

*Discourse and  
Communication for  
Sustainable Education*

*Volume 1, issue 2, 2010*



## Editorial

This issue of the interdisciplinary journal *Discourse and Communication for Sustainable Education* consists of seven papers that explore inspirational ideas in sustainable education, are written in innovative ways and are presented in experimental ways. I would like to thank all the members of the Editorial board and also the language editors for their hard work. My thanks are also due to contributors to this issue.

The paper by Pipere and her colleagues reports on a study undertaken to investigate international perspectives of what constitutes research in education for sustainable development. By employing inductive thematic content analysis, the authors seek to examine the perceptions of 66 researchers of education for sustainable development from 19 countries. The findings reveal a concern with the methodological aspects of research and an emergent need for synergy between the methodology of educational research and specific themes relevant to ESD research.

The paper by Contini and Pascual highlights an innovative, holistic, inclusive, integrated approach to a sustainable future promoted by the Earth Charter and describes the structure of its ethical framework. The main conclusion of the research is that the ethical framework of the Earth Charter is based on a limited number of core concepts: planetary human identity, feasible utopianism, co-responsibility and committed compassion.

The paper by Ololube dwells upon the communicative approach as a tool for relating reading and writing skills in early childhood education in a developing economy. This study confirms that teachers in the selected early childhood education centres have no professional early childhood education qualifications and, as a result, are not qualified to effectively carry out their teaching responsibilities. It is hoped that this study can contribute to a deeper understanding of how early childhood education teachers perceive language teaching and consequently assist in the development of teacher education programmes and activities.

The paper by Świtała reports on a fragment of a broader research on values education in Polish and Latvian schools. This paper seeks to evaluate data from the European Social Survey (ESS) and elaborate on the frames of references for identification of the aims for future research. The paper highlights the findings of an action research carried out in two Polish schools. The frames of references constructed during the study and data from European Social Survey were the grounds for creating a questionnaire for an action research to find out the tendencies that derive from the experience of students.

The paper by Baneviciūtė dwells upon the principles of education for sustainable development implemented in Lithuanian education system. The objective of this research is to find out whether pre-service dance teachers in Lithuania are ready to meet the challenges of contemporary educational paradigms.

The paper by Costandius examines the impact of a Service-Learning module aiming at enhancing social responsibility and citizenship by using art as a medium for learning and reflection. It involves an explicit and designed programme that includes Socratic discussions and self-reflection projects through art. The results of the project demonstrated that art is an effective medium to address sensitive issues because it functions on a symbolic and metaphorical level. Moreover, art that uses metaphors involves participants

both consciously and sub-consciously and encourages possibilities for a diversity of interpretations.

The paper by Belousa and Ūzuliņa provides theoretical and historical reflections about teacher's professional mastery, highlighting the emotional aspect as a dimension that integrates all its levels. Theoretical and historical reflections in this study follow the methodology of discourse evaluation. The discourse is contextualized in a setting of three periods of time (the 1st independence 1918–1940, Soviet occupation 1940–1990 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> independence from 1990) and grounded in Latvian national and international perspectives.

Finally, it is necessary to accentuate that strict adherence to the *Notes for contributors*, which are published on the back cover of every issue of the journal *Discourse and Communication for Sustainable Education*, is essential if the assessment, acceptance, editing and publication of articles is to proceed smoothly and in timely fashion.

Astrīda Skrinda

# PERCEPTIONS OF RESEARCH IN EDUCATION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: AN INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

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## **Abstract**

*This paper reports on a study undertaken to investigate international perspectives of what constitutes research in education for sustainable development (ESD). By employing inductive thematic content analysis, the authors sought to examine the perceptions of 66 ESD researchers from 19 countries. The findings reveal a concern with the methodological aspects of research and an emergent need for synergy between the methodology of educational research and specific themes relevant to ESD research. The significant overlap of themes and aspects of ESD research apparent across the different contexts within which the researchers were embedded indicates a unified core of ESD research, although there is also evidence of contextual factors influencing the research agenda. Based on the findings of this study, the paper concludes that there is an overlap between educational research and ESD research, but that the latter has its own specific aims, themes and political supporters. In an endeavour to develop a shared understanding about ESD research across disciplines and research context, a common language has to be developed to facilitate a constructive dialogue and research capacity building in this novel field.*

**Key words:** *ESD research, educational research, researchers, methodology*

## **Research in education for sustainable development: Looking for the right questions to ask**

Reaching a consensus and improving awareness about research related to issues of global concern requires constant monitoring of state of the art advances that are highly specific and thus poses a significant challenge. Given the apparent dearth of studies on education for sustainable development (ESD), this paper seeks to draw attention to this relatively novel and underdeveloped field by probing the various research approaches used by educational researchers, including the beliefs, presuppositions and values underpinning their practice.

Recently, ESD has emerged as a critical area of academic research globally both with regard to the urgency of the substantive issues that need to be addressed in response to an

international sustainability agenda and a lack of clarity regarding the way in which the field is conceptualized as a research domain. Bibliometric data shows a steady increase in the number of ESD articles published between 1990 and 2004 from 64 to 162, while the number of academic journals accepting ESD papers for publication increased from 27 in 1990 to 78 in 2004. This positive trend was accompanied by a growing number of authors publishing in this field (Wright & Pullen, 2007). For example, using the same search criteria, 1,479 ESD journal articles were identified for the period from 1990 and 2005, compared with the 1,338 articles published in the much shorter time span between 2005 and 2010. Thus, the bibliometric evidence suggests an almost threefold increase. And yet, ESD research is still in its inception and there is an urgent need for research capacity building, which can be achieved by focusing researchers' attention to this relatively novel field (McKeown, 2007).

The perceptions of the researchers about the nature and purpose of ESD research will be examined, whilst recognizing that these perceptions have gradually evolved through a process of social and collaborative learning (Daniels & Walker, 2001; Keen, Brown, & Dyball, 2005). Participation in conferences, collaborative projects, local and global networking, while teaching at their respective universities has allowed the researchers to construct and re-construct the research paradigms in which they locate their ESD research.

This study is to be understood as a scoping exercise which accords ESD the status of a legitimate topic for educational research and reflects the current state of development of the field. According to Labaree (2003), educational researchers are used to respond to society's demands in terms of providing explanations for educational problems at a given time. However, the expectation to provide answers to educational problems presents researchers with huge challenges and requires new and creative approaches. The need to clarify epistemological and methodological concepts and to agree a shared definition of tools is recognized by many in the field. Urgent answers were, therefore, sought in relation to the following questions: *What exactly is to count as ESD and what does not? What are the aims and boundaries of ESD research? What are its essential characteristics?* (McKeown, 2007)

This paper begins by identifying the themes of ESD research and will then go on to explore possible synergies across them with regard to the problems and advances encountered in educational research (entire field) and specifically in the field of ESD. Then, the different aspects of research in ESD in an international context will be considered and any issues arising will be discussed. Therefore, in recognition of the urgency of research capacity building in ESD and in pursuit of developing a shared vision for ESD research this study seeks to find out answers to the following questions: *1) What is ESD researchers' ideal conceptualisation of ESD research? 2) What commonalities, if any, do ESD researchers perceive between contemporary educational research and ESD research? 3) What are the distinctive traits of ESD research as identified by ESD researchers?*

The data generated in response to these questions will be used to determine the level of resonance that exists between the perceptions of ESD researcher participating in this study and research perspectives located in other contexts.

## Methods

### *Participants*

Since researchers in ESD could be viewed as a specific hard-to-reach population, it was not intended to conduct the research with a representative sample. A purposive opportunity sampling strategy was used deliberately targeting those who are thought to have information that will help to achieve the study’s aims. In an attempt to minimize the potential of bias, the participants were recruited from a diverse range of geographical, national and academic backgrounds whilst sharing the basic criterion of disseminating their research on ESD in academic peer reviewed journals and international conferences. Initially, the participants were recruited using the authors’ previous and current professional contacts within the academic community, mainly within a European context. In the introductory letter, the participants were asked to circulate the invitation to participate among their colleagues who they believed to be active ESD researchers. Thus, a snowball sampling strategy was employed. It introduced a certain degree of distance between the researchers and the potential participants and thereby avoided the recruitment of “agreeable respondents” who might have voluntarily or unintentionally empathized with members of the researchers if approached directly.

The participants (N=66) represented researchers from 19 countries, including five Eastern-European countries (30), seven Western European countries (19), three Scandinavian countries (11) and other non-European countries (Australia, Taiwan, USA) (6). The majority of the participants were between 36 and 69 years of age with research experience ranging from 4–24 years in general and 3–11 years for ESD specifically. For some, the first contact with ESD research was facilitated mainly at conferences and seminars (17) and through teaching at university (11). For others, it was projects (7) and masters or doctoral studies (7) that provided the means of introduction to this field. Non-governmental organizations and other institutions provided researchers with access routes to ESD, but to a lesser degree. Only three researchers reported discovering ESD through reading the literature and relevant documents. Ten researchers provided the following responses: *can’t remember; childhood experience; parental role models*.

The main socio-demographic characteristics of the participants are reflected in Table 1.

Table 1. Selected socio-demographic characteristics of the ESD researchers sample

<b>Background characteristics</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Gender:</b>		
Male	22	33.3
Female	44	66.7
<b>Status:</b>		
Under-graduate student	2	3.03

*Sequel to Table 1 see on p. 8.*

Sequel to Table 1.

<b>Post-graduate student</b>	12	18.2
Holder of a doctorate	32	48.5
Professor	20	30.3
<b>Doing research*:</b>		
As full-time researcher	12	18.2
As part of contractual employment	43	65.2
As a student	9	13.6
As a hobby	2	3.03
<b>Academic background*:</b>		
Natural sciences	18	27.3
Educational sciences	39	59.1
Humanistic sciences	6	9.10
Social sciences	9	13.6
<b>Preferred research methods:</b>		
Quantitative	15	22.7
Qualitative	37	56.1
Mixed	14	21.2

\*Some researchers had academic background in two fields of science

\*Some post-graduate students were working as full-time researchers or doing research as part of contractual employment

The sample presented in Table 1 reflects a high degree of diversity in terms of the participants' gender (although the majority being female), qualifications (holding a doctorate or not), working pattern (full or part-time), academic background (majority from educational and natural sciences) and preferred research methods (quantitative, qualitative or mixed). The diversity of the sample was seen as helpful in capturing a wide range of perspectives and voices and, by doing so, enhancing the balance and credibility of findings.

### *Data collection and analysis*

Data collection was conducted primarily via contacting the participants by e-mail and resulted in a response rate of about 80%. In addition further responses were received from delegates attending the international ESD conference in Turkey (Anadolu University, 2008), where an invitation to fill in the questionnaire had been included in the conference pack. The participation was voluntary, confidential and based on informed consent. It also included feedback of results on conclusion of the study. Initial demographic questions were followed by open-ended questions: *What about ESD research in general? In your personal opinion, what should ESD research be like? Provide a description of your ideas.*

Qualitative text data in the form of open-ended survey responses is often elicited to explore different dimensions of respondents' experiences, and this type of data can provide a somewhat rich description of respondent reality. The literature provides further arguments in support of this approach. Erickson & Kaplan (2000) maintain that in comparison to interviews or focus groups, open-ended survey questions can offer greater anonymity to respondents and often elicit more honest responses. They can also capture diversity in responses and provide alternative explanations for those that closed-ended survey questions



fail to capture (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Pothas, Andries, & DeWet, 2001; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998).

The data was analysed using an inductive approach to thematic content analysis with the aim of identifying prominent and consistent themes across participants (Baxter, 1991). The advantage of this approach lies in its capacity to allow categories to emerge from the data, rather than imposing them through theory- or research-driven hypotheses and assumptions (Creswell, 1998; Patton, 2002). Inductive themes, drawn from the data, are often useful in new areas of research, although Joffe and Yardley (2003) include the caveat that no theme can be entirely inductive or data driven, since the researcher's knowledge and preconceptions will inevitably influence the identification of themes.

Adopting a mixed methods approach (Bond, Holmes, Byrne, Babchuck, & Kirton-Robbins, 2008; Jithoo, 2010; Hutchins, Hastie, Starkey, Hilton, & Clark, 2005, etc.) in the analysis of qualitative data constituted a hybrid technique, which according to Bauer and Gaskell (2000) is highly flexible and can be adapted to the research questions, the participants, the method of data collection and characteristics of data. Weber (1990) believes that the best content analytic studies use both qualitative and quantitative operations on texts.

In conducting a thematic content analysis (Malterud, 1993), the following procedure was used. Firstly, all the material was read to obtain an overall impression and for the researchers to become aware of any preconceptions. Secondly, the units of meaning with a primary focus on the expression of an idea (i.e. case) (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1990), not individual items of language (for instance, single words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs), were identified and coded. These units of meaning were then distilled into broader themes.

The number of cases captured within each theme provided the researchers with an indication of the extent to which this mapping exercise revealed a shared understanding about the themes amongst ESD researchers. Due to the constraints imposed on the basis of the size and composition of the sample, it is not possible to present any statistically significant findings that can claim to be of generalisable value. Instead, this study seeks to highlight ESD researchers' perceptions of their field with a view to using some of these findings as a basis for follow-up large-scale study.

## **Findings**

### *Profiling ESD research aspects: Towards a holistic picture of educational research*

At first, the answers to the first research question will be examined *What is ESD researchers' ideal conceptualisation of ESD research?* An overview of the themes that emerged from the content analysis of data (answers to the open-ended question) will be provided. The length of the answers provided by the respondents varied from 5 to 394 words. On average, the length of the answers was 98 words. In total, 158 semantic units were generated leading to the emergence of six themes with one theme (research

methodology), generating an additional five sub-themes. The number of cases for each theme and relevant percentage are shown in Table 2. The majority (67%) of the respondents stated one idea (case), a third (32%) cited two and only one participant combined three.

The most frequently populated theme was ‘Research methodology’ (53%), which was further sub-divided into ‘Philosophical background’; ‘Disciplinary and theoretical background’; ‘Qualitative and quantitative research’; ‘Theoretical versus applied research’ and ‘Type of research’ (Table 2). Out of the five sub-themes, ‘Qualitative versus quantitative research’ (18%) and ‘Disciplinary and theoretical background’ (16%) were the most prominent, followed by ‘Aim of ESD research’ (14%), ‘Research environment’ (11%), ‘Problems with the research for ESD’ (10%) and ‘Themes of research for ESD’ (9%). In an attempt to answer the second research question (*What commonalities, if any, do ESD researchers perceive between contemporary educational research and ESD research?*), the researchers will focus on these themes. The original voices of the participants are provided in the form of citations presented in italics. To enhance coherence and clarity of argument, the presentation of data will be followed by discussion.

### *Philosophical background: Developing a common language and a shared understanding*

Nine researchers mentioned the need for a philosophical perspective that can inform ESD research. Four researchers stressed the need for a value-based approach, while three cited a systemic approach and two appealed to the *purposefulness* and *comprehensiveness* (verbatim quotes in italic) of obtained knowledge. Speaking about the subject of ESD research itself, the respondents suggested that *it should be about the dualism [between personal freedom and collective direction toward sustainability] and how it is addressed in different cultural contexts, and how it will be possible to bridge this and simultaneously ensure the preservation of the special character of the culture. This is comparable with the tension between feeling optimally free and acting in a certain direction [towards sustainability].*

This stance resonates with Dewey (2009), who advocates the view that educational practice needs to have a serious philosophical foundation. In a similar vein, educational research is to be underpinned and informed by a critical discourse on research methodology and thereby help frame and analyze philosophical problems specific to education (Moses, 2002) – both applications are relevant to ESD research, though they are scarcely considered by publications in the area of ESD research (Mandolini, 2007). Although debates about the environment, poverty and future generations are philosophically vigorous, such issues are generally regarded as being of marginal significance by the wider body of Anglo-American philosophers (Palmer, 2004, as cited in Everett, 2008).

Pointing to a value-based research approach, Howe (2008) suggests that educational research should be rooted in and guided by the values associated with a genuine form of democratic politics. According to Moses (2002) the “philosophers of education may also alert educators to the value and right headedness of some movements, and thus to the need for changes in policy and practice” (p. 14). Even if “we are entrenched in a particular way

of thinking about the world, one in which we have been trained, one that seems to suit our ends and our dispositions” (St. Pierre, 2006, p. 257), we need not only be willing to hear others, but also develop a common language to understand each other and thereby facilitate a constructive and critical dialogue across a diversity of perspectives and constituencies.

### *Developing an inter-disciplinary approach*

The value-laden aspect of research methodology was broadly addressed in the responses given by ESD researchers (25 cases). In ten cases, inter-disciplinarity in ESD research was prioritized, emphasizing the widest scope of involved dimensions: *The sense of interdisciplinarity is based not only on natural and historic variables, but also on normative dimensions (this means that they involve values, morality, cultural views on nature and human essence)*. Nevertheless, some scholars stressed the sole importance of their own discipline, such as social sciences, education or natural sciences, ecology. The majority of the researchers, however, perceived the field of ESD research as based on different approaches and theoretical perspectives and were aware of theoretically eclectic interpretations of the field. There was evidence of a more radical contextual view: *ESD research should not be based on purely theoretical models: an interpretation of ESD statements and criteria depends very much on specific social circumstances which, in turn, are related to economy and ecology*. This coincides with the opinion of Berliner (2002, p. 19) who maintains that “in education, broad theories and ecological generalizations often fail because they cannot incorporate the enormous number or determine the power of the contexts within which human beings find themselves” (p. 19).

