material is gathered from the general literature used in early childhood education during the last thirty years. The texts of the theories are analyzed using the content analysis method. Many of the theories are developmental, some are didactical, some are psychological, and very few are societal. There are also pedagogical theories. In this article the point is to cast light on the pedagogical theories and give the reasons for that. The analysis of early childhood education theories takes place in the context of a democratic society and sustainable development.

Key words: democratic society; diversity in education; early childhood education; preschool; Froebel’s theory; sustainable development.

Introduction
The decade from 2005 to 2014 has been declared as the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. Sustainable development means ecological, social, cultural, and economic sustainability, all of which rest upon the knowledge, skills, and values that support them. All four ingredient areas are inter-dependent and can not be fully separated from each other.

Agenda 21 (Chapter 36) points out the importance of education and training for sustainable development. According to it the countries and educational institutions should integrate environmental and developmental issues into existing training curricula and promote the exchange of their methodologies and evaluations.

Education and pedagogical theories should have a connection to the goals of democratic, pluralistic, and sustainable development of a society. For instance, the critical pedagogy questions the structures of the school system and teacher education that promote social inequality and injustice (Kanpol, 1999: 27). The critical pedagogy is ruled by the ethical ideals such as justice, freedom, emancipation, democracy, non-violence, and pluralism. Pluralism in education calls for the diversity of different theories. The significance of theories can be understood after realizing that theories themselves participate in constructing the educational processes (Arendt, 2002: 308.) Peters and Burbules (2004: 90) hold that, for instance, Freire’s
ideas are significant for today as well, when it is important to focus on social justice and participating democracy as well as on a critical approach to pedagogy.

Early childhood education and preschool are laying foundations for educational processes and the processes in a democratic society and sustainable development. In training the teachers for small children, the theories of education have an immense impact on how the educators see the phenomenon of education and its connections to the society, democracy, pluralism, and the broader issues of sustainability (Härkönen, 2004).

In this article the question is, what is the diversity of theories in the area of early childhood education, have any theories been left aside, what is the focus of theories applied, and how can the links between the theories, society, and democracy be seen. The societal context here is the Finnish democratic society.

Problems, Data, and Methods
In the scientific literature on early childhood education there are many general theories with which the phenomenon of early childhood education is closely related.

In this study the questions are the following:
1) What are the sources of influence on the Finnish early childhood education?
2) Where is the focus in early childhood education?
3) What have been the most famous general theories in early childhood education?
4) What kind of a picture do the books on early childhood education represent about didactics, Bronfenbrenner’s theory, Vygotsky’s theory, the constructivist theory, and Froebel’s theory?
5) What sciences do these theories belong to?
6) What are the main characteristics of these theories when they are compared with the focus of the Finnish early childhood education?
7) What notions arise when these theories are compared to the Froebelian theory?

The general literature on early childhood education over the last thirty years forms the basis of research. While going through the texts, the researcher identifies central categories, conceptions, and their meanings in these theories and makes an interpretative and representative comparison. Text samples are also presented (Härkönen, 1996: 90-114; 1999: 149-165). The main issue concerns the Finnish context of the theories on early childhood education.

Diversity of the Sources of Influence on Early Childhood Education
The Finnish way of bringing children up has influenced and still influences the institutional early childhood education. For example, the parents’ educational goals have been studied from time to time (Ojala, 1993: 159-174). The opinions of the professionals about the problems of work and work education at Finnish homes have been studied (Härkönen, 1991; 1996;
2005a; 2005b) as well as mothers’ and fathers’ interaction with small girls and boys in work education (Härkönen, 1991; 1996).

The early childhood education and preschool in Finland have been outlined on the basis of school teaching. Uno Cygnaeus, the father of the Finnish primary school, also founded a kindergarten. He introduced pedagogical ideas from Europe to Finland. The present preschool and primary education curricula have in their form and content conceived as logical continuations. Certain didactical theories of school teaching have been applied in early childhood education and preschool (Esiopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2000, 2000).

The Finnish kindergarten pedagogical tradition is a hundred years long and it has been strong by its impact through the years until today. Even if the German Friedrich Froebel’s pedagogy (Froebel, 1951) holds a dominant position in pedagogical sphere, we also feel the influence of the teachings of John Dewey, Maria Montessori, Helen Parkhurst, Rudolf Steiner, Célestin Freinet, Paulo Freire, Vasily Suchomlinsky, Alexander Neill, Loris Malaguzzi, and a myriad of others. Coming from Sweden, we have felt the influence of the dialogue pedagogy, which has features from Paulo Freire’s pedagogy (Ojala, 2002).

The present day Finnish curricula carry a reference to the pedagogical teachings of Montessori and Steiner (Esiopetuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet 2000, 2000: 20), and Freinet’s and Malaguzzi’s Reggio Emilian thoughts as the alternative pedagogies (Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet, 2004: 41). But the most famous pedagogical theory is that of the German pedagogue, Friedrich Froebel. The Finnish kindergarten – nowadays ‘the day care center’ – is based on Froebel’s pedagogy. This is why Froebel’s pedagogical theory will be analyzed here.

The author has come to pedagogical systems thinking through her study of pedagogues, mentioned above (Härkönen, 1991; 2003a; 2003b; 2003c). The pedagogical theories of the mentioned philosopher-pedagogues give a reference to the systems and holistic way of thinking, where, for instance, every educational part of the theory is connected with the social category (Checkland, 1985: 245-285; Härkönen & Jämsä, 2006).

In Finland we have also studied the educational models in our neighbouring nations and other countries in Europe and elsewhere.

The closest sciences to education are pedagogics, developmental psychology, psychology, philosophy, and sociology. Based on many sciences, the diversity of theoretical approaches can be found in the area of early education (Ojala, 1993).

Behaviorism has been used as a theory of learning, but it is subject to criticism. Didactics has been used as a theory of teaching. Bronfenbrenner’s theory, Piaget’s and Vygotsky’s theories are developmental theories (Vasta, 2002). Constructivism has been used as a theory of learning. We also know a societal critical theory, which points to in-equality in the society (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999). The diversity of the sources of influence on early childhood education is shown in the Figure 2.
The Focus of Early Childhood Education

The science which studies the phenomenon named ‘early childhood education’ is ‘the early childhood education science’. In Finland early childhood education means ‘care, education, and teaching’ for children from the birth to seven years of age. Preschool is understood as early childhood education for the six-year-olds. This means that preschool belongs to early childhood education or it can also be said that preschool is a part of early childhood education. Primary school starts at the age of seven. Preschool has many things in common with the first two grades at school. The newest national preschool curriculum was adopted in 2000, and the newest curriculum for early childhood education was published in 2004. It is based on the national lines of early childhood education from the year 2002 (Esiope- tuksen opetussuunnitelman perusteet, 2000, 2000; Varhaiskasvatuksen valtakunnalliset linjaukset, 2002; Varhaiskasvatussuunnitelman perusteet, 2004).

In this article the concept ‘early childhood education’ always contains the concept ‘preschool’ even if it is not written. The main science is ‘early childhood education science’ and the main focus is ‘early childhood education’, more exactly ‘care, education, and teaching’.

Pedagogical Theories

Froebel’s views on early childhood education

Here the author takes one example of pedagogical theories, Friedrich Froebel’s theory. In the article “The new systems theory of early childhood education and preschool as a frame of reference for sustainable education” Härkönen (2003c) has studied educational thinking of the German pedagogue Friedrich Wilhelm August Froebel (1782-1852) and that of the Englishman Aleksander Neill (1883-1973). In that article Härkönen (p. 31) presented the figure of the general systems model of educational thinking. In the next chapter the author concentrates on Froebel’s educational thinking and creates a figure about it.

Froebel has been called ‘the father of the kindergarten’. Also the Finnish kindergarten pedagogy rests on Froebel’s ideas.

Below, the author brings Froebel’s pedagogical categories, referred to in her research (Härkönen, 1991) (Figure 1).

The central categories of Froebel’s theory are views on the world, human being, society, knowledge, education, goals, contents, and methods. Methods are opened here into views on basic activities and care, views on play (Spiel), work arts and crafts (Beschäftigung), views on teaching (Unterricht) arts and crafts, views on celebrations, and views on outdoor education.

The role of educator (Erzieher) and interaction with children are important and can be found in every category. The category of ‘arts and crafts’ can be included both in the category of work and in the category of teaching.
Figure 1. Froebel’s views on early childhood pedagogy

All the categories mentioned above had philosophy-based theories attached to them. For example, the Froebel’s bricks embody the important philosophical notion of the universe. Härkönen (1991; 2003b) has found the systems character of Froebel’s educational thinking.

In Froebel’s theory the ideal society is represented as democracy. Froebel’s theory is a pedagogical theory. The focus of it is the phenomenon of education and in it the concepts of care, education, and teaching are
found. The features of different sciences like developmental psychology, psychology, philosophy, and sociology can be found in Froebel’s pedagogical theory. Froebel has also given views on a whole pedagogical process (Barrow-Bernsdorff et al., 1977; von den Driesch & Esterhues, 1964; Froebel, 1951; Günther et al., 1973).