The views of the researchers participating in this study resonate with the idea that simple interdisciplinarity as bounded by certain sciences is not enough. More effective theoretical pluralism reaching beyond the guiding assumptions and methods of the physical, behavioural and social sciences are necessary; alternative traditions and modes of inquiry are called for to complement the traditional, convenient habits of mind (Bullough, 2006). This stance should resonate with educational researchers, who continually tend to rebuild and extend the foundations of the field leading to dispersion of resources into a variety of parallel projects that are scattered across the terrain, each working its own discrete portion of the educational context and building its own intellectual foundations for analysing that context (Labaree, 2003).

### *The paradigm wars – mixed methods*

The researchers participating in this study paid particular attention to the paradigm wars and the majority agreed that ESD research asks for both qualitative and quantitative methods, depending on the research question. However, in nine cases a marked inclination towards the qualitative paradigm was evident (*mostly qualitative, situational and contextual, different kinds of people’s voices*), which can be explained largely by the background of the researchers. Five researchers mentioned that this should be high quality

and valid research that follows strict scientific criteria: *it is not the question of whether ESD research is qualitative, quantitative or mixed, basic or applied, theoretical, philosophical or naturalistic. What matters is the research question, the perspective of sustainability, and trustworthiness of research itself.* Only one researcher mentioned that ESD research, in general, should be quantitative and statistical. The issue of the methodological dichotomy is linked to the multi-disciplinarity of ESD research and, as it is indicated by one of the research participants, *every discipline should follow its own methodology though looking at a common aim.*

As to the specific type of research, action research and holistic education research were mentioned as consistent with the qualitative point of view and a recognition that action research has, for a long time, warranted its potential as a tool for diminishing the hindrances to the solutions of complex issues in society (Salite, 2008). Also, longitudinal and comparative studies were mentioned as an appropriate research design for ESD.

Many educational researchers (Paul & Marfo, 2001; Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002; Labaree, 2003, etc.) imply that “quantitative and qualitative research methods should not (and cannot) be distinguished and set in opposition to one another on the grounds that quantitative methods are inherently and exclusively positivistic and suited only for *confirmation*, whereas qualitative methods are inherently and exclusively interpretative and suited only for *understanding*” (Moses, 2002, p.2). Together, they can often support stronger scientific inferences than when either is employed in isolation (Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002). Undoubtedly, the idea that educational researchers need to develop and apply a high degree of methodological sophistication and flexibility to ESD research can be attributed.

### *The theory – research – practice nexus*

Ten researchers referred to the relationships between theory, research and professional practice. Both the combination of theoretical and applied aspects of ESD and practical implementation of results at the post-research stage were mentioned. The researchers suggest going *beyond the statement of facts and trends and moving towards the suggestions of means, approaches and methods which may improve the current situation.* The integrative aspect of educational research is illustrated by the six models of Research–Practice in Education presented by Burkhardt and Schoenfeld (2003):

- teachers read about research and implement it in their classrooms;
- summary guides (professional organisations regularly produce research distillations);
- general professional development;
- the policy route;
- the long route of the productive relationship between educational research and practice;
- experimental design.

Currently, there is evidence of the second and fourth model being the most prominent in ESD research. Summary guides like the UNESCO guidelines published during the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), intended for educational professionals and the public, reflect policy elaborated by UNESCO. The development or implementation of other models will require long-term initiatives and a larger number of ESD researchers. Furthermore, ESD research needs to embrace the research traditions of humanities, science, and engineering and use them in a complementary way. For instance, as in engineering, ESD research should also, but not exclusively, be concerned with the designing and systematic development of high-quality solutions to practical problems (Burkhardt & Schoenfeld, 2003).

### *The ESD research environment*

The researchers participating in this study indicated that ESD research should be conducted collaboratively, by allowing research participants (students, education legislators, mentors, teachers and teacher educators) to act as co-researchers and by creating teams and networks to conduct collaborative inquiry: *the focus is on encouraging a democratic process in which the participants are co-researchers who participate in designing research that will collect data about the experience they will undergo as co-subjects of the research.* Relating to the call for action research mentioned, the participants held that such research should be *carried out with people, not on them.*

Also, the literature on educational research stresses the importance of collegiality and collaboration and the development of more democratic, multi-professional, interdisciplinary, and cross-gender social relationships (Lagemann, 1997). It also highlights its reliance on relationships between researchers and those engaged in professional practice as critical, for instance, teachers, administrators, curriculum developers, university deans, school board members and a host of others (Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002).

The challenge for the field of education and for ESD research in particular is to bring diverse communities – both scientific and otherwise – together to integrate theories and empirical findings across domains, cultures and methods (Labaree, 2003), since ESD as a value-based area cannot work fragmentally or separately in just a few spheres or processes of organisation. To be successful, it has to pervade the various research paradigms and be interwoven at the micro-, meso- and macro- level of the system under consideration.

### **Distinctiveness of ESD research**

Answering the third research question (*What distinctive traits of research attributed to the particular field of ESD research are recognized by ESD researchers?*), this section will focus on 1) aims and themes; 2) exemplary cases; 3) issues arising from ESD research.

### *The aims and themes of ESD research*

The aims of ESD research were one of the three themes that elicited the second highest frequency of responses (22 cases). The majority agreed that ESD research should be aimed at 1) examining the current situation; 2) developing models for personal and a societal future life; 3) changing human awareness and actions towards more sustainable lifestyles and responsibility towards the rest of the world. Five researchers prioritized a new vision of education (awareness, self-regulation, world views, etc.). Just a small minority of the participants mentioned the evaluation of ESD and the need to develop contextualized educational models.

If education is defined as the deliberate activity of helping learners to develop a deeper understanding and skills, then the instructional dynamics occurring in schools or elsewhere becomes the unique province of education research. It is possible to agree with Ball and Forzani (2007) that the core of the educational process should be knowing about and understanding the dynamic relationships among teachers, learners, content, environments. However, if education is re-defined to include global existential and value-laden aspects, as it is the case with ESD, a researcher needs a visionary mind set while focusing on the questions of ends, of the good, as they invite others to engage in the struggle with what ought to be done, even as outcomes are inevitably uncertain, almost happily so (Bullough, 2006). Furthermore, the topics of ESD research emerging from this study show that the majority of participants recognize a visionary perspective of ESD research towards changing human lifestyles, which is clearly identified in 14 cases (9%). The largest number of cases pertains to innovations in education (schools, universities, teacher training) focusing on sustainable development. Other topics reflect a diverse range of issues: 1) existential and societal (human life and its sustainability/unsustainability, characteristics of the citizens of a sustainable society); 2) epistemological and cultural (basic knowledge of sustainability, indigenous knowledge); 3) instrumental (motivation and tools for reaching sustainability). The majority of the researchers accentuated that ESD research should focus on the discovery of individuals' intellectual, moral, social, affective and behavioural dispositions towards their present/future life and evaluation of sustainability/unsustainability of this life, 1) testing instruments for measuring the current dispositions and 2) creating the tools and verifying their efficiency for changing the unsustainable dispositions.

### *Exemplary cases of ESD research*

Research that is valued by external evaluators and has a high impact factor on users tends to be the kind of research that researchers readily use in their own self-presentation. In this study, the exemplary cases were also used by participants to define effective ESD research. Therefore, these cases can also complement the previously discussed themes of ESD research. They represent studies ranging from recognisably large-scale institutional projects to small-scale, applied studies. One such example, mentioned by the participant from Australia, is the Australian Research Institute for Education for Sustainability (ARIES)

which conducted research for educational systems change at a regional and national level (Denby, Tilbury, & Cerone, 2007; Henderson & Tilbury, 2004; Tilbury & Ross, 2005). Other similarly laudable initiatives noted in the answers from UK participants are the training projects on the Welsh dimension of ESD and Global Citizenship (e.g., DCELLS, 2008; DELLS, 2006) and an action research project (a cooperative inquiry) which is seeking to enable a team of teacher educators to develop the Cert Ed/PGCE (Lifelong Learning Sector) to integrate ESD into the curriculum (Cook, Cutting, & Summers, 2010; Summers, 2010). The small-scale applied projects are concerned with the use of multi-level learning with local teachers to broaden their awareness of “being”, to the study of self-deception/denial and greed as factors that prevent individuals (adult and teens) from transitioning to a sustainable lifestyle.

Two cases related to theoretical elaborations, namely the creation of the pedagogical systems theory focused on early childhood education (Härkönen, 2003) and models of implementing ESD strategic principles at various levels of education. It is interesting to note that the balance between the applied and theoretical nature of named projects matches the idea of a methodological equilibrium apparent in ESD research.

### *Issues emerging with regard to research in ESD*

Drawing on the relatively extensive research experience of the participants allowed the researchers to identify a range of issues with regard to the development and sustainability of ESD research. The responses generated by the 66 researchers are highly diverse and suggest that the assumption that ESD research is a well-developed field of educational research needs to be treated with caution. However, they provide evidence to suggest that there is a strong link between the findings of this study highlighted earlier and issues identified by the participants:

- unclear, irrelevant or taken for granted theoretical considerations with rather limited practical value;
- lack of broadly discussed and generally accepted methodology, methods, tools;
- the illusion that we can completely rely upon the information from the past (quantitative research) to make suggestions for future;
- difficulties with programme implementation on different levels;
- fragmented studies;
- lack of incentives for researchers and research participants.

In two cases, the researchers referred to the substantive areas in which ESD research tends to take place, implying that it is hard to identify generic criteria/content of sustainability or that *ESD has been reified to such an extent that we no longer ask what it means, and almost never consider its relationship to sustainable development itself*. For instance, one researcher highlighted the insufficient reflection given to ESD research in educational media.

## Considering the ESD research agenda in relation to different contexts

In order to elicit various discourses about the ESD research agenda in different contexts, it would be helpful to observe the outcomes of discussions held by international experts during consultations, workshops and presented in academic writing. Further analysis will be based on three items: 1) the research agenda in higher education for sustainability (HES) articulated during the Halifax Consultation in 2005 (Wright, 2007); 2) the strategic research agenda for the UNDESD presented during a joint UNU-UNESCO workshop in Paris 2006 (McKeown, 2007); 3) research trends in the United States identified in an article by Heimlich (2007).

### *The Halifax consultation – the research agenda for higher education for sustainability (HES)*

The Delphi Technique, a systematic, interactive forecasting method, which relies on a panel of experts, was used at this workshop incorporating three rounds of questionnaires: 1) the wording of written answers to open-ended questions about the priorities of HES research for the future as discrete questionnaire items complemented by new items from discussions; 2) the review of items on a Likert-Scale of 1–5 in terms of perceived importance for future HES research and inter-group agreement on 19 highly important themes; 3) the selection of the 10 most important research areas from 19 themes and development of a list based on participant rankings (Wright, 2007).

The methodology of the Halifax workshop partly coincides with the research methodology employed in this study in that the initial open question avoids predetermining or eliciting specific participant responses. The diversity of answers provided indicated the scope of the research (orientation towards ESD in general or towards HES) and was also reflected in the different backgrounds of the participants.

Although there is no striking disparity in the general framework of categories developed in this study (Table 2) and in the Halifax consultation (Wright, 2007), there are some notable distinctions: 1) *the Impacts of Teaching and Learning Methods* received the top ranking in Halifax, whereas, in this study, they were mentioned only indirectly; 2) the list of the Halifax categories contains a mix of categories related to different domains. The largest proportion is related to content issues (for instance, individual and social change, transformative learning, etc.). Only a few items refer to research methodology (e.g., the philosophy and epistemology of HES, case study analysis) or to research policy (legitimising HES research and practice). Probably the narrower focus of HES implicitly suggests a preference for turning to the content areas of research.

As for the similarities, from the seventeen categories ranked by the participants of the Halifax consultation, twelve were in tune with those obtained in this study. They are (starting from the highest rank): 1) *The Impacts of Teaching and Learning Methods*; 2) *Mainstreaming Sustainability*; 3) *Institutional Culture and Organisational/Governance Structures*; 4) *Evaluating Educational Approaches*; 5) *Legitimising HES Research and Practice*; 6) *Transformative Learning*; 7) *Philosophy and Epistemology in HES*; 8)



*Disciplinary, Transdisciplinarity and Interdisciplinarity; 9) Capacity-building; 10) Individual and Social Change; 11) Inclusiveness and Voice in Sustainable Development; 12) Networking.*

Two categories with direct relevance to HES were not a priority in this study. While omitting the categories of *Case Study Analysis* and *Leadership and Management*, the participants mentioned action research and longitudinal studies. Furthermore, the number of exemplary cases among the categories of this study shows that the research participants are already thinking about their research in terms of ‘best practice’ cases.

Table 2. The themes related to ESD research elicited from the textual data of ESD researchers

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Number of cases</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Aim of ESD research	22	14
Research methodology	83 (in total)	53
• Philosophical background	9	6
• Disciplinary and theoretical background	25	16
• Qualitative vs. quantitative research	28	18
• Theoretical vs. applied research	10	6
• Type of research	11	7
Research environment	17	11
Themes of research for ESD	14	9
Problems with the research for ESD	15	10
Exemplary cases of ESD research	7	4

It appears that the research agendas in both studies overlap, though the specific characteristics of research methodology and research focus led HES experts to emphasize the content areas specific for HES, while the ESD researchers in our study stressed the methodological aspects of ESD research. On a global scale, promising signs of a consensus are emerging from the European and North American international academic community of ESD researchers regarding the important issues of the research agenda: research aims, philosophical and disciplinary background, themes of research and collaborative way of doing research.

*UNU–UNESCO workshop – strategic research agenda for UNDESD*

The workshop organized in 2006 in Paris was based around a series of small group discussions of seven themes prepared by the UNESCO and the United Nations University (UNU). Each discussion session used a predetermined set of questions, themes, key words to prompt discussions.

The relative congruence between the workshop and this study is apparent and useful in discovering the essence of ESD research in general, as well as in relation to the diverse backgrounds of the participants. However, the methodology of the UNU-UNESCO workshop was different from the one used in the Halifax consultation and in this study, for

it was based on predetermined themes of discussions and limited to 28 invited participants from 20 countries around the world.

The core of the strategic research agenda created in this workshop provisionally aligns with the UNESCO political agenda and the focus on instrumental, functional and structural aspects of ESD research. The comparison of the major themes emerging from the discussion in Paris (Mckeown, 2007) with those generated by this study reveals that perhaps all major themes, except for the *Analysis of Policy*, are in one way or another touched upon. The *Clarification of the Concepts* demanded by workshop participants in our study was implicitly interwoven with methodological categories and in the discussion of ESD related issues. *Rising of Awareness*, *Analysis of Curriculum* related to sustainable development, *Evaluation of Practices to Identify Good Practices* and *the Eventual Development of Case Studies* were issues repeatedly mentioned in the workshop, and these items were close to the aims and exemplary cases of ESD research. *Methods for Building Capacity for ESD Research* highlighted in the workshop were of relevance to the different methodological issues (disciplinary background, researchers, and problems with ESD research) identified in this study. The theme *Learning* was observed in twelve responses of ESD researchers representing different research environment (for instance, action learning models, teachers' learning, lifelong learning, distance learning, learning society, transdisciplinary learning, learning environments, etc.). However, due to the high degree of diversity apparent in the underlying contexts of learning, it was not discerned as a separate theme.

On the basis of these synergies, the research agendas created by the participants in both studies are related. Nevertheless, the different methodologies, the context of participants and workshop organisation determined the more politically and normatively oriented agenda and terminology of the UNESCO workshop, whereas the ESD researchers participating in this study avoided reference to political matters placing less emphasis on the cultural dimension. Instead, the focus was predominantly on the methodological aspects of ESD research.

### *ESD research trends in the United States*

The analysis is based on the recent article by Heimlich (2007) *Research trends in the United States: EE to ESD*, where the author has attempted to classify the major trends of environmental education (EE) and ESD research in the US. According to Heimlich (2007) "in an ideal world, a unified research agenda would exist upon which research and evaluation studies could be built and intertwined" (p. 220). This view both substantiates his study and shows the relevance of his theoretical analysis to the current paper.

The methodology used by Heimlich (2007) relates to the area of descriptive analysis. In contrast to the studies described beforehand, the data had not been obtained from the research participants. Also, the elicited themes reflect the research trends in only one country, although, in its scope, Heimlich's (2007) study is similar to those previously analysed ESD research agendas that deal with ESD research in general.

Heimlich (2007) concedes that the themes he discerns are not comprehensive and that they illustrate how programmes lead towards outcomes desired by dominant stakeholders (government, schools, communities, agencies and NGOs) through studying what these programmes are, how they are constructed, how they work, in what ways they affect the learner, society, and lead to change for sustainability. Heimlich (2007) distinguishes between formal, non-formal and informal education. Formal education represents several broad and disparate areas: *Action Research*, *Cultural Relevance*, *Experiential Education*, *Place-based Education* and *Campus Greening*. Comparing it with this study, two trends are of striking similarity: action research and cultural relevance, unlike the terms ‘experiential education’, ‘place-based education’ or ‘campus greening’, which were not encountered in the answers of European researchers at all. However, the idea about direct experience through the learning environment was mentioned explicitly. In his (Heimlich, 2007) discussion of non-formal and informal education, four categories are discerned: *Free-choice Learning*, *Adult Environmental Learning*, *Citizen Science* and *Community-based Education*. This is in contrast to our study which perceives adult environmental learning and citizen science as aspects of lifelong learning and citizen education.

As Heimlich (2007) concludes “there is no paradigm dominating research in ESD and EE in the United States today” (p. 224), and it was difficult to identify similarities between Heimlich’s (2007) and previously analysed studies, due to differences in terminology and point of view. However, it became apparent that there was a huge impact of the context and differences in research development in different regions of the world, which prompts the elaboration of specific regional ESD research agendas.

## **Conclusion and recommendations**

The process and the results of this study allow the professional community of ESD researchers to engage in both professional criticism and self-correction (Popper, 1959, as cited in Feuer, Towne, & Shavelson, 2002), regarding the further development of ESD research. The general picture that emerges reflects a great diversity in the way in which ESD research is perceived. It not only provides us with responses to why, what, who and how questions, but also refers to both issues and best practice with a strong emphasis on the methodological aspects and the recognized issues.

The overall consensus emerging from the data was that research on ESD poses problems, challenges and advances that are well-described in the research literature about educational research in general. It is evident that ESD research mainly follows the struggles and advances in educational research, while having its own specific aims, themes, and political supporters. There is, therefore, a need for a synergy between the methodology employed in educational research and the specific themes relevant to ESD research.

The research findings suggest that the ESD researchers hold the view that ESD research starts with the examination of the current situation to develop personal/societal future life models prescribing the change of human awareness and actions towards developing more sustainable lifestyles and adopting responsibility for the world. These

changes can be introduced by innovations in education (schools, universities, teacher training, etc.) focusing on sustainable development.

The review of the four studies on the ESD research agenda demonstrates that answers to research questions are heavily influenced by the research context and methodology employed. And yet, this study shows that a general framework of ESD research is emerging from the overlapping of suggested themes and aspects of research. Each of the four studies has its strengths and weaknesses to be considered in order to develop a sustainable idea about the what, why, where and how of ESD research.

Finally, it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of this study. By using a purposive/snowball technique, it is not possible to guarantee that the participants' responses were not influenced by their relationship with the researchers and the conference convenors. It should also be acknowledged that a thematic analysis of qualitative data abstracts issues emerging from the lived social realities of those participating in the research and is thus influenced by the researcher's sense of how it connects, rather than the inter-relationship of themes in the participant's mind or lifeworld (Boyatzis, 1998). However, Joffe and Yardley (2003) argue that the goals of thematic and content analysis are simply different from those of, for instance, a narrative analysis. The research objective was to describe how thematic contents are elaborated by groups of participants and to identify meanings that are valid across a wide range of participants, rather than to undertake an in-depth analysis of the inter-connections between meanings within one particular narrative.

Finally, acknowledging the inherent limitations of this study we hope that it can make a valuable contribution to the debate on research capacity building in ESD in Europe and other regions of the world, and, on the basis of the research findings, it would be possible to draw recommendations for further endeavours in the direction of improving inquiry on ESD research:

- It is beneficial to adopt an inductive approach (open questions), which is more time consuming in terms of data analysis, but ultimately enhances the authenticity of findings. The results need to be discussed between the study participants at different stages of the research process (respondent validation) – during academic events (conferences, workshops, consultations), follow-up activities, through academic publications of participants, etc.
- It is essential to establish the research agenda, multi-voicedness and networking. Researchers with different levels of expertise and from different cultural and national backgrounds need to be equitably engaged in the process of collectively generating a global perspective.
- Political supporters should observe and encourage the directions of research that are in line with the global needs and developments and watch out for the warning signs of fragmentation, one-sidedness, injustice.
- The holistic nature of research should be preserved by integrating methodology and research topic and neither should be given preference at the expense of other. There is a need to balance all aspects of ESD research.

- The interpretation of results will always depend on the perspective of the author of the research report, and it is therefore important to ask: Who is doing it? How is it done? Why is it done?

It is hoped that this study has raised a number of pertinent issues with regard to the ESD research agenda and presented possible ways of how these can be addressed. With the aim of incorporating a wider range of perspectives in the current debate we invite responses from the community of ESD researchers.

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# THE EARTH CHARTER: AN ETHICAL FRAMEWORK FOR A FEASIBLE UTOPIA

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## Abstract

*This research objective is to highlight an innovative, holistic, inclusive, integrated approach to a sustainable future promoted by the Earth Charter and describe the structure of its ethical framework. The main conclusion of the research is that the ethical framework of the Earth Charter is based on a limited number of core concepts: planetary human identity, feasible utopianism, co-responsibility and committed compassion. Planetary human identity is based on the capacity to incorporate nature into the process of identity building and integrate three complementary feelings: singularity, belonging to groups and belonging to the planetary community of life. The Earth Charter stresses the necessity to give a new life to utopianism by working out a critical-radical-alternative, but a feasible idea of future and our responsibility towards it. Moreover, the Earth Charter rethinks responsibility as co-responsibility and assigns it four different qualities: universal, synchronic, diachronic and differentiated and appeals to an innovative politically connoted notion of compassion.*

**Key words:** *Earth Charter, co-responsibility, planetary human identity, committed compassion, feasible utopia, development, education for sustainability*

## Introduction

Over the past four decades, the United Nations has gradually shaped and organized a complex global strategy aimed at integrating the principles, values and practices related to sustainable development into all sectors of education. This strategy aims to promote those changes in behaviour necessary to preserve the future integrity of the natural environment and to give to present and future generations the opportunity to enjoy social justice, equity, peace and economic sustainability.

Today, the fundamental aim of the United Nations (2010) is to implement the United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). According to the Resolution 57/254 of 2002, the period from 2005 to 2014 has been declared the United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development. United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is serving as the lead agency of this Decade, and nations are being encouraged to establish their own Decade-oriented initiatives.

The DESD has clear, firm and well-grounded values. This ethical foundation can be found in two different key documents: Resolution 55/2, also known as the “Millennium Declaration” (2000) and the *Earth Charter* (2000). According to this ethical reference

framework, UNESCO has developed its own concept of “sustainable future”, the goal towards which the future of humanity and the planet will be guided.

The *Millennium Declaration* is a real platform agreement among nations, non-governmental and supranational institutions. In the *Millennium Declaration* (2000), the international community declares its intention to take the leadership and the coordination of a brand new global partnership for mankind’s development and for a sustainable future for the planet.

In the *Millennium Declaration*, the UN states a shared idea of the future that will inspire its agenda in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; the UN announces the project of “a world united by common values, striving to achieve peace and decorous living for all men, women and children” (Kofi Annan, monitoring sessions on the outcomes of the Millennium Summit, 2004). The *Millennium Declaration* is orientated towards a more peaceful, more prosperous and more just world, a new alternative world order built by the nations acting together as a real global community with common goals. The declared inspiring reference values of this project are freedom, equality, solidarity, tolerance, respect for nature and shared responsibility.

The sustainable development concept of the *Millennium Declaration* is definitely based on a vision of the world and a future that is alternative to the current system of values and the dominant present conception of human development. Sustainable development is conceived as the will to improve the quality of life for everyone, now and in future, by reconciling economic growth, social development and environmental protection. It is absolutely clear that this goal can be achieved only through a global world agreement by which all nations, communities and even individuals of the planet start cooperating on a new basis and striving for a common goal.

However, the most comprehensive and rigorous exposition of the framework of values of the DESD and the entire UN strategy for the new century can be found in the *Earth Charter*. The *Earth Charter* is an international declaration of fundamental principles for building a just, sustainable and peaceful world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (UNESCO, 2003).

### **The *Earth Charter* ethical framework**

The *Earth Charter* is a completely innovative document from at least four different points of view. Firstly, completed in 2000, it is the product of a decade-long worldwide cross-cultural dialogue on common goals and shared values integrating the environmental, social and economic dimensions of our global concerns. Secondly, it is a document designed to regulate relations between states, individuals and nature, a sort of code for the universal regulation of planetary relations. The *Earth Charter* pinpoints nature and all the living beings. Thirdly, the *Earth Charter* tries to offer the Earth community concrete answers to address major global issues of today’s world in a sustainable way. Finally, the *Earth Charter* attempts to synthesize the diversity of perspectives of sustainable development into a common vision by bringing about a brand new dialogue between different cultures, traditions, interests and concerns.

The first four main principles listed in the *Earth Charter* provide an overview of its ethical vision:

1. respect for the earth and life in all its diversity;
2. care for the community of life with understanding, compassion and love;
3. build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable and peaceful;
4. secure the Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.

The *Earth Charter* aims to provide an integrated ethical vision of sustainable development, building on a broadly participatory global consultation, assisting the human global community in articulating a new framework for economic and social policies oriented not primarily towards short-term economic gain, but towards the full flourishing of life (Rockefeller, 2003). It seeks to inspire in all peoples a new sense of global interdependence and shared responsibility for the well-being of the human community and the larger living world by calling human beings to create a global partnership. It states that the world environmental challenges, human rights, equitable human development, democracy and peace are interdependent and indivisible. The objective of the *Earth Charter* is to give an inspiring expression to the most fundamental principles of an integrated ethical vision for our common future. These principles will have enduring significance for people of all races, cultures and religions, clarifying humanity's shared values and developing a new global ethic for a sustainable way of life (Maurice Strong, Chairman of the Earth Council and Co-chair of the Earth Charter Commission).

According to the *Earth Charter*, the relations between states, individuals and nature should:

- reconcile integrity, unity and diversity as a condition to preserve humanity;
- recognize others (other humans and nature and, with it, all living beings who constitute it) as the foundation of every relationship and the very possibility of peace;
- accept the fact that the preservation of the common good is essential for the exercise of freedom;
- recognize that innovation and change are not ends in themselves.

The *Earth Charter* acknowledges these principles as the fundamental basis for the development of a new *ethics for the future*, the key condition, according to UNESCO, for building a sustainable future.

UNESCO promotes the *Earth Charter* as the possible universal planetary relations regulating code for future. The document is, therefore, intended as the required instrument for developing and affirming the basic reference principles for a just, sustainable and peaceful future society, for promoting respect and responsibility, justice, social equity and economic democracy, the fight against poverty, non-violence and peace.

Moreover, the 32<sup>nd</sup> General Conference of UNESCO (2003) adopted a resolution recognizing the *Earth Charter* as an important ethical framework for sustainable development<sup>7</sup> and a valuable educational tool (particularly in the context of the DESD).

The *Earth Charter* claims two major educational functions (Mackey, 2002). First, it defines the basic structures of a new educational paradigm by which to build societies

oriented towards global integrated human development and a sustainable future. The *Earth Charter* acts as an educational tool to:

- raise awareness among people about the need to take personal responsibility for present global challenges;
- encourage a change in lifestyle oriented towards sustainability and “being” instead of “owning”;
- promote global citizenship based on dialogue and cooperation between human beings and peoples.

The *Earth Charter* envisions and builds a shared common idea of what “ethics for sustainability” could be, by promoting a comprehensive and democratic world dialogue between individuals, peoples, organisations and nations.

The basic orientation of the *Earth Charter* is holistic: it conceives our planet as a whole, as an integrated system, an interconnected and interdependent “community of life”. Therefore, it proposes that the answers to the complex interrelated problems mankind is dealing with today and will have to face in future must inevitably be systemic. As claimed by Boff (2001), the reference concept of the *Earth Charter* new paradigm is that of “multiple-inter-feedback of everything with everything”. It is an innovative theoretical foundation that calls for a new educational orientation, an educational orientation very similar to the paradigm of complexity developed by Morin (2001).

The four basic principles of the path towards a sustainable future are the second fundamental reference of the *Earth Charter*: respect and care for the biological community and for ecological integrity; social justice and economic democracy; non-violence and peace. By stating a position very similar to the one proposed by Edgar Morin (2001), the *Earth Charter* warns us that our survival depends on our capacity “to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on [...] our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future”, and that this is the consequence of the fact that humanity is one part of a vast evolving universe, systemically interconnected. To achieve this goal, “we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world” (ECI, 2000, p. 1).

### **The first axis: The “planetary human identity”**

According to the *Earth Charter* vision, the distinguishing feature of the contemporary human condition is “unity in diversity”. The identity of human beings in a globalized world is, on the one hand, plural, unique and individual as a result of multiple heterogeneous affiliations. On the other hand, it is characterized by the feeling of belonging to a global world community, by the consciousness that all human beings share a common destiny. The possibility of building a new human identity, individual and common at the same time, relies on this very deep sense of belonging to a planetary community. According to the

*Earth Charter*, by missing it, we lack the basic requirement for sustainable development: the capacity to act on a global scale for the protection of and care for the planet as a biotic community. The ensuing new basic task for education is to work out new patterns for promoting and spreading in our societies “fundamental changes [...] in our values, institutions, and ways of living” (ECI, 2000, p. 1).

The *Earth Charter* is inspired by a critical humanism oriented to the transformation of reality, a possible, feasible, utopia bent on building a brand new socially and environmentally sustainable planetary community. The final paragraph expresses these utopian aspirations in a very effective way by saying: “Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life” (ECI, 2000, p. 4).

### **The second axis: Feasible utopianism**

A new feasible utopia for the 21<sup>st</sup> century is therefore at the core of the *Earth Charter*. A utopia based on a very radical idea of human development as “human development is primarily about being more, not having more” (ECI, 2000, p. 1). The person, his/her liberty, stands as the main goal of development, while the concepts of “welfare” and “quality of life” should be strictly tied up with the potentials that people are actually able to implement (Sen, 2000). The *Earth Charter* calls for a return to utopia, for a real Copernican revolution; it reminds us that all living beings are necessarily mutually dependent; there is no possibility of future development without complying with this principle.

This critical reality change oriented humanism. This new form of feasible realistic utopianism, highlights the fourth ethical principle of the *Earth Charter*: the principle of responsibility. “Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature [...] with increased freedom, knowledge, and power comes increased responsibility to promote the common good” (ECI, 2000, pp. 1–2). All human beings have a “responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations” (ECI, 2000, p. 1).

### **Third axis: Universal, synchronic, diachronic and differentiated co-responsibility**

Modern ethic defines “responsibility” as the capacity, peculiar to human beings, “to answer for their actions to themselves and to others, i.e. to account for them and take the consequences resulting there from” (Escámez Sánchez, García López, & Pérez Pérez, 2003, p. 189). As a consequence, the *Earth Charter* acknowledges that the ethical nature of the person, the fact that every human being has the duty to take positions on “the

transformation of social settings [...], on action” (ibid., p. 209), is based on the capacity to feel responsible.

According to the *Earth Charter*, the possibility of developing communities that can be sustainable, responsible, able to face the present challenges and capable of future depends on a radical reconsideration of the reference ethical values for individuals and communities, at local, national and global levels. The basis of this paradigm shift has strong affinities with the revised theory of ethics worked out by Jonas (1993) who believes that, faced with the current technological civilization “Prometheus unchained”, a real threat to the survival of the planet and of the human race, it is necessary to frame a new global ethics for the technological civilization, to develop a brand new ethic of responsibility completely different from traditional morals. The new ethics will enable people to give up the traditional intention and individual conscience point of view, considering the moral subject as isolated when judging their own conformity to the moral principles. The new ethics will enable acceptance of totally new points of view:

- to estimate the long-term effects of human actions;
- to estimate the consequences of human action on the extra-human world and the future generations;
- to recognize the need for a new relational, dialogical and continuously revisable basis for moral judgment.

The Jonas’s (1993) ethics of responsibility suggests a new moral imperative, more suitable for the present technological age: “Act so that the consequences of your actions are compatible with the continuity of authentic human life on Earth” (Jonas, 1993, p. 48.).

Faced with a possible ecological disaster, Jonas refuses pessimism and counters the arguments of the propagandists of “unlimited hope” with a moderate trust in reason and human freedom: “Despite all, my hope rests ultimately on human reason, that reason which has already proved so extraordinary in getting our power and which must now take the lead in limiting it. To doubt it would be irresponsible” (Jonas, 1993, p. 48).

The new *Earth Charter* ethical perspective has, therefore, important consequences, not only on morals, but also on politics and education. Responsibility is thought over as co-responsibility and as a moral obligation of everybody to everyone. Therefore, co-responsibility is universal: the human being as a moral subject who, by bringing on actions, takes on moral responsibility towards all living beings of the planet and also towards the Earth itself as a living being. The human being must, therefore, respond morally before the whole planetary community. All the elements of nature (living, non-living and the Earth itself as a whole) are included in the moral community.

This new form of universal co-responsibility is a “glocal” responsibility; it combines the needs of the local with the needs of the cosmic community of life. Co-responsibility includes all action consequences, even the unpredictable: “an ethics of responsibility must take into account the consequences of actions, both intentional and non intentional, to the ecosystem, for the third world and for future generations” (Cortina, 2002, p. 146). Moreover, this new conception of moral responsibility implies the “precautionary principle” already outlined in the Stockholm Conference (1972) and extensively reaffirmed by the Rio Declaration (Principle 15).

The concept of responsibility encourages an original integration between two different aspects. A synchronic, intra-generation one: people bear the responsibility to build democratic, just, peaceful, sustainable societies, based on respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, where everyone has got a real opportunity to develop his own potential societies for all generations and peoples who live in the same historical moment. On the other hand, a diachronic, inter-generation aspect: all the generations that will inhabit the planet in the future have an equal right to access the common goods that we use today (ecosystems and cultural-historical heritage). We are responsible to guarantee them this right, and for this the *Earth Charter* asks us to “...secure Earth’s bounty and beauty for present and future generations, [...] recognize that the freedom of action of each generation is qualified by the needs of future generations, [...] transmit to future generations values, traditions, and institutions that support the long-term flourishing of Earth’s human and ecological communities” (ECI, 2000, p. 2).