Non-pedagogical Theories
The author takes here four different and famous non-pedagogical theories: didactics, Bronfenbrenner’s theory, Vygotsky’s theory, and constructivism.

Didactics and teaching
Didactics (Brotherus, Hytönen & Krokfors, 2002: 103-116) is a discipline, the study of teaching. The development of didactics is closely connected to the history of development of school teaching. Didactics is a doctrine about teaching. Didactics contains the visions about the goals and contents of teaching and proposes the best means for reaching these goals. Didactics also offers guidelines for drawing up curricula. Practical didactics is always of normative nature.

Teaching is a comprehensive process, it is planning, action, and evaluation (Brotherus, Hytönen & Krokfors, 2002: 113-116). Teaching always implies the definition of goals, contents, methods, and values. Kansanen (1991: 251) holds that a teacher’s ‘pedagogical thinking’ is the principal problem of teacher education. The differences in thinking and in visions have an impact on teaching. Brotherus, Hytönen, and Krokfors (2002: 50-59) single out the child-centred, child-originating, and adult-originating pedagogical avenues of thought as examples of different ways of thinking.

Preschool in Finland has been widely influenced by school didactics. It is not a useful thing when school didactics widens its reach at the expense of a broader child pedagogics (Härkönen, 2002). It can then have an unsustainable effect from the point of view of child’s development. For instance, Froebel connected teaching with play, work, and other activities, Freinet saw working as a teaching method, Malaguzzi liked teaching to art, and Rudolf Steiner totally denied teaching before the age of seven. However, there are many features in didactics that are needed also in early childhood education theory (Figure 2).

U. Bronfenbrenner’s Theory and Development
In Finland in the sphere of early childhood education Bronfenbrenner’ theory of ecological development (1979) has been known for over 30 years. It has been applied in describing education, even if for Bronfenbrenner himself it is a theory of development. He has himself criticized his own theory (Bronfenbrenner, 1989). The Kurt Lewin’s theory that served as a starting point explained behaviour that Bronfenbrenner changed into development. The model does not namely decide what generates development, or education, says Bronfenbrenner himself (1989: 221).

Bronfenbrenner’s theory is a systems theory. Ballantine (1989: 14) has interpreted the systems theory not as a theory but as a model. Olsen (1978: 22) says that “a systems model is not a substantive theory of social organization. Rather, it is a highly general, content-free conceptual framework
within which any number of different substantive theories of social organization can be constructed”. Olsen (1978: 21) defines a system in a following way: “A system is a bounded and unified set of interrelated, dynamic, stable processes”.

Bronfenbrenner’s theory does not offer the tools for a comprehensive description of care, education, and teaching (Figure 2).

L. Vygotsky’s Theory and Development

According to Lehtinen and Kuusinen (2001: 121), Vygotsky’s theories are based on the dialectical philosophical tradition of the 19th century. Vygotsky’s main achievement is the theory of developmental psychology, a theory on development of psychological functions.

Vygotsky (1930/1978: 52-57) speaks of two types of social factors: cultural-historical and individuals with inter-influence between them. The widely known part of Vygotsky’s theory is the zone of proximal development (ZPD). This is the stage of the learning process, when an individual is unable to solve the problems alone, but needs the help of a more experienced person. Learning is a necessary and a universal aspect in the development of human psychological activities (Valsiner, 1987: 64-66; Vygotsky, 1981: 163).

Language has an important meaning in human development. Vygotsky wrote at the end of his book about thought and language that a meaningful word is the microcosm of human consciousness (Vygotsky, 1962). Valsiner (1987: 64) writes: “The central issue in Vygotsky’s theoretical thinking is the development of qualitatively novel (“higher”) psychological functions in the history of cultures and ontogeny of children in the process of organisms’ (i.e. culture or child) purposeful acting upon their environments”. Vygotsky tries to point out that the language has a most significant meaning for the development of human mental activities, direct social interaction, and independent solution finding. Vygotsky’s theory for describing development and language is called the socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1962; Vygotsky, 1978: 56-57; Vygotsky & Luria, 1994: 99-174). Davidova and Kokina (2002: 15) have underlined the systems nature of Vygotsky’s theory.

Vygotsky’s theory is the theory of development. It comprises views on the principles of learning and teaching, but it is not a pedagogical theory for systemizing the phenomena of education and teaching (Figure 2).

Constructivism and Learning

The constructivist theory is currently popular in Finland as the basis for understanding learning. In this theory knowledge is seen neither as an absolute nor as objective, the changing nature and subjectivity of knowledge, generated in the process of learning are emphasized. On some occasions it has been noted that human learning is such a multi-faceted phenomenon that for its perception a number of theories is needed, no one theory alone can provide all the answers. When moving towards a more mature understanding, the theories must not be listed in a strict order of preference (Puolimatka, 2002).

When speaking about a child, Bredekamp and Rosegrant (1992) sees that child constructs knowledge through learning and that earlier knowl-
edge structures channel the adoption of new knowledge. Individual differences have an impact on learning and development.

The curriculum is important document also for the constructivist teacher. Along the principles of the constructivist theory of learning the teacher can arrange constant changes in relation to the learners, the environment, and oneself (Prawat, 1990).

Constructivism is a theory on learning. Learning is a psychological process within the human mind. The term ‘learning’ has in some contexts been replaced by the term ‘teaching’ that has led to the evident confusion of these two phenomena. Teaching is an institution, created in the organised societies, it provides important individual and social development functions. Moreover, the relationship between learning/teaching and playing, working, taking care of oneself, celebrating and outdoor education, and the corresponding pedagogical categories should be understood. The nature of different children’s activities and the corresponding theories should be separated. The child’s learning is different in different activities. Learning gets constructed from different kinds of learning experiences (Häkkinen, 1998) (Figure 2).

Discussion

In this study the first question asked was: What are the sources of influence on the Finnish early childhood education? These sources are home upbringing, school teaching, the models of other countries, and the diversity of sciences. As to other countries, it is not only the neighbouring countries and various European countries, but also the USA and others, too. The important sciences have been the educational science or pedagogics, developmental psychology, psychology, philosophy, and sociology (Figure 2).

The second question was: Where is the focus in early childhood education? Based on the Finnish documents it can be answered that the focus is on ‘early childhood education’, more exactly defined as ‘care, education, and teaching’. Through the prism of theories it can be seen that ‘development’ and ‘learning’ are like the goals of caring, educating, and teaching. Sometimes also ‘socialisation’ is seen as a goal. The main science is ‘the early childhood education science’.

The third question was: What have been the most famous general theories in early childhood education in Finland? The most famous theories can be divided into two categories based on science: a) theories based on the pedagogical science and b) theories based on other than the pedagogical science. The diversity of pedagogical theories includes the names and titles like Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Steiner, Montessori, Dewey, Parkhurst, Freinet, Freire, the dialogue pedagogy, Suchomlinsky, Neill, Malaguzzi, and others. The diversity of theories based on other than the pedagogical science covers the names and titles like behaviourism, didactics, Bronfenbrenner, Piaget, Vygotsky, constructivism, the critical theory, and others.

The fourth question was: What kind of a picture do the books on early childhood education give about didactics, Bronfenbrenner’s theory, Vygotsky’s theory, the constructivist theory, and Froebel’s theory? Froebel’s theory represents the pedagogical science, others are examples of the theo-
Diversity of the theories on early childhood education in a democratic society:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity of the theories of other than the pedagogical science:</th>
<th>Diversity of the sources of influence on Finnish early childhood education and preschool education:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>behaviorism, didactics, Bronfenbrenner’s theory, Piaget’s theory, Vygotsky’s theory, constructivism, critical theory, and others.</td>
<td>home upbringing, school teaching, models of other countries, the diversity of sciences.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fifth question was: What sciences do these theories belong to? And the sixth question was: What are the main characteristics of these theories when they are compared with the focus of the Finnish early childhood education? Didactics is a part of the educational science. It has been used as a theory of teaching. When compared to the focus of early childhood education, it can be asked, how do didactics relate to care, education,
learning, and development? Bronfenbrenner’s theory is a developmental theory, but where is the sphere of care, education, teaching, and learning? Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory has been used as a developmental theory, but how is the process of care, education, teaching, and learning presented? The constructivist theory is a psychological theory and has been generally used as a theory of learning, but how to show care, education, teaching, and development? Froebel’s theory is an educational (or a pedagogical) theory, where the focus is on the educational process including care, education, teaching, learning, and development. Froebel has the developmental theory as a part of his pedagogical theory.

The seventh question was: What notions arise when these theories are compared to the Froebelian theory? As to the four analyzed theories or approaches (didactics, Bronfenbrenner’s theory, Vygotsky’s theory, and the constructivist theory) only didactics represents an educational science and it is the theory/theories for teaching. But didactics cannot function above all educational processes like, for instance, play, work, celebrations, and basic activities. Bronfenbrenner’s theory is not at all an educational theory. It cannot cover the whole educational process. Vygotsky’s socio-cultural theory is wide and useful for many problems, but it cannot cover the whole educational or pedagogical process. The constructivist theory is very famous and valid in Finland today. This theory is focused on the learning process. But it has not penetrated the whole educational phenomenon.