The *Earth Charter* also develops another innovative approach to the concept of responsibility. It works out the concept of differentiated responsibility, which binds the intensity of moral obligation to the actual possibilities and means of actions that the moral subject has. From this brand new point of view, all human beings must answer for actions and choices according to their actual means.

#### **Fourth axis: Critical and politically committed compassion**

Finally, the *Earth Charter* appeals to the value of “compassion” – care for the community of life with understanding, compassion and love. In the Western philosophical tradition, the concept of compassion generally shows a certain degree of complexity and ambiguity; it is a moral and philosophical concept to which there is a great deal of suspect and mistrust. However, the formulation of it is extremely innovative, featuring an absolutely liberating charge. In fact, the definition as provided by the *Earth Charter* implies sensitivity and deep engagement with the suffering of others, requires active involvement, solidarity and responsibility. It does not hide the asymmetries of the relations between the persons and the asymmetrical nature of power relations. It promotes respect and recognition of the dignity of those who suffer, collaborating and sharing; its connotation is political and moral, and it, therefore, implies also political commitment and complaint of injustice.

The *Earth Charter* raises the need for an ethical commitment and, from there, recognizes that we really have a chance to counter the risk of human extinction as a consequence of over-consumerism and over-exploitation of the resources that characterize our current development pattern. An ethical commitment based on three key values: the sense of planetary human identity, the universal differentiated co-responsibility, synchronic and diachronic and the critical responsible compassion.

## Conclusion

Faced with the many present global crises, the *Earth Charter* claims it is possible to reverse the present situation, to ensure for our societies the possibility of a sustainable future and the continuity of life on the Earth.

But, even more important, the *Earth Charter* suggests a feasible utopia, a new development pattern, focused on the strengthening of the individual freedom, capacities and aptitudes (Sen, 1998, 2000). A brand new, clearer, critical and radical idea of the future and of our responsibility towards it as compared to the remarks on this issue elaborated in former documents.

At the time when major changes in how we think and live are urgently needed, the *Earth Charter* challenges us to question and rethink our values and to choose a different, more sustainable way. At a time when international partnership is increasingly necessary, the *Earth Charter* encourages us to search for common ground where we can compare our diversities and jointly work out and embrace a new global ethic that could be shared by a growing number of people throughout the world. At the time when education for sustainable development has become essential, the *Earth Charter* provides a very valuable educational instrument.

According to the *Earth Charter*, building sustainable communities able to meet the challenges of the contemporary world and the present environmental, social, economic and cultural crisis is possible by integrating two pathways. It would be possible, on the one hand, by drawing the outline and promoting a new ethics for individuals and communities at local, national and global levels. A paradigm shift is based on the call to global responsibility, being responsible to oneself, to the others and to the planet, focused on a new balance between freedom and a sense of limits and on the capacity of envisioning and building the future. On the other hand, the ability of people to appreciate the beauty of nature, love it and assume the responsibility to promote it in their attitudes and behaviours is of utter importance.

A special responsibility should be accorded to education, to its capacity to build a new awareness and create proper conditions for more responsible and sustainable attitudes and behaviours. The highly innovative nature of the *Earth Charter* helps to explain why so much research has been carried out on it recently (Attfield, 2007; Bosselmann, 2004; Dower, 2004; Lucier, 2004; Lynn, 2004; Murga, 2005; Vilela, 2007).

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# COMMUNICATIVE APPROACH AS A TOOL FOR RELATING READING AND WRITING SKILLS IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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## **Abstract**

*This study dwells upon communicative approach as a tool for relating reading and writing skills in early childhood education in a developing economy. The quantitative data was gathered through the use of structured questionnaires and was analysed using SPSS version 17. This study confirms that teachers in the selected early childhood education centres (ECEC) have no professional early childhood education qualifications and, as a result, are not qualified to effectively carry out their teaching responsibilities. It is hoped that this study can contribute to a deeper understanding of how early childhood education teachers perceive language teaching and consequently assist in the development of teacher education programmes and activities. Teacher training and education courses must play a more active role in informing trainee teachers of the instructional value of communicative approach in the teaching and learning of the English language. This study provides parents, teachers, researchers, the public and those who manage education systems with new data that will help them to answer questions about the failing state of education in Nigeria.*

**Key words:** *communicative approach, reading and writing, early childhood, education, professionalism, teaching competencies*

## **Introduction**

The initiation of this research reflects a Nigerian academic concern and preoccupation with the declining standard of education in the country. Academic experiences provided the background and aroused interest in a research endeavour focused on teachers' professional competencies, in part, because of the limited materials on this subject in a Nigerian context. This study thus came about after a detailed examination of the segment of society that required improvement so as to enhance the developmental growth of children in relation to their reading and writing skills.

The communicative approach was developed in the 1960s and 1970s for teaching and learning the English language. The English language instruction in Nigeria had recently been expanded with the establishment of comprehensive schools. The communicative approach was to be used to teach virtually all children and is not limited to the teaching of oral skills. The communicative approach is used develop reading and writing skills needed to ensure pupils' confidence in reading, summarising, translating, discussing and debating, by using elements encountered in variety of situations to make language more fluid and the manipulation of language more fluent (Brown, 1994). English is the language of education, public relations and administration, commerce, science and technology, as well as a major language of global communication in general. It is the major medium through which nearly every Nigerian gains access to information and knowledge both internally and externally. The ability to speak and write English effectively has, therefore, become an essential skill in schools and workplaces across Nigeria.

Failure in the effective use of the communicative approach in relating reading and writing skills in early childhood education has lowered educational standards in Nigeria. This is evidenced in the inability of most Nigerian primary, secondary and university graduates to communicate effectively in written and spoken English (Ololube, Kpolovie, & Egbezor, 2009).

According to Ololube et al. (2009), educators in Nigeria have forgotten the important connection between teachers' professional competencies and the quality of early childhood education as high-quality teachers more effectively meet the predetermined goals of early childhood education. According to Poetter (1997), the most valuable resource right in our very own backyard has been overlooked – our early childhood pupils. Early childhood pupils are central to our practice as they are authentic reflections of the quality of our national development. They also have much to teach us about learners and the processes of learning. Not surprisingly, teachers in early childhood schools are often among the most powerful and the most exhausted adults in any society. They are powerful because of their influence over young minds and exhausted because of the responsibilities that are often disproportionate to their authority (Clark, 1995). The reality is that early childhood centres/schools will change and develop only if the teachers within these systems are empowered to develop themselves professionally (Bayne-Jardine, 1994).

Realising from the onset the importance of early childhood education, it is not difficult to comprehend early childhood education as a powerful instrument of social progress without which individuals cannot realize their full social and economic potential. It is then that enhancing ECE instruction through early childhood teacher education programmes is of immediate importance. These programmes are central to building and augmenting teachers' professional competencies in communicative approaches for relating early reading and writing skills. Such programmes are meant to help individual teachers grow and develop as professional early childhood teachers, provide them with the skills and professional abilities to motivate children to learn and assist them in acquiring the right understanding of the concepts, values, and attitudes needed, not only to manage classroom instruction, but also to contribute to society in which they are born, grow and live (Ololube, 2009). Thus, early childhood teacher education is designed to produce a highly motivated,

sensitive, conscientious, and successful classroom early childhood teacher who will handle students effectively and professionally and work towards better educational achievement.

The National Policy on Education (2004) Section 2, Sub-section 11–13 considers early childhood/pre-primary education to be education given in an educational institution to children prior to their entering primary school. It includes the crèche, the nursery and kindergarten. ECE refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth through early childhood, their parents and caregivers, the objective of which is to protect the child's rights to develop their full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential. Most often this education is provided for children from the birth to 3 years in day care centres or nurseries and for children from 3 to 6 years in kindergarten classes in schools (Uzodinma & Akinware, 2001). The purposes of this early childhood education are to effect a smooth transition from the home to the school, prepare children for primary level education, provide adequate care and supervision for children while their parents are at work, inculcate social norms, a spirit of enquiry and creativity through the exploration of nature, the environment, art, music, and playing with toys, develop a sense of cooperation and a spirit of teamwork, teach good habits, especially good health habits and finally to teach some of the fundamentals of learning, such as letters, colours, shapes and forms.

Education in the second half of the twentieth century was characterized by increases in the provision of educational programmes for pre-school aged children (Cotton & Conklin, n.d.). However, the age at which children have a legal right to attend free, school-based early childhood education and care varies across countries (OECD, 2002). It is increasingly acknowledged that high-quality programmes are needed to give all young children a strong start in lifelong learning. Unequal beginnings in education have become increasingly costly to remedy and have damaged the learning ability of many children invariably resulting in social, political and economic disruptions throughout the country. In order for a nation to develop, its pre-school education must be based on a solid foundation, and the national, state and local facilities needed for enhancing it ought to be provided. Yet, in a number of countries (including Nigeria), policy making and programme coverage in the early childhood years remains fragmented and piecemeal (OECD, 2002; Song & Young, 2008). The road to quality Education for All (EFA) presents enormous challenges including the need to hire and train (and retain) massive numbers of new teachers over the next decade. Success in this endeavour will in turn determine whether EFA objectives are themselves successful and sustainable (Mingat & Sosale, 2003; Ololube, Kpolovie & Egbezor, 2009).

In Nigeria, attempts to improve ECE professional development through the establishment of colleges of education are unrealistic. These colleges and other similar institutions have consistently demonstrated inadequate training and specialisation in early childhood education. At the same time, there is minimal or no specialized programming in early childhood education in the Nigerian Certificate in Education (NCE) and university bachelor degree programmes. As a result, little has been achieved in the realm of early childhood education, and, while we have always expected that teachers with specialisation in early childhood education would be employed to handle the instructional processes in pre-schools, the reality is that non-specialist teachers continue to carry out the teaching and supervision (Ololube, Kpolovie, & Egbezor, 2009).

## **Objectives and purpose of the study**

An education system is functional to the extent that it makes use of the available human and material resources to achieve its stated aims and objectives. The major objective of every school system, irrespective of the level of education, is to provide high quality education for learners. In addition, the success of any education system depends on the methodological competence, educational qualification levels and administrative aptitude of its teaching staff (Ololube, 2006). Professionalism in these three related skill areas is thus essential to teaching success.

There has been a general conception in Nigeria among teaching and non-teaching staff that the ability to teach with enthusiasm is both in-born and acquired. It has been further suggested, in discussions and evaluations with post-secondary professors and researchers, that academic qualification, without an accompanying period of professional or specialized training, is all that is required for teaching competence in early childhood education. In this paradigm, public perception sees intelligence, interest and other personal traits as the only qualities needed for effective ECE teaching. Consequently, they concluded that teacher education is unnecessary. As a result, many unemployed Nigerian college and university graduates see teaching as a short-term employment opportunity to sustain them until they get a job more in line with their interests and qualifications. Fortunately from their perspective, they do not have to wait long to be offered a job by the Ministry of Education or private sector education administrators (Ololube, 2007).

Again, not only is there growing academic dissatisfaction with the achievement of students in ECEC, but with the quality of instruction that children in general receive. Research has shown that the quality of instruction that children receive in schools affects their academic achievements thus the competencies of the teaching staff gain increased importance (Kerry & Wilding, 2004; Wylie & Thompson, 2003; Scheerens, 2000; Wheldall & Glynn, 1989). The study also examines the utilisation of available instructional materials, motivational process competencies, evaluation competencies and the method/instructional process competencies of teachers.

This research on the communicative approach as a tool for relating reading and writing skills in early childhood is a part of a wider study that discussed the need to accelerate and redesign early childhood education preparation programmes. In identifying the need for early childhood education centres (ECEC) to adapt to changing social circumstances and to successfully meet the learning requirements of all young people, a renewed emphasis must be placed on the professional quality and capacity of the teaching workforce (Ololube, Kpolovie, & Egbezor, 2009).

Conversely, given that there were limited research publications in Nigeria on this area of study, and those that did exist were very narrow and did not focus on other possible features that might improve teachers' professional competencies. This does not mean to suggest that this research is an end in itself; rather it is a means to help resolve the education aforementioned challenges. It seeks to fill the intellectual gap in the understanding of the key educational achievement issues in Nigeria, with a particular reference to ECEC teachers' job effectiveness. To this end, the researchers enter into the

global debate on educational improvement and student academic achievement from the perspective of a developing country.

The study objective is to analyse teachers' professional competencies as a way of improving their job effectiveness. This study is a demonstration of the everyday practices in the real world of instructional effectiveness and improvement.

This research yields knowledge about the characteristics of teachers' professional and academic competencies in the communicative approach used to relate reading and writing in ECE, and how they affect educational objectives. This study seeks to examine teachers' professional competencies in employing the communicative approach in several purposefully selected preschools in the Delta and Rivers State of Nigeria. This study seeks to theoretically and empirically ascertain the extent to which Nigerians are contending with compromised educational standards. Four research hypotheses have been formulated.

1. There is no significant difference between the professional competencies of teachers and the motivational competencies used to improve their job effectiveness in the communicative approach as a tool for relating reading and writing skills in early childhood education.
2. There is no significant difference between the professional competencies of teachers and the methods/instructional processes used to improve their effectiveness in the communicative approach as a tool for relating reading and writing skills in early childhood education.
3. There is no significant difference between the professional competencies of teachers and their evaluation competencies used in the communicative approach as a tool for relating reading and writing skills in early childhood education.
4. There is no significant difference between the bio-data of respondents and their overall perception of the variables related to the communicative approach as a tool for relating reading and writing.

### **The general structure of the early childhood education system in Nigeria**

The Nigerian government commits itself to setting and monitoring minimum standards for early childcare centres across the country and ensuring the full participation of governments, communities and teachers' associations in the development, operation and maintenance of early childhood education facilities (Ololube, Kpolovie, & Egbezor, 2009). Standards in this context are the degree of excellence required for a particular purpose – an accepted or approved example against which phenomenon are judged or measured. Excellence in this context includes generally accepted best practices in education in search of distinction in teaching and learning. Best practices, as an essential component of the excellence formula, create quality-teaching strategies that produce improved scholarship (Ololube & Ubogu, 2008).

The National Policy on Education (2004) compels the various levels of government in Nigeria to establish pre-primary school sections in existing public schools and encourages both community and private efforts in the provision of pre-primary education. The National Policy also calls for provisions in teacher education programmes for specialisations in early

childhood education, ensuring that the medium of instruction is principally the mother tongue or the language of the immediate community and developing the orthography of additional Nigerian languages and textbooks in the Nigerian languages. The Policy also stipulates that the main method of teaching at this level shall be through play; the curriculum shall be oriented to achieving, regulating and controlling pre-primary education and its learning objectives. To this end, the teacher-pupil ration is set at 1:25.

### **Categories of teachers found in early childhood education centres in Nigeria**

This paper discusses the various levels of teachers and those presently believed to be teaching in early childhood education centres (ECEC) in Nigeria:

- teachers holding the teachers' grade two certificates with:
  - five years of training in education and the study of academic subjects after primary school certificate;
  - two years of training in academic and professional subjects after full secondary school education without a certificate;
  - one year of training in predominantly education after obtaining a secondary school certificate;
- teachers holding the teachers' grade one certificate: those with teachers' grade two certificates, at least two subjects at the General Certificate of Education Advance level and a teaching practice level examination;
- teachers holding the teachers' grade two certificate and the Associateship Certificate in Education obtained after one year of professional studies at a university-level faculty of education or an institution affiliated with the faculty of education at a university;
- teachers with the Nigeria Teachers' Institute (NTI) certificate which is obtained after two or three years of professional training;
- teachers holding the Nigeria Certificate in Education (NCE) "Primary" after three years of professional studies at the College of Education;
- teachers holding a Bachelor of Education degree (B.A /B.Sc. Ed, B.Ed.);
- teachers with secondary school certificates;
- teachers without secondary school certificates;
- teachers with Bachelor of Education Degrees in Early Childhood Education.

However, the National Policy on Education (2004) Section 8, Paragraph 70b, emphasized that the Nigeria Certificate in Education will ultimately become the minimum basic qualification for entry into the teaching profession.

### **Teachers' professional competencies**

Teacher's modes of thinking and beliefs guide their behaviour and decisions both inside and outside the classroom. The challenges that teachers encounter inside the classroom are

many. Besides having to master various academic subjects, they must have command of a wide repertoire of different teaching methods and strategies (pedagogy) and understanding of the learning processes of pupils (Ahtee & Salonen, 1995). Approaches to achieving sustainable excellence in pedagogical content knowledge are related to methodological competencies and the act of teaching, motivational competencies, instructional process competencies, material utilisation competencies and evaluation competencies.

Shulman's (1987) introduction to the term pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) surveys the combination of content knowledge and pedagogic skills that are necessary for the organisation of classroom situations and activities of learners. He (Shulman, 1987) defined pedagogical content knowledge as the particular form of content knowledge that embodies the aspects of content most germane to its teachability. It means that both teachers' expertise and teachers' knowledge of subject matter differ from ordinary scholarly knowledge and pedagogy.

There are considerable diversities in the terminology used in the study of professional competence. The main reason for this is the early developmental status of the field and the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon being studied. Most of the research work to date has been occupation specific, so the concepts and terminology reflect the perspective of a given profession.

Kirschner and Thijssen (2005) described the competency concept as a cluster of person-related qualities suitable for dealing in a fitting manner with a clearly defined problem situation. Their definition includes three competency characteristics on which a reasonable level of agreement exists.