Nowadays, in Finland, we have many theories that are didactical, oriented to developmental psychology, psychology or society. But educational or pedagogical theories like those of Froebel’s, Montessori’s, and Steiner’s have been pushed aside. It can be asked if this is the issue of the power of science? In a democratic society, however, the plenitude of theories and pluralism can be seen as useful. Diversity of the theories on early childhood education in a democratic society can be sustained or created by a new pedagogical theory, which includes diversity and pluralism, or by a diversity of many different theories separated from each other.

Still a more scientific issue is the question about the focus of early childhood education. It must be asked how we are getting answers to the problems of the whole pedagogical process.

Froebel’s theory comprises all the processes that form the focus of early childhood education: care, education, teaching, development, learning, and also socialisation. In Froebel’s theory it is possible to comprehend the whole educational or pedagogical process – as it has also been practiced in many countries during a very long time. However, modern theories will be needed when the societies are changing and when the features of diversity and pluralism are valuable principles. Froebel’s theory is a systems theory and it can be a good example in the future when a new theory or new approaches will be created. In Froebel’s theory the society is clearly one part of the whole system (Figure 1). In the systems model it is possible to realize the connections between all educational categories or parts and the society. When democratic values will be applied to every category of the pedagogical systems theory, it will be possible to move toward a sustainable way of development.
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Intellectual Giftedness Criteria and Indicators: Latvian Teachers’ View

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Abstract
According to the educational strategy of Latvia, the care for intellectual and creative potential of society is marked as one of the main priorities. The paper exposes some contemporary theoretical conceptions of giftedness, as well as presents the research findings of Latvian teachers’ views on giftedness indicators and their correlations. Having analyzed M. Kholodnaya’s, H. Gardner’s, J. Renzulli’s, R. Sternberg’s conceptions, intellectual giftedness can be defined as person’s individual psychological resources, which open a way for creative and intellectual work, new ideas, solutions of problems using non-traditional methods, sensibility to alternative solutions of a problem, openness towards innovative work, etc.

The aims of the empirical study were, on the basis of Latvian teachers’ views, to explore the hierarchy of intellectual giftedness’ criteria (study potential, motivation, creativity, potential of the leader) according to the age, gender, social background of pupils and to calculate the correlations among intellectual giftedness indicators according to the mentioned parameters.

Keywords: giftedness; intellectual giftedness; teachers; criteria; indicators; correlation.

Introduction
New educational paradigms need to be considered in the expanding efforts in the education of the gifted to recognize and nurture creativity in the classroom. In the context of sustainable development, teaching is a multifaceted activity that is carried out in a socially constructed, complex, and institutionalized world of schooling observing the fact that “sustainable development is development in which real long term needs of both present and future human generations are met as optimally as possible. This means that not only the basic individual biological needs, but also real economical, cultural and social needs ought to be met” (Åhlberg, 2003).

The practices adopted in classroom are often influenced by an array of interwoven factors such as
- teacher’s beliefs, values, commitments, and knowledge;
- policies of schools, school districts, or school regions;
- the nature of learners in a particular context.
The research on intellectual giftedness is a serious problem both in science and in practice. In many European countries various investigations have been carried into the essence, identification, and development of giftedness (Renzulli & Reis, 1984; Renzulli, 1986; Torrance, 1988a; Miller, 1994; Eyre, 1997; Freeman, 1998; Babaeva, 1999; Sternberg, 2003, etc.).

Most often research questions are focused on a traditional approach towards evaluating giftedness, but mistakes made in defining and evaluating giftedness cost a lot.

The development of giftedness as one of the components of pedagogical activity should be seen as connected with criteria of giftedness. To determine the relations between the criteria of giftedness and indicators one needs to analyse indicators of several criteria according to parameters (age, gender, social status).

The aim of the research was set to explore the hierarchy of criteria and correlations among the intellectual giftedness indicators according to the age, gender, and social background of pupils drawing on the data obtained from Latvian teachers.

**Theoretical Background of the Research**

The analysis of different theories of giftedness (Wechsler, 1974; Renzulli, Reis & Smith, 1981; Ester, 1982; Gruber, 1986; Renzulli, 1986; Raven, 1991; Sternberg, 1993a, 1993b; Armstrong, 1994; Холодная, 1997; Babaeva, 1999; Gardner, 1999; Sternberg, 2003, and others) indicates that there are different opinions about the core of giftedness. There are more than one hundred definitions of giftedness and no single view on criteria and indicators of intellectual giftedness.

On the basis of these opinions, it is possible to conclude that intellectual giftedness is connected with the high level of intellectual activity. But we can pose the following question: Can high intellectual achievement always be perceived as indicator of giftedness in general?

Intellectual giftedness often is associated with the high achievements in standard psychodiagnostic tests (Wechsler, 1974; Rost, 1988; Raven, 1991, and others). Such association is very questionable since it emphasizes only one aspect of giftedness (more often – convergent thinking). But as the definition of giftedness signifies, it is a biased approach and can not be viewed as an acceptable one.

A lot of researchers (Fredriksen, 1986; Gruber, 1986; Schneider, 1993, and others) point out that for describing intellectual maturity there are other psychological mechanisms that cannot be measured by tests. Therefore we can conclude that high intellectual measurements cannot serve as the ground to establish that an individual possesses extraordinary intellectual giftedness.

Many researchers (Torrance, 1988a, 1988b; Schack & Starko, 1990; Miller, 1994, and others) indicate that approximately 30% of dismissed pupils are gifted. Thus, low academic achievements at school are not the basis for describing student as not gifted. Several important criteria viewed separately (high IQ, high indicators of achievement, high indicators of creativity) cannot be considered as the indicators of intellectual giftedness.
Analysing the popular approaches to intellectual giftedness, Khodnaya (1997) distinguishes several kinds of giftedness:

- Individuals who have IQ > 135–140 and have high intellectual abilities;
- Individuals with very high academic achievements;
- Individuals with very high indicators of creativity;
- Individuals with very high indicators of activity in practical work in a certain field;
- Individuals with very high intellectual achievements in any other field;
- Individuals with extraordinary intellectual abilities who can predict events.

Gardner (1983, 1999) differentiates ten types of intellect, which have a certain correlation. He provides us with a theory of intellect viewed in a multidimensional perspective.

According to Renzulli, intellectual giftedness is the correlation between different kinds of giftedness. The author identifies three significant aspects of giftedness:

- Intellectual abilities which are higher than average, including general (verbal, spatial, logical – abstract) and special abilities (abilities to obtain practical skills in mathematics, physics, ballet, and others);
- Creativity (originality in thinking, liability, openness to a new experience, readiness to take risks);
- High motivation;
- High level of knowledge, skills, patience to solve problems (Renzulli, 1986; Renzulli & Reiss, 1984).

These approaches make us to conclude that a single measurement of an intellect – IQ – is not appropriate to describe abilities of a person. The most important is that these theories give us a view what the curriculum should look like in order to develop all the talents of students.

We need to admit that giftedness is a multidimensional concept, van der Heijden offers the following criteria of giftedness: knowledge, metacognitive knowledge, skills, social recognition, growth, and flexibility (van der Heijden, 2000).

Alexander, Schallert, and Hare (1991) have distinguished three types of knowledge: declarative knowledge (“knowing that”), procedural knowledge (“knowing how”), and conditional knowledge (“knowing when and where or under what conditions”).

Savenkov suggests the following criteria of intellectual potential: originality in thinking, flexibility in thinking, productivity, ability of synthesis and analysis, classification and categorization, high concentration of attention, memory (Савенков, 1999, 2000). In 2004, Savenkov offers curiosity, sensitivity, ability to foresee, critical thinking, originality, ability to think logically, insistence, exacting towards the results of one’s work (Савенков, 2004).

Another example of an attempt to differentiate among different kinds of giftedness is Sternberg’s pentagonal model of intellectual giftedness. Giftedness responds to the following criteria:

- Criterion of superiority – high results in performing various psychological tasks;
- Criterion of rarity – high results in situations which cannot be perceived as typical, and which can be seen rarely in other situations;
Criterion of productivity – what a subject can perform in a certain field;
Criterion of demonstrability – when the results can be repeated in any other situation;
Criterion of significance – achievement can be evaluated according to a concrete cultural context (Sternberg, 2003).

The variety of conceptions helps to see multidimensionality of intellectual giftedness. In our view, intellectual giftedness can be defined as person’s individual psychological resources, which opens a way for creative and intellectual work, new ideas, solution of problems using non-traditional methods, sensibility to alternative solutions of a problem, openness towards innovative work, etc.

Having analysed the concepts mentioned above, we worked out the criteria and indicators of intellectual giftedness (See Appendix) which were approbated in our previous research (Kokina & Davidova, 2005).

Participants and Method of the Research
The research sample comprised 340 teachers who evaluated the gifted pupils in their classes. 274 gifted pupils (among them 165 intellectually gifted students) were evaluated by teachers. Among intellectually gifted students 34 pupils were 6-9 years old, 57 pupils were 10-13 years old, and 74 pupils were 14-19 years old. 71 female and 94 male pupils were evaluated. 73 pupils lived in the countryside and 92 pupils came from the Latvian cities.

The teachers evaluated gifted pupils according to intellectual giftedness criteria and indicators on Likert 4-point scale (See Appendix).

The calculations have been made using the programs EXCEL and SPSS. Having discovered high correlations, the authors could offer significant conclusions in regard to gifted children.

Results

The hierarchy of significance of intellectual giftedness’ criteria
Having analysed the evaluations of teachers, the criteria of intellectual giftedness – study potential, creativity, motivation, and potential of the leader were arranged according to their significance. The obtained data is reflected in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>1st choice</th>
<th>2nd choice</th>
<th>3rd choice</th>
<th>4th choice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 – 9 years</td>
<td>Leadership potential</td>
<td>Study potential</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 – 13 years</td>
<td>Leadership potential</td>
<td>Study potential</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 – 18 years</td>
<td>Leadership potential</td>
<td>Creativity</td>
<td>Study potential</td>
<td>Motivation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sequel to Table 1 see on p. 120.
By evaluating the data we can conclude that for all groups of evaluated pupils criterion “Potential of the leader” stands in the first place. In the second place we can put the criterion “Study potential” with the exception of female and 14-18 years old. Criteria “Motivation” and “Creativity” take the third and fourth place and they change depending on parameters. Results of our research differ from the traditional view in society, that intellectual giftedness depends more on description of study potential.

Correlations among intellectual giftedness indicators

Having analysed the criteria according to parameters (age, gender, social factor), the correlations among the indicators of criteria were discovered. For all the mentioned below coefficients of correlation the level of significance does not exceed 5% (p = 0,05).

In regard to age of 6-9 we can observe

Significant positive correlations:

- The indicator Acquires and remembers many facts with the indicators
  - Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic (.91)
  - Can see differences and similarities, can formulate similarities and differences (.87)
  - Reads a lot and is interested in the particular field (.82)
  - Understands causalities, asks many provocative questions (.77)

- The indicator Offers many ideas with the indicators
  - Has vivid imagination and fantasy (.91)
  - Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently (.71)

- The indicator Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic with the indicators
  - Gets involved in the work that seems interesting for him/her (.91)
  - Has a vivid imagination and fantasy (.79)

- The indicator Is emotionally sensitive with the indicators
  - Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic (.89)
  - Has a good sense of humour (.83)
  - Can express his or her ideas, has a well-developed abilities of speech (.77)
The indicator *Can criticize constructively, does not decide in an authoritarian manner* with the indicator *Is a good organizer* (.87)

The indicator *Is self-critical and is tended to wholeness* with the indicators
- Sensible reactions to right and wrong, can evaluate it (.86)
- Is not afraid to be different (.71)
- Can criticize constructively, does not decide in an authoritarian manner (.71)

The indicator *Is interested in themes that are not typical of his/her age* with the indicators
- Sensible reactions to right and wrong, can evaluate it (.86)
- Is not afraid to be different (.71)
- Can criticize constructively, does not decide in an authoritarian manner (.71)

The indicator *Good to cooperate with* with the indicator *Is a good organizer* (.85)

The indicator *Is flexible in thinking and action* with the indicator *Gets involved in the work that seems interesting for him/her* (.79)

The indicator *Rich vocabulary* with the indicators
- Can get easily bored by performing simple tasks (.76)
- Is self-confident, holding to ones’ views (.76)
- Manipulates with lots of information, discusses many themes (.69)

**Significant negative correlations:**

The indicator *Manipulates with lots of information, discusses many themes* with the indicators
- Has hypothetical thinking (.93)
- Is emotionally sensitive (.79)
- Is not afraid to be different (.71)

The indicator *Offers many ideas* with the indicator *Good to cooperate with* (.91)

The indicator *Is persistent in certain themes* with the indicators
- Gets involved in the work that seems interesting for him/her (.87)
- Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic (.77)

The indicator *Rich vocabulary* with the indicators
- Has a good sense of humour (.86)
- Has hypothetical thinking (.79)

The indicator *Can see differences and similarities, can formulate similarities and differences* with the indicators
- Works independently, needs only minimal teachers’ tutoring (.86)
- Is insistent in defending one’s views (.86)

The indicator *Can perform complicated tasks* with the indicators
- Is a domineering person in the field of his/her interest (.80)
- Is self-confident, holding to one’s views (.70)

The indicator *Works independently, needs only minimal teachers’ tutoring* with the indicators
- Is emotionally sensitive (.79)
- Is not afraid to be different (.71)
• The indicator Is insistent in defending one’s views with the indicators
  – Is emotionally sensitive (.79)
  – Is not afraid to be different (.71)
• The indicator Has a high sense of responsibility with the indicators
  – Is communicative (.77)
  – Is emotionally sensitive (.77)
• The indicator Sensible reactions to right and wrong, can evaluate it
  with the indicator Is self-confident (.73)

In regard to age of 10-13 we can observe

Significant positive correlations:
• The indicator Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic with the indicator Offers original solutions to the problems (.82)
• The indicator Has a good sense of humour with the indicator Has vivid imagination and fantasy (.82)
• The indicator Sensible reactions to right and wrong, can evaluate it
  with the indicators
  – Offers original solutions to the problems (.79)
  – Is not afraid to be different (.77)
• The indicator Is communicative with the indicator Gets involved in the work that seems interesting for him/her (.79)
• The indicator Is self-confident, holding to one’s views with the indicators
  – Can see more and gain more (.78)
  – Offers original solutions to the problems (.77)
  – Is a domineering person in the field of his/her interest (.76)
  – Gets involved in the work that seems interesting for him/her (.75)
  – Is communicative (.74)
  – Is flexible in thinking and action (.73)
  – Sensible reactions to right and wrong, can evaluate it (.71)
  – Can express his or her ideas, has a well-developed abilities of speech (.71)
• The indicator Is self-critical and is tended to wholeness with the indicator Is a domineering person in the field of his/her interest (.76)
• The indicator Reads a lot and is interested in the particular field with the indicators
  – Can criticize constructively, does not decide in an authoritarian manner (.75)
  – Has hypothetical thinking (.73)
• The indicator Can perform complicated tasks with the indicator Offer many ideas (.73)
• The indicator Has a high sense of responsibility with the indicators
  – Gets involved in the work that seems interesting for him/her (.75)
  – Is communicative (.73)

Significant negative correlations:
• The indicator Is self-critical and is tended to wholeness with Is a domineering person in the field of his/her interest (.76)
The indicator *Is not afraid to be different* with *Gets involved in the work that seems interesting for him/her* (.75)

The indicator *Not interested in a routine work* with the indicators
- *Is communicative* (.70)
- *Rich vocabulary* (.70)

*In regard to age of 14-19 we can observe*

Significant positive correlations:
- The indicator *Is emotionally sensitive* with the indicators
  - *Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic* (.97)
  - *Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently* (.85)
  - *Good to cooperate with* (.74)
- The indicator *Can criticize constructively, does not decide in an authoritarian manner* with the indicators
  - *Can perform complicated tasks* (.95)
  - *Has vivid imagination and fantasy* (.81)
  - *Is flexible thinking and action* (.78)
  - *Is insistent in defending one’s views* (.76)
  - *Has a high sense of responsibility* (.76)
- The indicator *Is insistent in defending one’s views* with the indicators
  - *Is flexible thinking and action* (.94)
  - *Has a high sense of responsibility* (.88)
  - *Is interested in themes that are not typical of his/her age* (.75)
  - *Good to cooperate with* (.73)
  - *Has vivid imagination and fantasy* (.73)
- The indicator *Manipulates with lots of information, discusses many themes* with the indicators
  - *See the commonalities and differences* (.92)
  - *Can see differences and similarities, can formulate similarities and differences* (.92)
  - *Reads a lot and is interested in the particular field* (.92)
  - *Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently* (.92)
  - *Offers original solutions to the problems* (.88)
  - *Has a high sense of responsibility* (.88)
  - *Is flexible in thinking and action* (.73)
- The indicator *Can see differences and similarities, can formulate similarities and differences* with the indicators
  - *Can see more and gain more* (.91)
  - *Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently* (.91)
  - *Offers original solutions to the problems* (.81)
  - *Has a high sense of responsibility* (.76)
- The indicator *Has a high sense of responsibility* with the indicators
  - *Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently* (.91)
  - *Is flexible in thinking and action* (.91)
  - *Is an easy-going person* (.91)
  - *Does not need external motivation for performing tasks which seem interesting for the student* (.80)
- The indicator *Rich vocabulary* with the indicators
  - *Does not need external motivation for performing tasks which seem interesting for the student* (.85)
– Can perform complicated tasks (.78)
– Is insistent in defending one’s views (.78)
– Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently (.75)
– Is flexible in thinking and action (.75)