- Competency is person-related. People possess different competencies in varying degrees.
- Competency is criteria-related. Different criteria must be defined and used to assess the acquisition of a competency.
- Competency is context-related. A competency can manifest itself in different ways in different contexts as opposed to knowledge, which is context independent.

Eraut (1994), in trying to distinguish between professional competence claims, noted that sometimes these are very general and mean little more than being adequately qualified, especially in professions where the unqualified are not permitted to practise. For instance, when clients or service users describe a professional as competent they usually mean that there is nothing detrimental known about his/her professional capabilities and history.

According to Willis and Dubin (1990), professional competence involves the ability to function effectively in the tasks considered essential within a given profession – in comparison to job competence, which is more focused on a specific organisation and job. Professional competence is reflected in the performance of the professional, and by observing the professional's performance one can assess their level of competence. An important outcome of the maintenance of competence is professional vitality, which involves the ability to successfully meet forthcoming challenges.

To Kautto-Koivula (1996), professional competence involves at least two principal domains: (1) proficiencies specific to the profession, discipline or organisation that



include a discipline-specific knowledge-base, technical skills considered essential in the profession and the ability to solve the type of problems encountered within the profession; and (2) general characteristics of the individual that facilitate the individual's development and maintenance of professional competence. These include intellectual ability, personality traits, motivation, attitudes and values. She (Kautto-Koivula, 1996) further distinguished three cognitive domains of competence: (1) skills (manual or intellectual); (2) knowledge, which is simply information committed to memory; (3) the deeper learning variously described as understanding, conceptual learning or meaningful learning.

### **Effective classroom instruction in communicative teaching and learning**

Communicative language teaching makes use of real-life situations that necessitate communication. In other words, the teacher sets up a situation that students are likely to encounter in real life. Unlike the audio-lingual method of language teaching, which relies on repetition and drills, the communicative approach can leave students in suspense as to the outcome of a classroom exercise, which will vary according to their reactions and responses. The real-life simulations change from day to day and students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful ways about meaningful topics (Orellana, n.d.).

It is the belief of the proponents of meaning-focused instruction, crystallized in what is known as the intensive version of the communicative approach, that learners acquire language skills best when their attention is focused on meaning rather than on language forms. This approach to language teaching quickly acquired a number of supporters based on which several theories and models of language acquisition have since been developed (Baleghizadeh, 2010). While some still considered phonics and the whole language approach to be the unrivalled solution to the reading and writing achievement problem, critics of whole language frequently cite the lack of research-based evidence as justification for not putting it into practice in classrooms. They also argued that phonics was strongly supported by scientifically based research and was thus the indisputably legitimate approach to teaching reading and writing (Song & Young, 2008).

Offering a bit more context to the issue, Song and Young (2008) noted that, while flawed instructional approaches are widely perceived as contributing to the reading and writing achievement problem, many of their study participants did not think it fair to blame it all on teachers. Song and Young (2008) argued instead that inadequate pre-service and in-service training left teachers ill-prepared for effective teaching, which, in turn, has led to reading and writing problems. They also observed that a major issue yet to be resolved is the insufficient time spent in teacher preparation programmes teaching how to teach reading and writing skills. The causal chain is extended by one link, and the origin is traced to teacher preparation programmes that did not equip teachers with the knowledge and skills they needed. Compounding this is the fact that school systems failed to provide adequate in-service training to help teachers augment and implement effective instructional practices. Another major problem identified was the issue of resources – both fiscal and non-fiscal. According to the study participants, educational resources were nearly always

insufficient, in addition to the lack of funding for professional development. Thus, they attributed the reading and writing problem, in part, to the deficit of resources with respect to class size, qualified teachers and books and libraries.

Research has demonstrated that teachers' behaviour in the classroom is positively related to pupils' achievement (Scheerens, 1992; Ololube, 2009). Especially important in this respect is the allocation and use of teaching methods and classroom management, which is aimed at attaining an orderly atmosphere that promotes learning. It also involves several other components of teaching such as structuring the content, questioning, evaluation, feedback and corrective instruction. It has been suggested that teachers who succeed in these behavioural areas have positive effects on students' academic achievement.

The complex causal agent of reading and writing problems in schools according to Song & Young (2008) is the lack of a single state entity responsible for developing educational policies. The education policy environment is complex. There are several state institutions that speak to and about education and they tend to overlap, conflict and consequently fragment state influence. This confusion and fragmentation has an effect on the school and curriculum-level abilities and confidence of teachers. Nonoyama-Tarumi and Bredenberg (2009) argue the problem is extremely complex. Therefore, specialized interventions which provide early childhood education readiness skills to develop children early in the school years to enhance children's learning performance in core curriculum areas when they move into more formalized schooling are needed.

## **Research procedure**

This study explores and analyses the need to accelerate and redesign early childhood education preparation programmes, and this poses key challenges for Nigeria in relation to the communicative approach as a tool for relating reading and writing skills in early childhood education. It provides insights that may be useful for education planners, administrators and policy makers. This study used a combination of observation and text-based materials, which are valuable sources of records about educational research. For the observation component, the researchers participated in the activities of ten early childhood education centres by examining teachers' academic profiles and classroom settings (Maxwell, 1996). The type of observation used in this study does not imply a research strategy of immersion. However, observations were still made of the physical settings of selected early childhood education centres and the quality and skills of the academic staff working in them.

This study employed a benchmarking technique that incorporates quantitative assessment design aimed at improving the best available practices, processes and performance so as to help improve the quality of early childhood education management (Ololube, 2005a, b). Benchmarking was adopted because it makes use of the hypotheses in this study to initiate a process focused on creation, the development of excellence and the discovery of new ideas. Benchmarking enables individuals to compare phenomenon, identify relative strengths and weaknesses, and improve working practices accordingly. It

offers the opportunity to learn from other regions and countries, including whether or not their early education systems and strategies have been identified as best practices (Ololube, Kpolovie, & Egbezor, 2009). Figure 1 depicts the research design of this study.

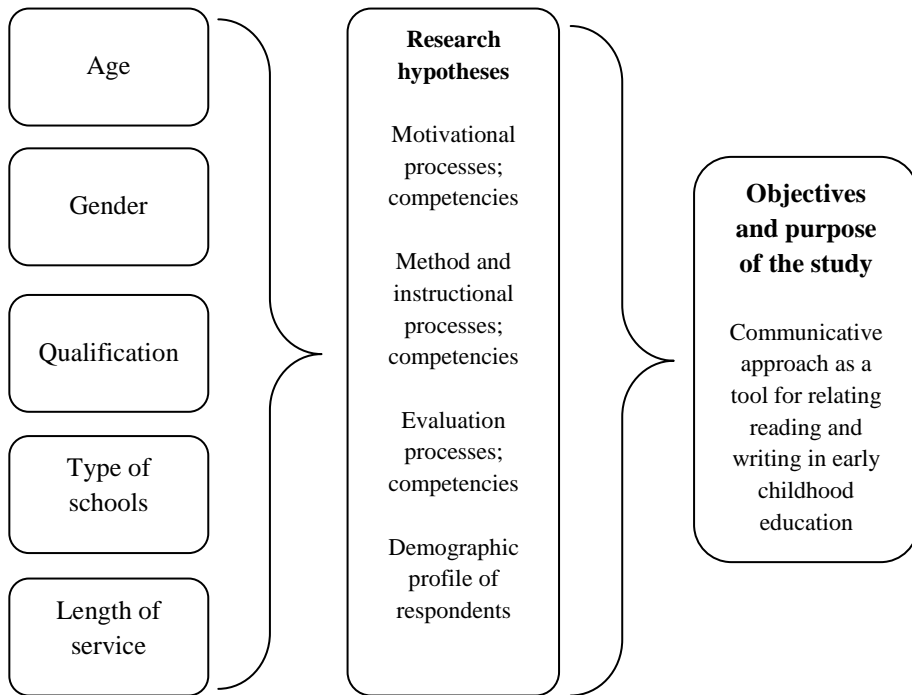


Figure 1. Bio-data of the respondents, the research hypotheses and the purpose of the study

The sampling was purposive, which is characterized by the use of judgment and deliberate effort to obtain representative samples by including the most probable typical groups in the sample. Purposive sampling was selected instead of a random cross-section of the population so that we could identify a small number of early childhood education centres in both public and private sectors with specific characteristics, behaviours and experiences. This was done to facilitate broad comparisons between the groups that the researchers identified as likely to be important. This technique is typically used to overcome problems associated with geographically dispersed populations where it is time and resource-intensive to construct a sampling frame for a large geographical area, such as the Rivers and Delta States.

Table 1. Bio-data of the respondents

Bio-data of respondents	Groups	Freq.	%
Gender	Male	39	34.8
	Female	73	65.2

Sequel to Table 1 see on p. 44.

*Sequel to Table 1.*

Age	20–30	77	68.8
	31 and above	35	31.3
Qualifications	Secondary School Certificate/Diploma	21	18.8
	NCE	42	37.5
	BEd/BScEd/BAEd	46	41.1
	Degree in Early Childhood Education	0	0
	Postgraduate degree	3	2.7
Type of schools	Public (6)	47	42
	Private (6)	65	58
Length of service	Less than 1 year	7	6.3
	About two years	28	25.0
	About 5 years	42	37.5
	About 6–8 years	28	25.0
	Over 9 years	7	6.3
	Less than 1 year	7	6.3

The central materials for this study were theoretical sources (textbooks, articles and reports). These categories of documents provided us with insight into what has already been written on this subject and were used extensively. To be able to make full use of the theoretical sources located and accessed, we needed to assess their validity and importance. Four overlapping validity criteria can be used in such cases: authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning. The acceptance of the retrieved information was dependent on the selection of information from the review and its interpretation. It is hoped, nonetheless, that the representation gleaned here is a relatively balanced and logically precise one. Though no researcher is independent of his/her own normative evaluation of a research problem. If any part of the analysis should bear the hallmark of the researchers' stance, it should be overlooked and considered as part of the researchers own over-sight (Ololube, Ubogu, & Egbezor, 2007).

The respondents for this study (N=112) responded to a two-page questionnaire, which included two major sections: A and B. Section A was comprised of five items, which focused on respondents' bio-data: gender, age, qualification, type of school and length of service. Section B was comprised of eighteen items, including possible competency variables, in which respondents were asked to determine the value of their perceptions of their competencies (motivational competencies, method/instructional processes, evaluating competencies). Section B employed a seven-point Likert-type scale (7 = strongly agree; 6 = agree; 5 = partly agree; 4 = neutral; 3 = partly disagree; 2 = disagree and 1 = strongly disagree). The rating scale was considered to be of approximately equal attitude value to which subjects responded with degree of agreement or disagreement (Ololube, 2009). The data for the study was gathered between 15 June and 16 July 2010 from twelve early childhood education centres (ECEC) (six public school and six private schools) out of the hundreds of public and private ECECs in the Rivers and Delta States of Nigeria.

Statistically appraising the reliability of the responses to the questionnaire was regarded as appropriate as the respondents may have answered the questions randomly given that they were directly affected by the study. This study, in part, focused on their qualifications, competencies and effectiveness. Consequently, a quantitative analysis of the inquiry was performed to statistically test the reliability of the research instrument. In

research statistics, when the reliability of a research instrument has been established, it provides a basis for continuity. The instrument was tested with the Cronbach alpha coefficient and a reliability coefficient of .902 was obtained. Thus, the research instrument was accepted as very reliable as it was able to measure the consistency or repeatability of what we set out to measure.

A number of statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS Version 17: mean point value and standard deviation, Pearson product moment and chi-square of significance. Pearson product moment was employed to test the relationship between variables and respondents' bio-data information. Chi-square was used to find statistically significant differences in the variables. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$  to assess if the level of confidence observed in the sample also existed in the population.

## **Results and discussion**

This section focuses on empirical data presentation, interpretation and analysis. The first step is to present the results of the experimental data in their raw form as drawn from questionnaires. The data for this study is provided in table form and were analysed to support or refute the research hypotheses. The second step is the discussion of the information provided by the respondents in relation to the already existing research on the subject. The clear merit of this section is that the results are connected to the information assessed in the literature review.

### *Motivational competencies in the communicative approach*

To answer research Hypothesis 1, the responses on items 1–5 of section B of the questionnaire were tallied and analysed and the results are presented in Table 2. The statistical analysis of respondents' answers to these items shows significant differences between specialist teachers and non-specialist teachers in terms of their familiarity with and ability to motivate students effectively ( $X^2=53.375$ ,  $p<.000$ ). The data also revealed differences in the ability of specialist and non-specialist teachers to encourage students to learn effectively ( $X^2=32.375$ ,  $p<.000$ ). There are likewise significant differences in abilities to effectively use reward and punishment to motivate student learning ( $X^2=87.500$ ,  $p<.000$ ). There are significant differences in terms of using planned lessons to motivate students to learn ( $X^2=66.500$ ,  $p<.000$ ). Significant differences were found between the specialists and the non-specialists in terms of mastery of subject matter and motivating reading and writing ( $X^2=42.875$ ,  $p<.000$ ). Thus,  $H_0$  1 was rejected.

The cross tabulation analysis revealed that over 96% of non-specialist teachers teaching in early childhood education centres do not find a job interesting and believe that they do not have the motivational competencies in the communicative approach to reading and writing. Interestingly, 70% of children in private ECECs do better than those in the public system. The insinuation is that government at various levels uses the public system to create and maintain a docile, undereducated majority. It can then be presumed that actual

education is not and has never been the goal of public schools. Public schools are warehouses of mediocrity, centres of government indoctrination for the country's children, and easy employment for poorly trained teachers and other adults (Song & Young, 2008). 90% of the respondents believe that their qualifications determine the kind of skills and knowledge they need to be effective in teaching in an early childhood setting (Ololube, Kpolovie, & Egbezor, 2009). In addition, 82.9% of the respondents believe that students' motivation to learn comes from their desire to communicate in meaningful and interesting ways about meaningful topics (Orellana, n.d.)

More than 94% of the respondents think it is not easier to teach in an early childhood education centre using the communicative approach. They also believe that teaching and learning in early childhood education centres do not happen randomly but must be systematically structured if results are to be achieved. The results of this study further revealed that just over 88% believe that the type of English that students speak and write today is linked to the calibre of their teachers (Umoh, 2006).

Table 2. Chi-square analysis of respondents' motivational competencies in the communicative approach

S/N	Motivational competencies in the communicative approach	Chi-square	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	Demonstration of familiarity with students will motivate them learn	53.375 <sup>a</sup>	2	p < .000
2	Encouraging students will make them learn effectively	32.375 <sup>a</sup>	2	p < .000
3	Effective use of reward/punishment will motivate students to learn	87.500 <sup>b</sup>	3	p < .000
4	Planning lessons will motivate students to learn	66.500 <sup>b</sup>	3	p < .000
5	Sufficient mastery of subject matters is a motivator in teaching	42.875 <sup>a</sup>	2	p < .000

### *Methods/instructional competencies in the communicative approach*

Analysis of items 6–12 was performed to determine if there were significant differences between respondents.  $X^2$  showed that there are significant differences between the specialists and the non-specialists in their early childhood education teaching methods and instructional competencies on six out of the seven variables tested. SPSS version 17 displayed it as  $p < .001$  significance levels. This does not mean that the probability is 0. It is less than .005. Table 3 shows the highest  $X^2$  value as 22.750 and the lowest  $X^2$  value as 50.750, meaning that professional competence in methods and instruction lies in the hands of trained early childhood teachers. No significant differences were found in children learning reading and writing more easily when they engaged in role playing at  $X^2 = 3.500$ ,  $p > .321$ .

The methods and instructional competencies in classrooms significantly determine the academic achievement of students. Song and Young (2008) noted that flawed instructional approaches are widely perceived as contributing to the reading and writing achievement problem. Using cross tabulation to test the relationship between variables, it was

determined that more than 85% of non-specialist early childhood teachers teaching in early childhood education centres do not use the appropriate methods of teaching in their instructional processes (Ololube, Kpolovie, & Egbezor, 2009). 98% of the respondents are of the opinion that inadequate pre-service and in-service training has left teachers ill-prepared for effective teaching, which in turn leads to reading and writing problems among students (Song and Young, 2008).

Table 3. Chi-square analysis of the employed methods/instructional competencies of the respondents

S/N	Employed methods/instructional competencies	Chi-square	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	Children having opportunities to move around in the English classroom	50.750 <sup>a</sup>	5	p < .000
2	Children guided on how to read and write in English	40.250 <sup>a</sup>	5	p < .000
3	In learning English language, it is important to repeat and practise a lot	22.750 <sup>b</sup>	6	p < .001
4	Playing English videos for children to imitate and learn from it	47.250 <sup>b</sup>	6	p < .000
5	Pronouncing a word wrongly, I would correct him/her at once	45.500 <sup>a</sup>	5	p < .000
6	Children learn English easily when they engage in role plays	3.500 <sup>c</sup>	3	p > .321
7	For children to learn, you must demonstrate teaching situation effectively	22.750 <sup>b</sup>	6	p < .001

### *Evaluation competencies in the communicative approach*

To examine the research hypothesis: *There is no significant difference between the professional competencies of teachers' and their evaluation competencies used in the communicative approach as a tool for relating reading and writing skills in early childhood education*, the responses on items 13–18 of section B of the questionnaire were tallied and analysed, and the results are provided in Table 4. The statistical analysis of responses shows significant differences between the skills of specialist and non-specialist teachers in questioning as a teaching method, constructing evaluation instruments, developing effective curricula for evaluation, keeping accurate records of individual students, evaluating data to improve job situations and assessing children's behaviour effectively. The test analysis indicated  $X^2=14.875$ ,  $p<.005$ ;  $X^2=47.250$   $p<.000$ ;  $X^2=71.750$ ,  $p<.000$ ;  $X^2=66.500$ ,  $p<.000$ ;  $X^2=45.500$ ,  $p<.000$ , and  $X^2=32.375$ ,  $p<.000$  respectively. Thus,  $H_0$  3 was rejected.