• The indicator Is flexible in thinking and action with the indicators
  – Is a domineering person in the field of his/her interest (.88)
  – Is an easy-going person (.87)

• The indicator Reads a lot and is interested in the particular field with the indicators
  – Offers original solutions to the problems (.87)
  – Has a high sense of responsibility (.79)
  – Is a good organizer (.76)
  – Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently (.72)
  – Is flexible in thinking and action (.72)

• The indicator Understands causalities, asks many provocative questions with the indicators
  – Offers original solutions to the problems (.88)
  – Reads a lot and is interested in the particular field (.85)
  – Is a good organizer (.78)
  – Has vivid imagination and fantasy (.75)

• The indicator Sensible reactions to right and wrong, can evaluate it with the indicators
  – Offers many ideas (.88)
  – Works independently, needs only minimal teacher’s tutoring (.73)
  – Is not afraid to be different (.73)

• The indicator Offers original solutions to the problems with the indicators
  – Has a high sense of responsibility (.88)
  – Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently (.80)
  – Is flexible in thinking and action (.80)
  – Is an easy-going person (.80)

• The indicator Has vivid imagination and fantasy with the indicators
  – Is a leader in a chosen field (.87)
  – Is not afraid to be different (.81)
  – Is flexible in thinking and action (.79)
  – Is an easy-going person (.79)

• The indicator Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently with the indicators
  – Is an easy-going person (.87)
  – Is interested in themes that are not typical of his/her age (.79)
  – Is a leader in a chosen field (.74)

• The indicator Can see more and gain more with the indicators
  – Can criticize constructively, does not decide in an authoritarian manner (.85)
  – Is an easy-going person (.87)
  – Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic (.79)
  – Is interested in themes that are not typical of his/her age (.79)

• The indicator Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic with the indicators
  – Is persistent in certain themes (.81)
– Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently (.79)
– Is communicative (.79)

• The indicator Can perform complicated tasks with the indicators
  – Has a high sense of responsibility (.77)
  – Is insistent in defending one’s views (.75)
  – Offers original solutions to the problems (.75)
  – Is a leader in a chosen field (.75)
  – Is flexible in thinking and action (.74)

• The indicator Has a good sense of humour with the indicators
  – Is a domineering person in the field of his/her interest (.75)
  – Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic (.73)

Significant negative correlations:
• The indicator Is self-confident, holding to one’s views with the indicators
  – Is not afraid to be different (.81)
  – Is a leader in a chosen field (.75)

• The indicator Is self-critical and is tended to wholeness with the indicators
  – Good to cooperate with (.85)
  – Is a leader in a chosen field (.71)

We can conclude that children of all ages need colourful, impressive information that does not contradict with the ideals of humanistic pedagogy. Teachers need to focus their attention on developing affective sphere and will power of students.

In regards to gifted children, at the age of 6-9 the functioning of thinking operations is very essential. Besides, children at this age need an opportunity to develop critical skills of self-evaluation regarding their work.

The most typical peculiarities of teenagers (10-13 years old) such as independence, public activities, non-acceptance of authoritarian decisions, and non-compliance to other people’s decisions prove to be true. In addition, the teacher’s attitude to pupils should be taken into account: if a teacher respects any manifestations of teenagers’ independence, they can become creative, brilliant, and active pupils with whom it is easy to cooperate and whose moral categories correspond to those of adults. And vice versa, the less the teachers will accept manifestations of teenagers’ independence and consider their emotional world, the more difficult it will be to expect the originality, responsibility, and activity from them. Working with children of this age group, teachers should take humour very seriously; otherwise teenagers’ intellectual achievement can worsen and their originality diminish.

In the age group from 14-19, pupils with intellectual giftedness want to express themselves freely that develops students’ independency and fosters involvement in a field of an interest. A deep interest in the specific field promotes the development of a high sense of responsibility and ability to defend one’s position actively. A wide competence in different issues fosters manifestations of imagination and fantasy as well as flexibility in thinking and action. If young people get involved in various activities, the emotional sensitiveness acquires an aesthetic character. A too great spitefulness and self-confidence burden interpersonal communication and hinder the maintenance of a leader’s position.
In regard to girls we can observe

Significant positive correlations:

- The indicator Has a good sense of humour with the Is emotionally sensitive (.95)
- The indicator Does not need external motivation for performing tasks which seem interesting for the student with the indicator Sensible reactions to right and wrong, can evaluate it (.89)
- The indicator Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic with the indicator Is a leader in a chosen field (.89)
- The indicator Has a high sense of responsibility with the indicator Good to cooperate with (.82)
- The indicator Is self-confident, holding to one’s views with the indicators
  - Is a domineering person in the field of her interest (.94)
  - Is insistent in defending one’s views (.79)
- The indicator Acquires and remembers many facts with the indicator Is persistent in certain themes (.75)
- The indicator Can see more and gain more with the indicators
  - Has a high sense of responsibility (.83)
  - Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic (.70)
- The indicator Is insistent in defending one’s views with the indicators
  - Offers original solutions to the problems (.72)
  - Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently (.71)
  - Can criticize constructively, does not decide in an authoritarian manner (.70)

Significant negative correlations:

- The indicator Can performs complicated tasks with the indicator Not interested in a routine work (.78)
- The indicator Rich vocabulary with the indicator Has a good sense of humour (.72)
- The indicator Manipulates with lots of information, discusses many themes with the indicator Has hypothetical thinking (.72)

In regards to boys we can observe

Significant positive correlations:

- The indicator Can performs complicated tasks with the indicators
  - Is flexible in thinking and action (.91)
  - Is interested in themes that are not typical of his age (.71)
  - Is insistent in defending one’s views (.70)
- The indicator Acquires and remembers many facts with the indicator Can see differences and similarities, can formulate similarities and differences (.87)
- The indicator Is not afraid to be different with the indicator Can criticize constructively, does not decide in an authoritarian manner (.87)
- The indicator Is self-confident, holding to one’s views with the indicators
  - Is flexible in thinking and action (.79)
  - Can perform complicated tasks (.79)
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- Can express his opinion freely and confidently (.74)
- Has a good sense of humour (.73)

• The indicator Manipulates with lots of information, discusses many themes with the indicators
  - Offers original solutions to the problems (.76)
  - Can perform complicated tasks (.75)
  - Is insistent in defending one’s views (.72)

• The indicator Understands causalities, asks many provocative questions with the indicators
  - Can performs complicated tasks (.75)
  - Is flexible in thinking and action (.75)
  - Is communicative (.71)

• The indicator Can see more and gain more with the indicator Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently (.74)

• The indicator Reads a lot and is interested in the particular field with the indicators
  - Can performs complicated tasks (.73)
  - Does not need external motivation for performing tasks which seem interesting for the student (.73)

• The indicator Is insistent in defending one’s views with the indicator Is flexible in thinking and action (.80)

• The indicator Has a high sense of responsibility with the indicator Is a leader in a chosen field (.73)

• The indicator Has a good sense of humour with Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic (.72)

Significant negative correlations:

• The indicator Is self-critical and is tended to wholeness with the indicator Is a domineering person in the field of his/her interest (.84)

• The indicator Not interested in a routine work with the indicator Is communicative (.78)

• The indicator Is self-confident, holding to one’s views with the indicators
  - Is flexible in thinking and action (.78)
  - Is insistent in defending one’s views (.77)
  - Offers original solutions to the problems (.72)

We can conclude that gender plays a significant role as the girls and boys display different results. If teenage girls display activity, responsibility, initiative, and the ability to show up themselves, boys are more interested in a certain issue and enjoy the process of an individual enquiry. Girls succeed with memory skills, boys with thinking operations.

Solving complicated problems and penetrating into some specific field develop boy’s perseverance and insistence in defending their opinion. The qualities not to adapt oneself to other people and not to be afraid to be different are also more characteristic for boys. This is promoted by employing the cooperation style in teacher’s pedagogical activities (an authoritarian style in interpersonal communication is inadmissible). Both for girls and boys, a highly developed sense of humour influences a nuanced development of emotional and aesthetic spheres.
In regard to country children we can observe significant positive correlations:

- The indicator *Is emotionally sensitive* with the indicators
  - *Is a leader in a chosen field* (.90)
  - *Has a high sense of responsibility* (.90)
- The indicator *Is communicative* with the Good organizer (.89)
- The indicator *Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic* with the indicators
  - *Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently* (.89)
  - *Acquires and remembers many facts* (.75)
- The indicator *Has a good sense of humour* with the indicator *Is a leader in chosen field* (.88)
- The indicator *Is self-critical and is tended to wholeness* with the indicators
  - *Offers many ideas* (.83)
  - *Can see more and gain more* (.76)
- The indicator *Does not need external motivation for performing tasks which seem interesting for the student* with the indicators
  - *Good to cooperate with* (.81)
  - *Is a domineering person in the field of his/her interest* (.70)
- The indicator *Sensible reactions to right and wrong, can evaluate it* with the indicators
  - *Is communicative* (.88)
  - *Has a high sense of responsibility* (.80)
- The indicator *Is self-confident, holding to one’s views* with the indicators
  - *Is a domineering person in the field of his/her interest* (.77)
  - *Has vivid imagination and fantasy* (.71)
- The indicator *Reads a lot and is interested in the particular field* with the indicators
  - *Is flexible in thinking and action* (.75)
  - *Can see differences and similarities, can formulate similarities and differences* (.72)
- The indicator *Has a high sense of responsibility* with the indicator *Is a leader in a chosen field* (.73)
- The indicator *Offers many new ideas* with the indicators
  - *Offers original solutions* (.71)
  - *Manipulates with lots of information, discusses many themes* (.71)
- The indicator *Can perform complicated tasks* with the indicators
  - *Is interested in themes that are not typical of his/her age* (.70)
  - *Rich vocabulary* (.70)

Significant negative correlations:

- The indicator *Is insistent in defending one’s views* with the indicators
  - *Good to cooperate with* (.80)
  - *Has vivid imagination and fantasy* (.71)
- The indicator *Can criticize constructively, does not decide in an authoritarian manner* with the indicators
  - *Has a good sense of humour* (.87)
  - *Is a leader in a chosen field* (.77)
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- The indicator *Reads a lot and is interested in the particular field* with indicator *Works independently, needs only minimal teacher’s tutoring* (.71)
- The indicator *Manipulates with lots of information, discusses many themes* with the indicator *Has hypothetical thinking* (.75)
- The indicator *Does not need external motivation for performing tasks which seem interesting for the student* with the indicator *Offers many ideas* (.71)

**In regards to city children we can observe**

Significant positive correlations:

- The indicator *Is self-confident, holding to one’s views* with the indicators
  - *Is flexible in thinking and action* (.92)
  - *Is a domineering person in the field of his/her interest* (.82)
- The indicator *Is self-critical and is tended to wholeness* with the indicators
  - *Is interested in themes that are not typical of his/her age* (.86)
  - *Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently* (.75)
- The indicator *Has hypothetical thinking* with the indicators
  - *Can criticize constructively, does not decide in an authoritarian manner* (.82)
  - *Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently* (.79)
- The indicator *Can get easily bored by performing simple tasks* with the indicator *Can see differences and similarities, can formulate similarities and differences* (.78)

Significant negative correlations:

- The indicator *Is a leader in a chosen field* with the indicator *Is a good organizer* (.77)

If we compare indicators of country and city children, they can be ranked in the following sequence: emotional sensitivity, perception of beauty, sense of humour, and others, but for city children ranging is different: self-confidence, ability to express one’s own views, hypothetical thinking, quick perception of information, and others. It means that social and psychological factors have a major influence on the development of intellectual giftedness.

For pupils from rural areas, it is vital to develop the attitude towards what is right and what is wrong, what is good and what is bad. This fosters the development of their initiative and organizing skills. But for city pupils, self-confidence, self-criticism, and self-assertion are especially important.

It is essential to create a beautiful and aesthetic educational environment for gifted pupils from rural areas as this promotes their involvement into various activities; while the active position of the gifted pupils from cities in attending different activities is facilitated by the need to gain public recognition.

Teachers who work with intellectually gifted children should consider their individual features and social origins.
Conclusions

As a result of the analysis of several conceptions, the intellectual giftedness is defined as person’s individual-psychological resources, which open a way for creative and intellectual work, new ideas, solution of problems using unconventional methods, sensibility to alternative solutions of a problem, openness towards innovative work, etc. In the context of sustainable development, new educational paradigms need to be considered in the expanding efforts in the education of the gifted to recognize and nurture creativity in the classroom.

Drawing from the concepts of D. Wechsler, J. Renzulli, R. Sternberg, M. Kholodnaya, H. Gardner, A. Savenkov, the criteria and indicators of intellectual giftedness were worked out to use in this research. According to these criteria and indicators, teachers involved in the research evaluated intellectually gifted children.

Considering Latvian teachers’ responses toward the criteria of intellectual giftedness, it was discovered that teachers rank the criteria of giftedness in the following sequence: 1) leadership potential, 2) study potential, 3) creativity, and 4) motivation.

Having analysed the correlations among the giftedness indicators according to the parameters of age, gender, and social background, we can acknowledge that in respect of the intellectual manifestations of giftedness, the age, gender, and social background play an essential role. City and country girls and boys in the age groups of 6-9, 10-13, and 14-19 years have been evaluated differently which was discovered in the correlation analysis. This means that, while working with intellectually gifted pupils, the teachers have to consider pupils’ individual peculiarities, as well as their age, gender, and social background.

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Appendix

*Intellectual Giftedness Criteria and Indicators*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 1. Study potential | 1.1. *Rich vocabulary*  
1.2. *Manipulates with lots of information, discusses many themes*  
1.3. *Acquires and remembers many facts*  
1.4. *Understands causalities, asks many provocative questions*  
1.5. *Can see differences and similarities, can formulate similarities and differences*  
1.6. *Can see more and gain more*  
1.7. *Reads a lot and is interested in the particular field*  
1.8. *Can perform complicated tasks* |

Sequel to Appendix see on p. 133.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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</table>
| **2. Motivation** | 2.1. Is persistent in certain themes  
2.2. Can get easily bored by performing simple tasks  
2.3. Does not need external motivation for performing tasks which seem interesting for the student  
2.4. Is self-critical and is tended to wholeness  
2.5. Works independently, needs only minimal teachers’ tutoring  
2.6. Is interested in themes that are not typical of his/her age  
2.7. Is self-confident, holding to ones’ views  
2.8. Is insistent in defending one’s views  
2.9. Not interested in a routine work  
2.10. Sensible reactions to right and wrong, can evaluate it |
| **3. Creativity** | 3.1. Offers many ideas  
3.2. Offers original solutions to the problems  
3.3. Has vivid imagination and fantasy  
3.4. Can express his/her opinion freely and confidently  
3.5. Has hypothetical thinking  
3.6. Has a good sense of humour  
3.7. Is emotionally sensitive  
3.8. Can feel the beautiful, has a sense of aesthetic  
3.9. Is not afraid to be different  
3.10. Can criticize constructively, does not decide in an authoritarian manner |
| **4. Potential of the leader** | 4.1. Has a high sense of responsibility  
4.2. Is a leader in a chosen field  
4.3. Is an easy-going person  
4.4. Can express his or her ideas, has a well developed abilities of speech  
4.5. Is flexible in thinking and action  
4.6. Is communicative  
4.7. Is a domineering person in the field of his/her interest  
4.8. Gets involved in the work that seems interesting for him/her  
4.9. Good to cooperate with  
4.10. Is a good organizer |
The Evaluation of Creative Subjects in Primary School: The Example of Art Studies

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Abstract
Evaluation has always brought up arguments both in school and in society in general and the viewpoints can be divided into two groups – those who think that creative subjects shouldn’t be graded and those who want constant grading with numbers based on general appearance. Judging from the preceding the problem arises: is the grading of creative subjects even necessary in elementary school and if so, then how and on what grounds should it take place. A case study has been conducted, the purpose of which was to concentrate on qualitative analysis and to observe possibilities for grading in elementary school through the one theme.

Key words: primary school; visual art education; evaluation; assessment; grade.

Introduction
At present a discussion on drawing up a new curriculum attempting to reform the basis of evaluation has been initiated on the Estonian educational landscape. Therefore, it is important to discourse on which means of evaluation are functional and which could be used in assessment at the first school level in the subject of art education. Evaluation has always caused heated discussions in Estonian educational system. Both at schools as well as in society in general the people involved in the dispute can be divided into two major interest groups – those, who would not evaluate creative subjects and those who would like to assess everything with numbers. While speaking about evaluation in art education it is crucial to understand that this process is more complicated than for example in mathematics or mother tongue because of the complexity of the evaluation system, since various aspects should be assessed simultaneously. The current topic is essential because in Estonia it has been treated very little and rather superficially. However, assessment should be tackled at wider scale, keeping in mind its versatile functions – encouraging, valuing, checking, and finally summative numerical grade. Furthermore, we should realize that evaluation is a natural and inseparable part of school, belonging as a practical activity to the daily lives of the participants in the learning process. The same model also should be used in art education, in which it is necessary to realize and implement the democratic principles of education. Therefore, why to assess at all? What and how to assess? Who assesses and based on what? How to regard those grades and evaluations? What infor-
What is Evaluation?

Evaluation is a complex and versatile process. Speaking about assessment in art education, we should understand which aspects we consider in the learning process and how evaluation as a process supports the pupil’s versatile development. Treating different functions of evaluation, we should keep in mind their supportive and motivational impact on the comprehensive development of the learner (emotional, manual, intellectual, social, etc.) and the acquisition of knowledge and skills, i.e. by providing evaluation at much wider scale. The current report considers two types of evaluation: assessment (oral and written discussions) and grade as a numerical indicator. The object of evaluation should be defined, i.e. reaching the learning aims specified in curriculum. Therefore, besides the national curriculum this report draws on the evaluation principles for the first school level published in the subject guide of art education and the collection “Assistance to the Teacher” according to which the priority in evaluation is given to the pupils’ creative approach to the task and the improvement of their manual skills. At this age level the outcomes of arranged short tasks should get positive evaluation, which would encourage and inspire the child (Maalust, Tuulmets, Lind & Rohtla, 2004).