The evaluation competencies exhibited in the communicative approach when relating reading and writing skills in early childhood education centres determine the academic achievement of students. The teachers evaluated themselves on competency statement items of the questionnaire, which were tallied along the lines of "agree and disagree" (Table 4). The results from the analysis revealed that specialist teachers tend to employ and use appropriate evaluation methods more than non-specialists teachers do. For instance, using appropriate questioning skills, constructing various evaluation instruments, using evaluation data to improve job situations, keeping accurate records of individual students and effectively assessing student behaviour are among the first-hand competencies of

specialist teachers. The cross tabulation analysis shows that 93.3% of the respondents hold this view on the professionalization of early childhood education teaching.

Table 4. Chi-square analysis of evaluation competencies of the respondents

S/N	Evaluation competencies	Chi-square	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1	Appropriate questioning skills in teaching children	14.875 <sup>a</sup>	4	p < .005
2	Constructing various evaluation instruments	47.250 <sup>b</sup>	6	p < .000
3	Developing effective curricula for evaluation	71.750 <sup>c</sup>	5	p < .000
4	Keeping records of individual students accurately	66.500 <sup>c</sup>	5	p < .000
5	Evaluation data to improve job situations	45.500 <sup>c</sup>	5	p < .000
6	Assessing children behaviour effectively	32.375 <sup>a</sup>	4	p < .000

### *Bio-data of the respondents and the overall perception of the variables tested*

The results from the Pearson product moment analysis indicate that there are no significant differences in the overall analysis based on the respondents' bio-data profiles. With gender as an independent variable and items 1–18 in section B of the research questionnaire as dependent variables, no significant gender effect on the opinions of female and male respondents can be found. The mean score of 5.4615 for male and 6.2877 for female, with  $r=.014$ ,  $p>.882$  illustrates that both male and female respondents hold early childhood education specialists as the path forward for the development of early childhood education. The analysis also reveals that age has no significant effect on the opinion of respondents when it comes to the communicative approach as a tool for relating reading and writing skills. From Table 5, it can be seen that the means of the respondents appear at the same score level (6.1688 and 6.6286), while  $r=.071$ ,  $p>.457$  depicts likewise. Age, at this stage, did not have an effect on respondent views. Thus, all the respondents, regardless of age differences, held specialisation as the best outcome for ECE and ECE students.

The relationship between qualifications and opinions on the communicative approach to reading and writing education disclosed a similar situation. Here again, specialisation was the preference among respondents for making sure that young children receive a good education. The inequality between the postgraduate degree holders and other qualification groups is not sufficient enough to meet the requirements to falsify the null hypothesis. This slight shift in their view might be because of their experience and/or their broad educational background. The inability to falsify the null hypothesis was also because  $r=.035$  but does not exceed  $p>.446$ , as it has to occur 35 times in every 1000.

The respondents were grouped into two categories based upon type of school: public or private. Their mean consistently fell in the same mean score level of between 4.5000–4.5256. Thus, no significant differences existed in their views as per the indications of  $r=.021$  and  $p>.589$ . Different categories of teachers all hold professionalism in high esteem.

The respondents' bio-data on length of service did not result in a contrary view. The region of rejection was not reached either. None of the five categories in years of service had a mean score of less than 5.8000 with  $r=.012$ , and  $p>.836$ . The results reveal that all



five categories of teachers, based on length of service, show a positive attitude towards specialisation.

The overall Pearson product moment analysis reveals that all respondents, irrespective of gender, age, qualifications, school type and length of service showed unwavering support for the importance of professionalization in early childhood education. Since the results show no significant differences existed in the respondents' opinions, the null hypothesis was true, and it was accepted (Table 5).

Table 5. Pearson product moment analysis of respondents' perception of the variables tested

Bio-data of respondents	Groups	Freq.	%	Mean	r	Sig. (2-tailed)
Gender	Male	39	34.8	5.4615	.014	.882
	Female	73	65.2	6.2877		
Age	20-30	77	68.8	6.1688	.071	.457
	31-above	35	31.3	6.6286		
Qualifications	Secondary School Certificate/Diploma	21	18.8	6.0000	.035	.446
	NCE	42	37.5	5.5000		
	BEd/BScEd/BAEd	46	41.1	6.1304		
	Degree in Early Childhood Education	0	0	0.0000		
	Postgraduate degree	3	2.7	4.5000		
Type of schools	Public (6)	47	42	4.5256	.021	.589
	Private (6)	65	58	4.2740		
Length of service	Less than 1 year	7	6.3	6.0000	.012	.836
	About two years	28	25.0	6.2500		
	About 5 years	42	37.5	5.8333		
	About 6-8 years	28	25.0	5.6900		
	Over 9 years	7	6.3	5.8000		

## Concluding remarks

This study stems from our intense belief in the value of the teaching profession, its functionalist importance to society and its role in children's educational experiences. This paper is a piece of academic writing for teachers whose daily lives are driven by the imperatives of educational planning and policy-making so as to help young children learn effectively. This study is addressed, first and foremost, to those teachers who seek empirical evidence and who want to be at the very top of their profession. It is also for parents, researchers, education planners and policy makers in developing countries, especially those in Africa, who wish to come to terms with the everyday reality (Kerry & Wilding, 2004), of the failing state of Nigerian early childhood education.

This paper examined a problematic perspective on the early childhood teaching profession in Nigeria, that all one needs to be an effective early childhood education teacher is a university certificate. It has, at the same, taken an inventory of teachers' competencies

and looked at options for enriching early childhood teachers' use of effective teaching techniques (Ololube, Egbezor, & Kpolovie, 2008). The research findings suggest that specialized interventions, which provide school readiness skills to children early in the school years, enhance children's learning performance in core curriculum areas, such as reading and writing as they move into more formalized schooling (Nonoyama-Tarumi & Bredenberg, 2009).

This research has outlined the complex role of early childhood education (ECE) teachers and explicitly stated the significance of the need for professionalisation and development in the ECE community.

The professional characteristics, knowledge and skills of teachers, which help promote the stability of the academic environment, have a close connection with activities and potential activities within a school. The results in this study show that the professional characteristics, knowledge and skills of teachers have a role in effecting quality teaching in ECE. Non-specialist teachers should not be encouraged to remain in the ECE teaching profession. Staff education and training are one means of professional updating, which deal with all developmental functions, directed towards the maintenance and enhancement of one's professional competence. It is evident in this study that teachers who are dedicated to improving their competence are likely to contribute, directly or indirectly, to the growth of students' achievement.

Providing professional development, especially for ECE teachers, is a challenge in teacher education. There has been little or no system of ongoing professional development and consequently no culture of professional development in Nigerian ECE schools. The ongoing professional development of ECE teachers is particularly important given the poor performance of students in national and international examinations. Early development of children using the communicative approaches will yield positive results in the years to come. It is necessary for educators to understand the problems that plague ECE schools and to formulate relevant programmes to prepare and support ECE teachers. Furthermore, current changes in technology, new advances in learning and the inherent challenges arising from curriculum renewal and reform require radical changes in teaching and learning methodologies. Once the desirability of adopting rich and flexible curriculum frameworks has been recognized, alternative ways of promoting teaching and learning methodologies will be necessary. This will involve moving away from a rigid, prescriptive approach to classroom work (Pillai, 2001).

Nigeria, like other developing countries, needs effective ECE teacher education programmes. Teacher training is broadly divided into what is provided before and during employment. This includes pre-service or initial education and training and continuing professional development or in-service education and training (Day & Sachs, 2004; Bolam & McMahon, 2004). Teacher training is commonly acknowledged as one of the most important factors in developing quality teachers. In-service training might take any form, such as sandwich programmes organized by the faculties of education at most Nigeria universities during the vacation period of eight weeks per session, workshops, seminars, and symposiums, which are aimed at remedying the inadequacies of pre-service training.

## **Implication for research and practice**

This study has both practical and conceptual elements that can facilitate a broad understanding of the issues surrounding early childhood education policies and teachers' preparation programmes in line with quality Education For All (EFA). This study has given considerable attention to the divergent factors and, as a result, might fill an intellectual gap in understanding the key issues surrounding early childhood educational achievement in Nigeria, with particular reference to the main themes of this research study. This study breaks new academic ground by focusing on the under-researched area of early childhood education teachers' qualification and their teaching effectiveness.

The professional competencies of ECE teachers and their relationship to teaching quality and improvement are part of an area of increasing importance in ECE educational policy and practice. ECE teacher competencies have become a focal point for motivation and commitment among both new and experienced teachers. The research findings are particularly helpful not only to practicing ECE teachers, but also to all those involved in ECE research, policy making, planning and those who work in initial ECE teacher education programmes and in-service teacher education in developing countries.

The need to instantaneously revitalise ECE and ECE teachers through effective ECE teacher education agendas is of paramount importance. According to Owens (2004), work towards this goal is guided by basic principles:

- programmes for the education of the nation's ECE educators must be viewed by institutions offering them as a major responsibility of society and must be adequately supported and promoted and vigorously advanced by the institution's leadership;
- programmes for the education of ECE educators must enjoy parity with other professional education programmes, full legitimacy and institutional commitment and renewal for faculty geared to the nature of the field;
- programmes for the education of ECE educators must be autonomous and secure in their borders, with clear organisational identity, constancy of budget and personnel and decision-making authority similar to that enjoyed by the major professional schools.

This study has implications for government, administrators, policy-makers, instructors and other actors involved in early childhood education. Further quantitative research on the topic is highly encouraged as there are some limitations of this study. A new perspective on the professional competencies of early childhood teachers in the use of communicative approach as a tool for relating reading and writing skills that does not only take into consideration the unique characteristics of the variables used in this study, but also other factors and their cultural derivation is recommended.

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# VALUES ACROSS COUNTRIES IN A MODERN SOCIETY – THE EXAMPLE OF POLISH SCHOOLS

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## Abstract

*This paper reports on a fragment of a broader research on values education in Polish and Latvian schools. This paper seeks to evaluate data from the European Social Survey (ESS) and elaborate on the frames of references for identification of the aims for future research. The paper highlights the findings of an action research carried out in two Polish schools. The values of European countries are analysed in the context of educational research in Europe and other regions of the world. The frames of references constructed during the study and data from European Social Survey were the grounds for creating a questionnaire for an action research to find out the tendencies that derive from the experience of students. The survey was preceded by a special training session for the teaching staff about evaluation and its significance for increasing the quality of school performance.*

**Key words:** values, values education, system of values, quality of school work, sustainability

## Introduction

This study is a fragment of a broader research on values education in Polish and Latvian schools in the context of education for sustainable development. Values education is of utter importance in Poland due to many reasons. Firstly, official governmental programmes, in this respect, do not exist in Poland although such programmes are required. Secondly, talking about values is often associated with Catholic values or values related to the Catholic Church. This view is inadequate in the contemporary world.

Values orient people's behaviour in social situations (Matuszewicz, 1975). Thus, a value gets its sense and meaning only if it is an element of a certain system, and it plays a specified role in this system (Matuszewicz, 1975). Each society that wishes to develop must remember and cherish the values which are an inseparable element of the society's culture. Values are not the result of social relations; values are created as a result of social relations (Parson, 1969).

Values have been the subject of research and studies of many theorists from different parts of the world for ages. The notion of value has multiple aspects and meanings; it can be defined in many different ways. Values could be presented from psychological, sociological and cultural perspectives. This paper discusses values connected with school, and those aspects of values seem to be the most significant ones, particularly if they are intended to be discussed in a holistic manner.

The precursor of this notion was Plato (Tatarkiewicz, 1988) who recognized justice as the most important value in life (“virtue” by Plato); however, justice was understood at the time in a completely different way than it is today. The state and the interests of the state were of the greatest importance to Plato. Even a lie in the interest of the state was justified. The base of the statehood was upbringing and gradual proceeding to further stages of initiation.

The notion of values has evolved over the ages, and, at present, we can distinguish the following definitions (Matuszewicz, 1975). Value can be understood as a union of ideas and attitudes which create a scale of preferences and priorities, both for motives or objectives and actions (Young, 1949). Value is highlighted as the primary choice or positive attitude to certain target relationships (such as equality, salvation, self-esteem or freedom) or certain widely understood ways of conduct (such as courage, honesty, friendship or moral purity) (Bem, 1970). According to Bem (1970), values are objectives, not means. Thus, they can be described as a certain process which is important both from the point of view of an individual and the society. Values can be considered to be the main components of attitudes which govern our behaviour aiming at certain preferable objectives (Hollander, 1971). Maslow (1959), in contrast, perceives values as constructive differences between individuals that create preferences related to the way we treat each other, the culture and the world.

Social value is understood as any object which possesses empirical contents, is available to the members of a social group and has a meaning as a result of which it is or may be an object of activity (Thomas, & Znaniecki, 1996). Value is defined as a conception of the desirable, characteristic of the individual or the group and exerting influence on the choice of available ways, means and goals of action (Kluckhohn, 1962). Krech and Cruchfield (1962) argues that value is a particularly significant kind of belief shared by the members of society and is related to what is desirable, good or what should be. Drobnickij (1966) acknowledges that value is an object of unfulfilled need, something that should be acquired.

## **The context and the purpose of the study**

The study is a fragment of a broader action research. The author conducted the study in two schools in the Wielkopolskie Province in Poland.

One of previous essential elements of the study was the analysis of values carried out by the author on the basis of empirical data from ESS – the European Social Survey Round 4, a survey which is carried out in many European countries.

The system of social values in each country results from the historical experience of that country. The system of social values is shaped in the process of society development and during the development of an individual. Poland, traditionally regarded as a conservative country, is placed mostly in the middle of the group. The declarative level and the real life level are very different. Trying to develop the school life, it is necessary to take into consideration the real school environment rather than declarations (Świtła, 2010).



The main objective of the study is to determine teachers' awareness of the notion of value. The study also seeks to find out an answer to the question: *Are we ready to foster values in Polish schools?*

## **Methods**

This study was conducted by the author in two schools. One of the schools (school No.1) is a big complex of schools located in a small town. It consists of a vocational school, a secondary technical school and a general secondary school. 43 teachers of different specialisations, with different periods of work experience and of different ages took part in the study. The other school (school No. 2) is a general secondary school – a non-public school with public school accreditation, located in a big town. Twenty-three teachers of general subjects, of different ages and with different periods of work experience participated in the study.

The overall analyses were carried out for a group. The length of work experience, age and the subject taught were not taken into consideration in this study, and the analyses were carried out irrespective of these factors. This study was preceded by workshops for the teachers, the subject of which was to work out the strategy and plan for school development, taking into account the systems of values which prevail in the schools.

The basic empirical data comes from the analysis of answers given to the open questions included in the questionnaire. In this part of the questionnaire, four questions were related to the understanding of the notion of value (the respondent could define a value as he/she understands it), choosing the values considered to be important (each respondent could indicate five different values), choosing the value considered by the respondent to be the most important one and specifying the methods of work used by the teachers to encourage values within the subjects they teach. The results of the qualitative research were analyzed by the author with the use of the Excel program for tabular presentations.

## **Findings**

The first question to the respondents was an open question: *How do you understand the notion of a value?* The respondents gave the following answers which have been grouped and put into the categories which are provided below.

**Principles.** 16 respondents in school No. 1 and eight respondents in school No. 2 defined values as

- norms that function in social life;
- specific standards of behaviour;
- a very important norm;
- a norm which shows what actions need to be taken;
- a set of all assumed norms which help us make decisions;
- certain principles which are very important in an individual's life.

**Individual characteristics.** Eight respondents in school No. 1 and three respondents in school No.2 defined values as

- characteristics that show ‘the value of a person’;
- characteristics that enrich a person;
- characteristics that allow a person to be a good Polish citizen and a good employee;
- a set of behaviour patterns and personality traits;
- a set of characteristics specific for an individual or a group;
- characteristics which are helpful while making a decision;
- a characteristic, a virtue, which should govern a person’s behaviour.

**Aspirations.** Seven respondents in school No. 1 and two respondents in school No.2 defined values as

- the most important goals and aspirations in a person’s life;
- high ideals in the life of each person;
- essential goals and plans in life;
- the aim of a person’s activity;
- kindness, wisdom, an aim in life.

**Material goods.** Two respondents in both of the schools defined values as

- something material a person aims at and wishes to possess;
- something of a specific meaning;
- important things.

**Attitudes.** A few respondents defined values as

- attitudes which are considered to be valuable and desired;
- patterns of behaviour passed on from one generation to another.

The fact that 13 respondents (12 from school No. 1 and one from school No. 2) did not provide any answers at all is quite alarming. Both in school No. 1 and in school No. 2, the dominant answer was that values are norms (principles). Occasionally, values were defined as specific attitudes.

Furthermore, the respondents were asked to indicate the five values which, in their opinion, are the most important values in social life. On the basis of the answers given by the respondents, the list which comprises 59 items has been worked out (Table 1). The list was categorized by the author and the participants together.