Assessment as Valuation

Firstly, assessment as valuation will be examined, in which the pupil’s individual development and efforts in learning can be deliberated. The process of evaluation includes assessing the pupils’ development and motivating them to further activities. The attribution of values is connected to cognizance, which always involves evaluative activity. The basis of assessment is the viewpoint from which the evaluation is provided. It is the opinion or argument on which the subjects approve, disapprove, or express the indifference in their evaluations (Ивин, 1970: 27). These opinions build foundations for the child’s vital personal and social competency that describes the personal development of the learner, improvement of communication and learning skills. This comprises the individual’s system of values, reverence towards other people and nature, sense of truth, compassion, tolerance, readiness and ability to conduct moral discussions and justify one’s own and other people’s deeds, etc. Competency can be assessed only with words. Valuation of learning means that the priority should be the development of self – the learner, learning to learn, and gathering knowledge (Kadajas, 1996: 26).

The process of evaluation is closely connected to the development of one’s image of oneself, therefore, we should value the child’s intrinsic world, help him/her become himself/herself. Self-cognition presupposes the ability to distinguish oneself from the surrounding world and analyse one’s actions (Otto, 1989: 64). As we all are very different as people, every one of us has something to be proud of, in order to sense our genuineness. We
simply have to discover the values hiding inside us, and to do so, we are helped at school by our peers and teachers. Finding one’s place in life, i.e. discovering oneself, sensing oneself, realizing one’s abilities fully, is revealed in a hidden form or publicly in every self-description fostering individual development (Krause, 1989: 9). Great importance in the evolution of self-consciousness has the necessity of finding one’s place among the peers, which would require greater susceptibility to other people’s judgements (Arak, 1973: 181). Since self-esteem is shaped during one’s life and the child’s self-esteem is in the process of evolvement and easily affected, we should understand that it is determined by experience, comparison, and judgements of others.

According to the theory of social learning, the extrinsic values should become intrinsic activities through the assistance of practice and assurance coming from outside. Emotional experience denotes intrinsic assurance. The evaluation of pupils’ actions affects the development of their personality. Teacher, his/her model and imitation play a crucial part in the modelling of children’s attitudes (values). The child imitates the teacher’s attitudes and mindset, especially in younger grades (Sarv, 1997: 74). Individual’s evaluating attitude to the surroundings is marked by three assessive forms. The first is a direct and spontaneous form, i.e. emotions, which are evaluative by their nature. Emotions are the experience of witnessing, acknowledging, or despising some feelings (Rubinstein, 1989: 140), which affect the child’s view of the world and his/her self-definition, attitude to the phenomena of the surrounding world, to other people, to their actions, to himself/herself (Lunge, 1992: 3). The second is a form of verbal or oral assessment, which may be reflected in words or sentences revealing what the person considers valuable or vile about the object of assessment (Ивин, 1970: 10). Thirdly, the nonverbal or behavioural assessment forms are distinguished – intonation, facial expressions, gestures, expressive movements, also conditions and means for completing the activities. The teacher’s intonation and facial expressions become especially meaningful for pupils if they are not assessed exploiting ordinary measures. Valuation assessment conceals wide possibilities for evaluative discussions, which analyse the child’s progress even to the smallest achievements. However, from time to time a more rational grading system – numerical grades – could be used.

**Summative Evaluation**

By the term ‘summative evaluation’ we mean checking and comparing the works and giving grades. Usually it is determined at the end of some study topic, task, course, etc. T. Lepiksaar emphasizes in “The Subject Guide of Art Education” that in the first classes the pupils’ works should not be assessed with grades but something positive should be said about the outcome. If the educational institution still insists on numerical grades, these grades should be provided at the end of the mid-term or the school year and should be rather high (Lepiksaar, 1997).

Using the grades children can compare themselves to the others, draw conclusions – what they can do, what are their strong and weak sides, how they will manage to achieve their aims in the future. Based on grades the teachers make assumptions about the children’s future development and
very often these suppositions influence the teachers’ behaviour. Therefore, grades provide necessary assessment messages, which in the learning process can be viewed as a feedback. Both the teacher and the pupil can improve their actions, create self-image, and express their opinions about the others. Summative evaluation presupposes that the teacher has clarified the assessment criteria to the pupils: the child should be aware of what will be evaluated, what are the teacher’s requirements. What concerns art education, dominance of numerical grades is too rigid and one-sided. In the mentioned subject it is more rational to evaluate the process itself.

Process Evaluation in Art Education

As we know, learning is one of the leading activities of the child at the first school level. At the same time the teacher has to maintain the child’s learning motivation through which the child’s mental as well as work- and morality-based tasks are realized. Encouragement, the primary requirement of which is consideration of all subjective factors, means that the criterion of evaluation in each case is the child himself/herself with his/her actions and level of development (Lulla, 1976: 19). In process evaluation the valuer usually is the teacher; however, it can also be the pupils themselves or even their peers. One form of it, as was stated earlier, could be the self-evaluative discussion. The aim of such evaluative form is awareness of the study process and hence, the improvement of it. We could distinguish three tasks of the process evaluation (Kadajas, 1996):

1) diagnostics, which enables to analyse the course of learning, provided after each observation or by checking the pupil’s present state of affairs: initial results, achievements and learning difficulties, reasons for hardships;

2) modelling, in which the pupil receives information about the present situation, progress, and reasons for mistakes, and he/she has time to develop his/her learning activities to the desired direction;

3) foretelling – assessment of different aspects reveals what the pupil’s learning results could be, what would his/her summative grade be.

Being educational scientists we know that only praise and encouragement can design positive motivation towards the desired behaviour (Lulla, 1976: 19). Assessment as the attachment of grade encourages and fosters the child’s intrinsic needs, creates confidence in the righteousness of the deeds. Therefore, the pupil’s inner motive for learning activities is trenched in (Ots, 1989: 10). Assessment instead of numerical grades or even more – verbal comments regarding different aspects – carries versatile effect; in the hands of a wise teacher assessment becomes a promotional (therapeutic), stimulating procedure depending on the child’s individuality and developmental needs (Sarv, 1997). This helps the child to sense that his/her efforts have been noticed and they will be considered.

Didactic Methods

The research involves case study in which emphasis was put on qualitative analysis and the possibilities of evaluation were treated in the art lessons of the first school level on the basis of the topic Man’s Best Friend. The
data were gathered in the Children Creative Studio in the spring of 2005 and Kalamaja Basic School in the autumn of 2005. The sample comprised 32 pupils of grades 1-3 (currently the first school level in Estonian educational system) between the ages of 7-10. In addition to the pupils, the sample also included two teachers who provided the six art lessons during the period of three weeks. The analysis of syllabus by the teachers provided the data for the research. Besides, the case study included recording the course of the lessons – introduction to the topic, discussion, learning the technique and discussion following it, introduction of creative task and basis of evaluation, supposed course of the creative process, and summary of the topic. The creative process was documented in a written form, including the pupil’s comments, beginning of the work process, possible questions, problematic areas, and solutions.

The bottom line of the subject treatment was the interest of the pupils and the necessity to follow the content, skills, and aims presented in the national curriculum. Within the given topic the study aims regarded were the development of the pupil’s observation skills, figurative thinking, and imagination. The pupils were guided to make use of different means of expression and various works of art were viewed. The following was regarded within this topic as study content:

- **depictive instruction** – expressing nature through line and silhouette.
- **composition instruction** – organizing the surface of the picture, including different proportions of the paper format and the size of the object depicted, primary, supportive elements, and background; balance of details in the picture.
- **conversations on art** – art in the surrounding world, analysis of the peers’ works, and tolerant attitude to the fellow-students’ pictures.
- **techniques and materials** – usage of dots and lines to create texture, creation of a picturesque surface with crayon and oil pastels.

Moreover, within the given topic the pupils should acquire the following competency-learning results:

- can depict figures;
- keep in mind the composition rules of the picture;
- can create and use simple textures;
- can describe works of art in simple words and justify their preferences;
- value different solutions in one’s own works.