Table 1. The most important values in social life

Norms	Individual characteristics	Attitudes	Aspirations	Goods – material and non-material
security	keeping one’s word	kindness	effectiveness	dignity

*Sequel to Table 1 see on p. 59.*

Sequel to Table 1.

ethical behaviour	loyalty	accuracy	carer	wisdom
honour	responsibility	friendliness	love	money
humanitarianism	courage	independence	friendship	family
law-abidingness	organisational skills	objectivity	job satisfaction	tradition
justice	diligence	patriotism	stability	faith
tolerance	dedication	helping others	recognition	health
freedom	truthfulness	respect for others	credibility	life
	righteousness	respect for culture		
	decency	ability to live in a society		
	punctuality	faithfulness		
	religiousness	social sensitivity		
	reliability	understanding the other person		
	conscientiousness			
	frankness			
	honesty			
	compassion			
	understanding			
	perseverance			
	trust			
	obligation			
	kindliness			

The results for each school and a comprehensive list of the results – ten items for each school are provided in Figure 2. In both cases, the dominant answer was honesty and friendship. In school No. 1, there was no answer in four cases, whereas in school No. 2 all the respondents gave answers to this question.

The respondents were also asked to indicate the most important value, according to their opinion. According to the opinion of the respondents, honesty and family were recognized as the definitely most important values in both schools.

The fourth question was an open question: *How do you foster values within your subject?* In school No. 1, the ways of fostering values within the subjects taught by the respondents include showing one’s own example (n=5); showing standards of behaviour/role models (n=5); application of clear requirements (n=3); organization of work (=2); drawing attention to national values (n=2); showing trust towards students (n=1); showing the role of tolerance (n=1); admission of own errors or mistakes (n=1); discussions of values with students (n=1); prohibition of cheating (n=1); praising the ability to admit being wrong (n=1); teaching understanding for others (n=1); creating the right atmosphere (n=1); diligent performance of undertaken tasks (n=1); lack of criticism (n=1); allowing students to have their own opinions (n=1).

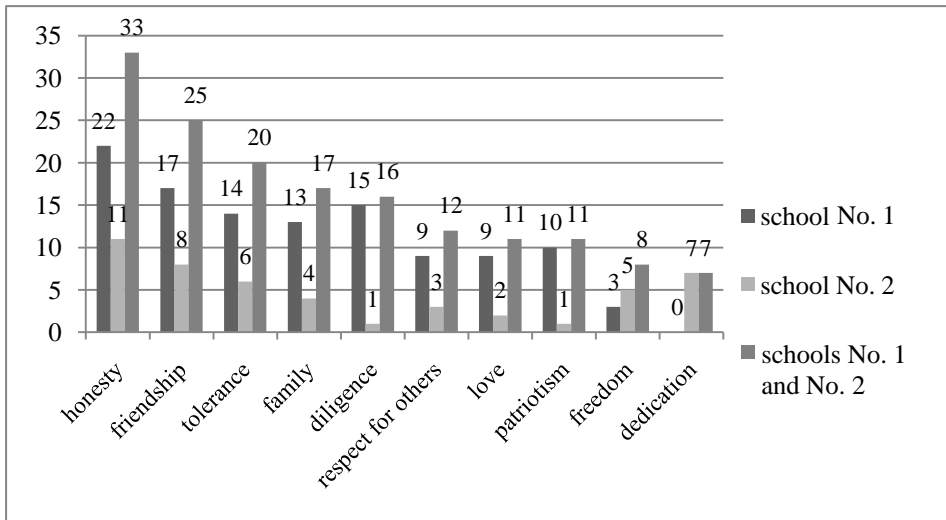


Figure 2. The most important values in social life, as articulated by the respondents in school No. 1 and school No. 2.

The most common ways of fostering values within the subjects taught by the respondents are provided in Table 2. Three respondents gave no answers, which constitutes 14.3%. The most common ways of fostering values within the subjects taught by the teachers in school No. 1 are provided in Table 2.

Table 2. Ways of fostering values within the subjects taught by the respondents in school No. 1

showing own example	5
showing standards of behaviour/role models	5
application of clear requirements	3
organisation of work	2
drawing attention to national values	2
showing trust towards students	1
showing the role of tolerance	1
admission of own errors or mistakes	1
discussions of values with students	1
prohibition of cheating	1
praising the ability to admit being wrong	1
teaching understanding for others	1
creating the right atmosphere	1
diligent performance of undertaken tasks	1
lack of criticism	1
allowing students to have their own opinions	1

In school No. 2, the most common ways of fostering values within the subjects include prohibition of cheating (n=7); showing standards of behaviour/role models (n=6); showing the role of tolerance (n=5); rebuking for wrong behaviour (n=4); fair marking (n=3); showing no favouritism to any students (n=3); teaching honesty (n=3); drawing attention to risk or threat (n=2); teaching teamwork (n=2); discussions of values with students (n=1);

application of clear requirements (n=1); lack of criticism (n=1); teaching responsibility for another person (n=1); teaching how do have a discussion (n=1); teaching self-acceptance (n=1). The most common ways of fostering values within the subjects taught by the respondents in school No. 2 are provided in Table 3.

Table 3. Ways of fostering values within the subjects taught by the respondents in school No. 2

showing own example	10
prohibition of cheating	7
showing standards of behaviour/role models	6
showing the role of tolerance	5
rebuking for wrong behaviour	4
fair marking	3
showing no favouritism to any students	3
teaching honesty	3
drawing attention to risk or threat	2
teaching teamwork	2
discussions of values with students	1
application of clear requirements	1
lack of criticism	1
teaching responsibility for another person	1
teaching how do have a discussion	1
teaching self-acceptance	1

17 respondents gave no answers, which constitutes 39,5 %. Other common ways include showing patterns or role-models to follow and making students work on their own, with a ban on cheating at the same time (cheating is a serious problem in Polish schools).

## Discussion and conclusion

The research results show minute differences between the answers provided in the two schools, despite the fact the schools are located in the completely different environments. The most common answers given by the respondents are alike. It probably results from the fact that certain values are generally accepted and recognized as essential social values as a consequence of the historical experience of the Polish society. It may result from the fact that both schools are governed in a similar way.

The obtained results show how the notion of value is comprehended. The respondents most often understood values as principles/norms that regulate social life, indicate what is right and desirable. The respondents also referred to values as individual traits, which are essential for the development of an individual and society, and the most modest aims and aspirations of a human being.

Some respondents found it difficult to give an answer to the question: *How do you understand the notion of a value* (27.9% and 5.5% in the surveyed schools respectively), particularly in the case of school No. 1. It means that one third of the teachers in this school do not highlight spiritual, intellectual or non-material aspects of social life. It may also be the evidence of a very low level of interest and participation in social life. It is also

probable that this part of society (here teachers) is not interested in their own influence on the social life and the surrounding environment. This tendency is extremely alarming and, unfortunately, characteristic of the contemporary Polish society.

Honesty was indicated, in both of the schools, as the most important value from the point of view of social development, which seems to be absolutely justified taking into account the current social situation in Poland. Honesty is thought to be an indispensable requirement for further social development. Honesty guarantees trust in the ruling élite, entrusts them with the mandate to introduce necessary changes. It is also a guarantee of social development in all essential areas where the interests of all the participants of the social life are taken into account, both on a macro and micro scale.

The low percentage of the teachers (39.5% and 14.3% in school No.1 and school No.2 respectively) who were unable to indicate how, if at all, they foster values within their subjects needs to be analysed carefully.

The respondents indicated their own example as the most important way of fostering values within the subjects they teach. Such an attitude is justified by the traditions of Polish pedagogy. As a matter of fact, values are handed down from generation to generation, also within the teacher–student and student–teacher relationships.

It is necessary to initiate discussions of the ways of fostering values within subject groups. It requires, however, proper actions to be taken not only on the level of a particular school, but also on a national level, which depends on the good will of those who are in charge of the entire system of education. Discussions at school seem to be much easier to organize because it “only” requires the commitment of the teachers who work in the school. In the schools where the survey was carried out, it seems to be particularly easy because the teachers have already made the first step towards changes in their school, by undertaking the tasks aiming at developing and adopting the plan of their own school development.

The system of Polish education needs to be modified initiating realistic reforms. Student-oriented rather than content-oriented curricula should be adopted. Polish schools need well-prepared teachers. Such a system should take into account the requirements of the sustainable development of society, and teachers should be made particularly aware and responsible in this respect.

Further research will be based on dominant values in the context of education for sustainable development. Values education should highlight not only moral aspects, but also social, emotional, psychological, spiritual and intellectual aspects of personality development. In further stages of work, it is also necessary to specify the meaning of the notion of value.

### **Acknowledgement:**

This work has been supported by the European Social Fund within the Project “Support for the implementation of doctoral studies at Daugavpils University”. Agreement Nr. 2009/0140/1DP/1.1.2.1.2/09/IPIA/VIAA/015.

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# DANCE TEACHER EDUCATION: PROGRAMME ANALYSIS AND STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS

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## **Abstract**

*The principles of education for sustainable development implemented in Lithuanian education system shifted the perceptions of teachers' roles from disseminating knowledge towards developing students' competencies of responsible, critical and creative thinking and acting. The objective of this research is to find out whether pre-service dance teachers in Lithuania are ready to meet challenges of contemporary educational paradigms. A questionnaire was administered to 59 pre-service dance teachers, and the analysis of five dance teacher education programmes was carried out. The findings reveal that, in general, pre-service dance teachers are not satisfied with the quality of the study process, although, according to their statement, they acquire the necessary knowledge.*

**Key words:** *dance teacher, teacher education, pedagogical practice, competencies*

## **Introduction**

The quality of life is interpreted differently by different people, social and cultural groups, and is underpinned by a number of core principles and values (Tilbury & Wortman, 2004). Since 1990, when Lithuania declared the independence of the state, understanding of the quality of life has gone through huge changes. Less people think about common goals for future, especially for sustaining it for the future generations. Unconscionable usage of natural, human, cultural and social resources lead to the extinction not only of certain animal and plant species, fresh air or water, but also to destruction of cultural heritage. As a result, an idea of an active and creative, positive and responsible person was highlighted during Lithuanian educational reform, which started in 1988. Later, Lithuanian educational documents (Law on Education, 2003; Provisions of the National Education Strategy for 2003–2012, 2003; General Programmes of Primary and Basic Education, 2008) emphasized and implemented the principles of the transformational function of education, holistic perception of reality, integrity, the development of critical and creative thinking, developing of virtue oriented attitudes, which are essential principles of sustainable development and education for sustainability (Brūzgelevičienė, 2006).

Most of the latter documents on education in Lithuanian conform to the recommendations of European institutions and underline a need to strengthen key competencies to fulfil personal well-being and the well-being of the entire society and lifelong learning principles in education. It is stated that, in order to develop key competencies of young people, teachers have to obtain these competencies (Aramavičiūtė & Martišauskienė, 2006).



The shift of educational paradigms, which was the core of Lithuanian educational reform, changed perceptions of teacher's roles and competencies, strategies of teaching and learning (Brūzgelevičienė & Žadeikaitė, 2008). The system of teacher education and training in Lithuania was improved by taking into consideration main principles of sustainable development regulated by various documents, such as Guidelines and Recommendations for Reorienting Teacher Education to Address Sustainability, 2005; Common European Principles for Teacher Competencies and Qualifications, 2005; UNESCO and Sustainable Development, 2005; Improving the Quality of Teacher Education, 2007. The documents which regulate teacher education in Lithuania (Profile of Teacher Professional Competences, 2007; Regulations on Teacher Education, 2010) declare the aim to prepare teachers capable of being on the forefront of society. Foreseen objectives include the implementation of sustainable development by challenging the aspirations of consumption, encouraging people to imagine a different future and engage in new ways of perception and behaviour.

It is possible to assume that, since the beginning of Lithuanian educational reform, the quantity and content of documents on teacher education and training created favourable conditions to realize the principles of sustainable education in practice. Research (Adomaitienė, Zubrickienė, & Andriekienė, 2006; Brūzgelevičienė, 2006) reveals contradictions between the documentary and the practical level of implementation of the principles of sustainable development in teacher training and education.

The situation in dance teacher education in relation to sustainability emerges as a problem in the context of completed researches and lack of scientific sources on the contribution of dance education to education for sustainable development. The aim of this research is to investigate the situation in dance teacher education on a programme and students' perceptions level. The research seeks to find out whether: (1) principles of sustainability are observed while educating dance teachers; (2) pre-service dance teachers understand principles of sustainability and implement them in their activities; (3) in-service dance teachers know how to develop key competencies of pupils to create a sustainable future.

## **Materials and methods**

An analysis of scientific literature on education, education documents of the European Union and Lithuania permitted to structure the main aspects of a questionnaire, an interview and an analysis of dance teacher education programmes (Figure 1). A comparative analysis of dance teacher education programmes, a questionnaire survey and an interview of pre-service dance teachers were grounded in this model.

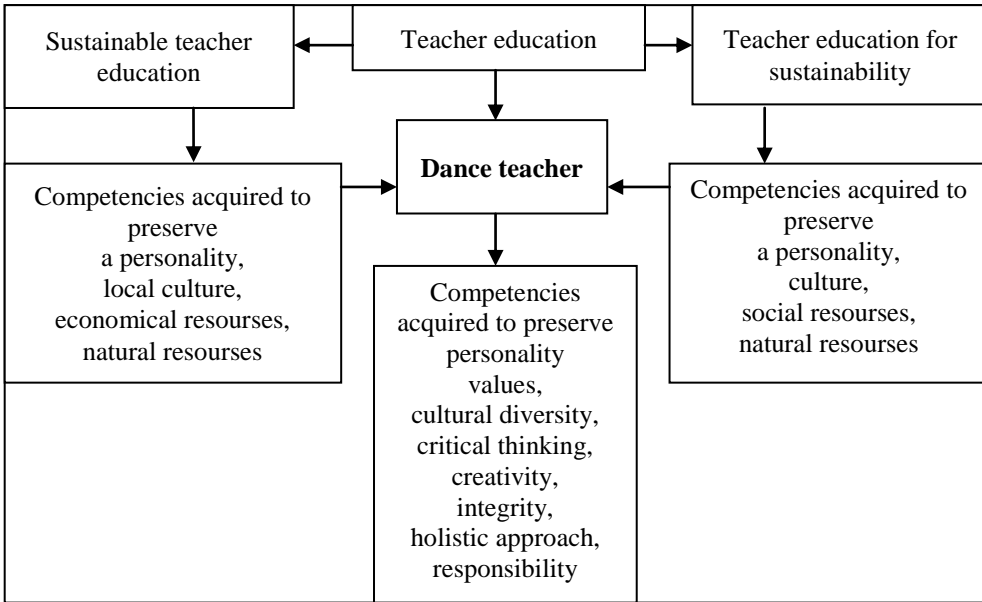


Figure 1. Model of the inquiry and analysis

The research was carried out in Vilnius Pedagogical University in 2008 and 2009. The research sample included 59 students out of 61 students of dance education (educology) study programme in Vilnius Pedagogical University.

A questionnaire involved three groups of questions which revealed the following aspects: 1) characteristics of the respondents (gender, study year, study form); 2) the extent to which dance teacher education programme complies with the students' needs and expectations and students' motivation to acquire a dance education programme; 3) development of key competences in relation to sustainable education. A qualitative analysis of questionnaire results was carried out.

An interview was carried out with 16 full-time third and fourth year students who had participated in the questionnaire survey. The interview included questions on the students' perceptions of the sustainability of dance teacher education, involving their view on the balance of subjects, the quality of course content, the competencies of lecturers and the impact of these factors on developing professional and pedagogical competencies.

Data for comparative analysis of dance teacher education programmes was obtained from the open electronic database AIKOS (Open System of Information, Consulting and Orientation), which is stored at the central service station in the Centre of Information Technologies of Education. Additional data was gathered from official websites of Lithuanian secondary schools.

## Results

To reveal a system of dance teacher education in Lithuania, an overview of higher education establishments which offer dance teacher training programmes was given. In

Lithuania, there are 6 higher education establishments (2 universities, 2 academies and 2 colleges) where one can obtain a dance teacher education programme.

Study programmes of universities and academies were chosen for further analysis. The comparative analysis of study programmes of dance teacher education revealed that graduates from Vilnius Pedagogical University (VPU) and Lithuanian Academy of Physical Education (LKKA) get a teacher's qualification, which is necessary to earn the right to teach in formal education (primary and secondary schools) according to the Law of Education. Two programmes of Klaipeda University (KU) and Lithuanian Music and Theatre Academy (LMTA) give a choreographer's qualification. Although KU declares that graduates of this institution can work in schools as dance teachers, in fact, graduates have to attend additional courses of pedagogy and psychology in order to get the right to teach children. There is evidence given by graduates of KU that sometimes the administration of the schools where they work does not pay attention to the fact they do not have the necessary qualification.

Only VPU programme's title indicates that this programme is intended for dance teacher education. The degree of other institutions does not clearly indicate their relation to dance teacher education. An exceptional situation is with LMTA since the programme offered at this higher education establishment was designed particularly for in-service or former ballet dancers who have secondary education and cannot teach anywhere when they finish their active professional career. They get a choreographer's qualification in LMTA bachelor studies and receive a teacher's qualification only in master studies.