The topic’s *Man’s Best Friend* didactic description: treatment of the topic was initiated by the discussion among the pupils on why the dog has been man’s friend since ancient times and what the pupils think why man has needed the dog, etc. To illustrate the talk, photographs and reproductions of masterpieces depicting dogs are shown. The questions of the discussion were the following:

- What kind of dogs is on the pictures?
- What kind of similarities and differences in dogs can you find?
- In what way do the dogs differ from each other?
- How have the artists depicted the dogs’ fur? etc.
One of the tasks in treating the topic was the depiction of the dogs’ fur with lines and colours. The primary aim was that the pupils would acquire the process of drawing and during the discussion prior and following the drawing process would acquire the skill to depict fur with different materials and tools. The setting of the creative task which was elaborated within the theme also included the introduction of aspects that will be evaluated in the creative work. These were depicting the animal’s figure (characteristics of an animal, in this case a dog, and how to express these), organizing the surface of the picture (size of the dog, background, primary and supportive elements), technique and material (usage of dots and lines in describing fur), and usage of oil pastels (mixing colours, melting, dispersing). The topic ended with a summarizing discussion on the theme and created works. The pupils received individual feedback about the skills and knowledge acquired in the course of the topic.

Results

The research revealed that the pupils are very keen on talking about the dogs and animals in general. Another crucial aspect connected to the treatment of the topic was how the children use vocabulary to describe fur and then depict it on paper. These trials of techniques enabled the teachers to give oral assessments as feedback. The following situation can be used for illustration – the task was to depict on the paper the fur of a familiar dog. The pupil said: “My friend – dog is smooth. White and smooth.” How to depict ‘white’ and ‘smooth’ on paper? One possibility is to take toned paper and white oil pastel crayon and cover the paper abundantly with a layer of crayon. However, since the task was to be fulfilled on white paper another technical problem arose. The pupil covered the given paper with white oil pastel, however, the surface was hardly visible. The pupil solved the problem by saying: “Actually he is slightly orange”, and added a few lines with orange pastel to his picture. The teacher could only give approving evaluation to such a solution drawing the pupil’s attention to the successful settlement of the situation and technically valuable result.

During the research the pupils’ opinions were collected by completing self-evaluating discussion sheets (see Figure 1). Kadajas says that in the discussions concentrated on one’s self-evaluation the pupils describe and analyse how they do something in the learning process. It is targeted to both the pupil and the teacher and its aim are mutually to adjust activities, however, both sides should be aware of the process and feedback should be guaranteed (Kadajas, 1996: 29). The pupils were given an opportunity to view the work done and analyse it individually. The opinion sheets were used by the teachers for two reasons – provide the pupils with oral feedback based on the comments written on the opinion sheet and support through this the future developmental possibilities of the child, and determine the final numerical grade.
Figure 1. The pupil’s self-evaluative discussion sheet

The opinion sheets were filled by the pupils rather differently. The reason for that could be the different age of the pupils and, hence, the different writing and discussion skills. Besides, it was quite an exceptional study situation for the children, who filled the opinion sheets for the first time. However, it was a good feedback for the teachers in order to direct the pupils to critically evaluate their work and supplement it. For instance, one pupil had worked only on the minor details, leaving the overall entity of the work without attention. On the opinion sheet he wrote: “My work is somewhat empty. I should probably cut some of the paper off”. At the same time the empty surface indicated some fascinating technical trials, which would have been a great loss to be thrown away. Therefore, the student received a positive evaluation from the teacher for the minor details as well as for the trials and it was mutually decided that the whole surface of the finished picture should be covered with watercolours to let the drawing glow through the layer of colour. Such self-evaluative discussions which are supported by the teacher’s assessment provide the child with information on what he/she has studied, has he/she done well or not, and how one or another skill is developing.

Therefore, the child should be encouraged not only for the work done, but also for his/her endeavours and serious attitude to work. The teacher’s main action plan should be to see and also to help the child notice his/her strong sides. The child should be assisted to find himself/herself through involvement in various activities, organize his/her life so that he/she can express his/her potential. Hence, it was crucial to include in the research the possibility for each pupil to introduce his/her peers the dog he/she knew and show how he/she depicted the dog’s fur and explain why he/she had used such means. The pupils were also asked to explain why they made use of the particular tools and materials. Furthermore, the children had an opportunity to have a summarizing discussion at the end of the topic, evaluate the works of the peers and listen to the class-mates’ opinions, who were also guided to support the fellow-pupils.
The teacher’s (peer’s) assessment is approved only if it matches the pupil’s endeavours. Hereby, we should highlight the notion of individual norm, which determines the comparison of the pupil’s outcome to his/her prior achievements. Therefore, the teacher evaluates the child’s improvement within the limits of his/her opportunities, keeping in mind his/her individual development (Kadajas, 1996: 27). Praise is one of the most powerful means of acknowledgement, the educative might of which we are definitely aware of; however, in practice we tend to forget it (Lulla, 1976). The study situation of viewing the peers’ works revealed that oil pastels were widely used and mainly one brownish hue was exploited. The pupils explained that oil pastels were enjoyable to be used, since they cover the paper well. Moreover, the viewing of the works enabled the teacher to explain that oil pastels could be mixed together, hence, getting new tints. Those pupils who had made use of that possibility described the technique to the others. This encouraged the pupils to look at their works with the critical eye and they were given a chance to improve their work. The pupils who used this opportunity could sense their value through self-evaluation and realize their abilities.

Relying on the above-mentioned, every teacher is about to face the question how to assess pupil’s work and put out the final grade. Even if the grade is rather high, for example “4” and “5” on the five-point scale, this number does not reveal anything about the pupil’s development, in other words, how to assess effectively, supporting the pupil’s development. At the same time, providing evaluation by such high grades can convince the children that good grades in art education are received anyway and the motivation to make an effort and develop themselves could disappear.

In the collection “Assistance to the Teacher” the principles of summative evaluation in art education are provided, i.e. the pupils’ works are assessed after the completion of various practical tasks regarding first and foremost the work’s relevance to the set task, the level of its completion and finality, balance of composition and wholeness, pupil’s creativity and originality of depiction, the level of depictive skills and changes in it, and if necessary, the technical accuracy, correctness of the work (Maalust, Tuulmets, Lind & Rohtla, 2004). The prevailing grade in art education determines the evaluation of practical works, however, again the question arises, how to provide numerical assessment on the pupil’s creativity or changes in depictive skills? The authors of the current report share the viewpoint that in the art education lessons of the first school level we cannot evaluate only the final performance, but evaluative comments and explanations on progress should be added to the numerical grade.

How can one objectively provide assessments and still determine the final numerical grade? The teachers participating in the research initiated an assessment sheet (see Figure 2), which included the criteria for determining the numerical grade, the latter being based on the observation of the pupils and their performance throughout the theme, i.e. during the six lessons. The criteria were arranged into a table, which is comprehensive and easy to be filled in by the teachers. The table included the various activities done and skills acquired during the treatment of the topic, all of these could be evaluated as little (1 point), enough (2 points) and ample/constant (3 points). The overall number of parameters in the table is 11,
which provided basis for determining the numerical grade. Currently the five-point grading system is used in Estonia, whereas grade “1” is not executed. Hence, the numerical grades are determined as follows: “5” – 26-33 points, “4” – 18-25 points, “3” – 9-17 points, and “2” – 0-8 points. “0” is given if the pupil has not passed the topic because of certain reasons.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pupil: Siim Susi</th>
<th>Points: 23</th>
<th>Grade: 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pupil’s observation in lessons</strong></td>
<td>Little</td>
<td>Enough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>participation in discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trying new technique</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>following suggestions</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finding one’s own solutions</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Creative work</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skill of depicting figure</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skill of organizing picture surface</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usage of dots and lines</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>usage of oil pastels’ characteristics</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pupils self-evaluation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>giving evaluation</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bringing out the essential</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>seeing the possibilities</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comments:**
Siim participated actively in every discussion. Especially well he could describe the dogs’ fur and talk on how to express it on paper. In learning the techniques he did not have patience to try out more possibilities of the techniques. Furthermore, he did not follow the teacher’s and peers’ suggestions. However, Siim was very resourceful while completing the creative work noticing that a pen can be effectively used to scratch into the layer of oil pastel crayons (circles!) and this contributed much to his work. While creating the figure Siim should pay more attention to proportions in the future, at the same time the dog drawn by Siim is depicted creatively enough. He has also managed to organize the picture’s surface evenly – the dog is the primary element and everything related to the topic (sun, birds, grass, etc.) is nicely at the background. In the future Siim should be more interested in seeing various possibilities in his work and not to hold on to traditional solutions.

Figure 2. Assessment sheet

While writing the comment one should bear in mind the person it is targeted to. In the given case it is rather to be used by the teacher and enables to provide feedback to the parent. In the framework of the research the assessment sheet was used in individual discussions with the pupils about the process and while observing the practical works completed by the pupils.
Conclusion

According to the data collected in the research, it could be claimed that evaluation is an important part of the lessons of creative subjects at the first school level. Dealing with evaluation problems the child’s personality and the child’s prior level of development and progress should be considered.

It is crucial to understand the encouraging, acknowledging, controlling, and summative functions of evaluation, which stimulate the pupil to participate actively in the learning process. Evaluation enables to guide and urge the pupils and through this create the possibilities for the child to notice and understand his/her current and future developmental directions. This is supported by both the teachers’ and peers’ assessments, the pupils’ self-evaluating discussion, and the summative grade determined at the end of the topic. These means of evaluation enable to assess the whole creative process in art education.

References


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