The study courses were examined to reveal the content of dance teacher education. An analysis of course content showed that mostly all main dance types (modern, ballet, folk, and ballroom, historical) are taught alongside with dance composition, history of dance, teaching methods, as well as general university study courses, though their distribution among programmes is different. LMTA emphasizes study courses related to classical ballet – more than 54 local credits (1 local credit equals 1.5 ECTS). KU sport dance programme emphasizes sport dance (57 credits), while KU choreography programme underlines Lithuanian national dance (25 credits). In VPU and LKKA, none of the dance types predominates and the amount of credits is more balanced, ranging from 2 to 10.

Examining study courses that are directly connected with pedagogical competency, it appears that, in LMTA, only pedagogical psychology is taught in 4 credits. In KU, both programmes include psychology, cultural education, teaching methods, and their amount ranges from 2 to 14 credits. In VPU and LKKA, besides the aforementioned study courses, arts education, special education, special arts education, education (didactics and theory of upbringing), health education, research in education are taught with the number of credits varying from 4 to 8. LKKA should also be mentioned since they include study courses related to the physical aspect of dance – anatomy, physiology, kinesiology, nutrition, injury prevention, etc.

Pedagogical practice is another important part of dance teacher education programmes, especially underlined in the latest requirements of the Regulations on Teacher Education (2010). It is stated that pedagogical practice should cover 20 local credits (30 ECTS) and start in the first study year, including several modules: observation practice (the first study year), a teacher's assistant (the second study year), practice with supervision of a mentor

teacher (the third study year), independent practice with a mentor teacher (the fourth study year). An analysis of dance teacher education programmes revealed that the requirement of 20 credits of pedagogical practice which starts in the first year is observed only in VPU dance education programme. In other examined institutions pedagogical practice covers from 4 to 6 credits and start in third or fourth year. The final thesis of pedagogical studies is written in VPU and LKKA. Both programmes in KU and the studies in LMTA end with a concert or a dance project.

Generalising the comparative analysis of study programmes, it might be stated that there is no clear relation between a title, a qualification, a degree, possible and real areas of a job, subjects and their amount in dance teacher study programmes. The data revealed that the principles of sustainable teacher education are not followed fully in dance teacher education and training since study courses are not well-balanced and graduates either have to acquire a needed qualification or study subjects in which they are already professionals (as in the case of LMTA where professional ballet dancers follow study course related to ballet). This data could constitute a basis for a more thorough approach from the institutions in charge of quality assessment in higher education. The Resolution of Lithuanian Government on Fields and Types of Study in High Education (2009) form the grounds for balancing and reorienting towards sustainability study programmes, related degrees and qualifications alongside with content, outcomes and evaluation strategies in dance teacher education. For this purpose, all study programmes should be revised, adopted according to the requirements of the Resolution and registered in the Ministry of Education and Science in order to be able to organize entrance exams and admission of students.

A qualitative analysis of data obtained through a questionnaire and an interview with pre-service dance teachers of VPU data was carried out. The answers of the students to open questions indicated lack of a positive attitude to the accordance of dance teacher education programme to their needs and expectations. In the students' opinion, the study courses related to dance are well-balanced, though a wish to have a wider range of dance styles was expressed. According to the pre-service dance teachers, some of the general university study courses, such as psychology or health education, need more obvious linkage with dance teaching; some study courses related to dance, such as ballet or ballroom dance, need more integrity with daily life or pedagogy. Few study courses, such as dance didactics, educational movement, were reported to have a holistic approach to the development of pedagogical and professional competencies.

The respondents maintained that they would appreciate openness of university teachers to share their own experience of teaching, especially their mistakes and thinking patterns. The pre-service dance teachers indicated that some of the university teachers of general university study courses do not allow to debating or questioning their statements, use teacher-centred teaching methods. These factors do not encourage students' critical and creative thinking, which according to Tilbury and Wortman (2004), help people to interpret the world, knowledge and information, recognize when they are manipulated by those around them and try to resist it. Statement that "few university teachers use active group work methods or research projects" featured in students' answers. Besides, the factor that teachers do not use ICT frequently and ask students to bring printed paper works and make

paper copies of them emerged. Accepting electronic version of the works was mentioned by the students as a possibility to sustain natural resources through using less paper.

View of the future dance students on gained competencies to develop pupils' key competencies of creative and critical thinking, acceptance of cultural diversity, understanding the importance of responsible behaviour, and forming humanistic values revealed that the students are not fully satisfied with their achievements. The questionnaire showed that, at the beginning of studies, the pre-service dance teachers are engaged in acquiring competencies in dance techniques and they expressed a wish to have more and a wider variety of dance styles (Table 1).

Table 1. Pre-service dance teachers' attitude towards the development of competencies

Competency	year 1	year 2	year 3	year 4	
				before PP	after PP
Techniques in various dance styles	H	H	H	H	M
Organization of pedagogical process	L	L	M	M	H
Evaluation of dance achievements	L	L	L	L	H
Organization of creative activities	L	L	M	M	H
Communication with pupils	L	L	M	M	H
Cooperation with pupils	L	L	M	M	H
Cooperation with parents	L	L	L	L	M
Cooperation with colleagues	L	L	M	M	M

PP – pedagogical practice, H – high importance, M – medium importance, L – low importance

The data shows that competencies such as organisation of creative activities, communication with pupils and cooperation with colleagues start to interest the pre-service dance teachers from the third year. The reason for this might be study subjects of dance didactics, educational creative movement and such where students are introduced to the principles of teaching and evaluating creativity, motivating pupils, integrated arts projects, etc. An especially evident shift is observed in the fourth year after independent pedagogical practice at school. The respondents indicated that the area where they need improvement and more competencies is educational process and psychology of children. Nearly all dance education students stated that during and after pedagogical practice they started to study independently the issues dealing with pedagogical activities. Competence to cooperate with parents even after pedagogical practice was not evaluated by the respondents as of high importance. It might be because of the fact that more time is needed in order to get in touch with parents and to understand their essential role in communication with children.

Questioning of the pre-service dance teachers revealed that they lack comprehension of the importance of personal responsibility in sustainable education. Especially students of the first year do not pay due attention to the outcomes of their pedagogical actions. On the one hand, they maintain that children have to obey their instructions and execute given tasks; on the other hand, they declare that the main goal of dance education in a comprehensive school is creativity. Nevertheless, the pre-service dance teachers do not think that they have to allow children to debate, question, disagree with given tasks or suggest other tasks. This shows that the students are not ready to develop critical and

creative thinking of children alongside with preserving the child's personality. Respondents indicated motivation for dance activities and the necessity to inquire into pupils' interests in order to raise their motivation, however they failed to suggest any method of how to solve the contradiction between different (or sometimes opposite) interests of pupils and teachers. For instance, to the question 'how is it possible to resolve the situation when a dance teacher has an aim to teach Lithuanian folk dances and pupils want to learn hip hop dance steps' the answer of a third year student was "but they have to understand that at first they have to learn folk dances of their nation". For sustainability it is important to recognize the value and relevance of local knowledge and culture; however, none of the pre-service dance teachers prior to pedagogical practice could suggest how to explain especially to adolescents the importance of national dances for the preservation of local cultural values. In this context it should be mentioned that dance teachers who have background in Lithuanian folk dance usually complain that the young generation does not like to dance Lithuanian folk dances, though in the Dance Day of the Song festival (which is declared by UNESCO a nonmaterial heritage) more than 7000 young dancers danced folk dances and this figure only reflects those who were chosen to participate. On the other hand, investigations (Baneviciūtė, 2009) show that few dance teachers find appropriate balance while introducing dances of different cultures from different countries. Interviews with the pre-service dance teachers of the third and fourth year showed that none of them would choose to present to pupils traditional dances of European countries. These facts reveal contradiction with the given principles of ESD which declare that cultural diversity should be valued and respected both by teachers and learners.

The research by Levin and He (2008) confirms that teacher education programmes can influence the future teacher's beliefs about the most significant aspects of teachers work. Interview of the fourth year students after their independent pedagogical practice revealed that their attitude towards their profession had changed. The data distributed as follows: half of the respondents' shift in attitude was positive, the other half – negative. Those who declared that they realized they did not want to work at school nearly all said that their motivation to enter dance education studies was connected with the wish to get a diploma of higher education or to improve their dance skills. Among those who stated they had proved themselves they could work at school and wanted to do this, the motivation for entering dance education studies was related to the wish to become a dance teacher. These findings give reason to believe that it is possible to avoid a negative shift in attitude to teacher's profession by starting pedagogical practice from the first year and step by step introducing various aspects of problem solving in educational process. This information might be useful in order to improve the organisation of pedagogical practice since questioning of dance education students revealed that in most cases diploma is the most frequent expectation for entering a pedagogical university. Another characteristic feature is that full time students, who usually are young people around 19–20 years of age immediately after graduation of a comprehensive school, expect to improve dance technique skills and learn new dance styles. This shows that they do not fully realize the goals and type of dance education study programme. Part time students mostly are people about 30–40 years of age, who have been working as dance teachers already for several years; they mentioned that a diploma of high education and a teacher's qualification is the

most common expectation upon entering a dance education study programme since, according to the Law on Education (2003), in order to work at a school one has to have teacher's qualifications.

During the interview, pre-service dance teachers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> year stated that pedagogical practice should start from the first year because this way they could get more comprehension about education process and avoid the misconception that teaching dance at school is very easy and there is nothing to study, "I will teach as I was taught", or another misconception that teaching is such a hard work that it is impossible to handle it without being hard and autocratic. Furthermore, the question of the qualification of supervisor of the dance teacher's pedagogical practice arises. Investigations (Banevičiūtė, 2009) show that there are few dance teachers who work creatively and underline the importance of creative education of children during dance lessons at school. Dance teachers mostly teach dance steps or dances of various kind (usually folk and ballroom). Not enough attention is paid to developing competencies in understanding and analysing dance as a means of communication and expression. University teachers who are in charge of students' pedagogical practice face shortage of in-service dance teachers capable of being good examples for the pre-service dance teachers.

## **Conclusion**

The research through analysis of dance teacher education programmes and the views of pre-service dance teachers on dance teacher education system and process indicate three aspects of teacher education for sustainability. The first aspect relates to sustainability of dance teacher education in secondary school. The data revealed that the principles of sustainable teacher education are not observed fully because of insufficient qualification of some academic staff, inappropriate teaching methods and lack of responsibility both from students and teachers. The second aspect relates to pre-service dance teachers' competencies. Pre-service dance teachers do not fully acquire the competencies needed to develop the competencies of pupils to understand, take responsibility for and create a sustainable future for future generations. The data showed that the pre-service dance teachers need to enhance their learning towards the improvement of dance education organisation process, teaching methods and communication with pupils. It was indicated that pedagogical practice is an essential subject for improving the competences of sustainable education. The third aspect relates to the implementation of principles of sustainability as far as pre-service dance teachers' thinking and behaviour are concerned. Pre-service dance teachers do not fully comprehend the transformative role of education in changing the ways people think and act.

The results of the research indicate that the system and process of dance teacher education need to be improved on a basis of recent documents of teacher education in Europe and Lithuania by balancing study subjects, their contents and teaching methods.

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# USING ART AS A MEDIUM TO ENHANCE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND CITIZENSHIP

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## **Abstract**

*The aim of this research is to consider the impact of a Service-Learning module aiming at enhancing social responsibility and citizenship by using art as a medium for learning and reflection. It involves an explicit and designed programme that includes Socratic discussions and self-reflection projects through art. Action research was used as a methodology, ensuring that the whole class and the researcher were involved in the research process. The results of the project demonstrated that art is an effective medium to address sensitive issues because it functions on a symbolic and metaphorical level. Art that uses metaphors involves participants both consciously and sub-consciously and encourages possibilities for a diversity of interpretations.*

**Key words:** *responsible citizenship, service-learning, self-reflection, art and design*

## **Introduction**

This research aims to consider the impact of a Service-Learning module that envisions enhancing social responsibility and citizenship by using art as a medium for learning and reflection. Action research was used as a method for the module, and the psychoanalytic learning perspective (Fenwick, 2001) was used as a framework for teaching and learning in the module.

Service-learning is understood as an interaction that renders a service or addresses a need in communities outside the academic environment. Service-learning at Stellenbosch University (SU) is envisioned as a transformative pedagogy that is community-oriented and learner-centred. The aim of service-learning is to create an environment within which knowledge can be discovered, shared and applied to the benefit of the community. Bringle and Hatcher's (1999) formulation of service-learning is employed at Stellenbosch University. Service-learning is regarded as a curriculum-based, credit-bearing and carefully structured educational experience (Stellenbosch University, service-learning, 2011). Service-learning is integrated in the curriculum in credit-bearing modules with the aim to enhance the teaching and learning process. Service-learning, therefore, could create a space where interaction can take place and social responsibility and citizenship could be enhanced.

The importance of service-learning is also underlined by the South African Department of Education in the Education White Paper of 1997. The mission statement of the SU Visual Arts department emphasizes the importance of respect for diversity and knowledge applied for the benefit of the community. The Visual Arts course general

outcomes state, for instance, that by the end of the module a student will have an understanding of the diversity of historical and cultural developments, of the world as a set of related systems and of the importance of promoting the preservation of indigenous knowledge in the world. But the questions remain: *How do we reach these course outcomes in this module? How do we practically foster social responsibility and citizenship?*

The author lives in an eco village that includes people from different income groups, races and cultures. The major issues in the village are not ecological because it is very clear to everyone that we follow certain regulations to realize an ecological way to build and live. It is the social side of the co-existence that is not all that clear, far more complex and not often spoken about. It is the subtle nuances in conversations, subconscious stereotyping or ingrained perceptions, inherited or indirect knowledge (Jansen, 2009) that need to be addressed for a postcolonial and post-apartheid society to heal and grow. A concrete effort and a structured module are needed to address issues of social responsibility and citizenship. Art can be used as a medium to enhance the process of becoming a more socially responsible citizen.

According to Beagan (2003), a socially responsible individual is a person who takes part in activities that contribute to the happiness, health and prosperity of the whole community and its members. Nussbaum (2002) refers to relevant abilities such as the ability to criticize your own traditions, showing mutual respect for other opinions, thinking as a citizen of the world and not only locally and imagining yourself in the shoes of others – what she (Beagan, 2003) calls the “narrative imagination”. Weinstein (2004) emphasizes teaching to see the Other, but also to be the Other, in other words, reflecting in the voice of the Other. Weinstein (2004) highlights the value of biographical writing where reality is stated clearly, which is more valuable than imaginative writings in novels. Weinstein (2004) also stresses the teaching of difference and not social cohesion or social harmony because cohesion assumes that there are no major differences, which leaves little room for a situation where there are differences and little social cohesion. Accepting difference needs a more complex emotional response than believing or assuming that there is social harmony.

## **Research methodology**

Students approached their own involvement with communities as a participatory action research (PAR) project. The method of PAR was employed since it involves the participants as an integral part of the research. The students were encouraged to work with the community to find solutions together. Data gathering and an analysis were performed with the consent of the learning partner and community, because research of this nature could give rise to sensitive issues such as the “white gaze” (Fanon, 1967, p. 112) and the fascination with the poor, exotic (Fanon, 1967), which could hamper actual reflective learning.

Action research demands a certain amount of self-reflection where one can stand apart from the process of one’s learning and aim to understand the process itself. Zuber-Skerrit (2001) refers to both action learning and action research taking place simultaneously. Action learning is “learning from action or concrete experience as well as taking action as a

result of this learning” (Zuber-Skerrit, 2001, p. 2). As a theoretical framework for action research, Zuber-Skerrit (2001) uses a grounded theory (raw data and contextual knowledge), personal construct theory (where all participants become active constructors of knowledge), critical theory (where participants develop a self-critical and self-reflective attitude) and systems theory (where participants develop holistic resolutions to complex problems). Action research recognizes that human beings, communities or organisations are difficult to predict, and that their characteristics, ideas, strategies and behaviour are complex. The aim is not to produce generalisations, but to know, understand, improve or change a particular perception or social situation for the benefit of all the participants.

The psychoanalytic learning perspective of Fenwick (2001) was used as a framework for this study. It focuses on the inner struggle of the ego, negotiating between the inner and outer world. It opens up the area of the unconscious, which could cause repression or resistance inside individuals towards themselves, towards learning and towards the outside world. This tension could generate anxiety, which causes resistance. For learning to take place, people have to be “deliberate experimenters in their own learning and willingly engaging in traumas of the self” (Fenwick, 2001, p. 33). Learning is some personal experience where the inner and outer worlds constantly interact. Exploring your own mind or imagination is a fascinating process to enable better understanding of yourself, as well as interactions with others.

## **Findings**

The aims of the Service-Learning module relate to Nussbaum’s (2002) list of valuable abilities to promote mutual respect for opinions between all participants, to reflect on own traditions and on inherited or ingrained perceptions and stereotypes, to neutralize power relations between participants and to recognize valuable local and indigenous knowledge in a global world. The current Service-Learning module consists of research, community interactions, practical art projects, discussions and reflections. Interactions with communities are facilitated by a non-governmental organization that links each student with a person who is called a “learning partner”.

### *The role of artistic practice*

Dewey (1980) highlights the critical and social function of art and argues that the process of making art or creativity is found in all human actions. Human creativity is formed mostly in the subconscious. Creativity requires looking at many options and finding new combinations of options. Hofstadter (1985) talks about “slippability” (p. 237) or the capability of being unpredictable, making mistakes and identifying coincidence. The unpredictable is often the source of a creative thought. Niederheman (1998) argues that design as a subject offers a “tool for creating connections between ideas, information, people and objects” (p. 84). Niederheman (1998) also refers to Buchanan (1998), who

argues that “we need to spend more time teaching non-designers design knowledge”. Design could be a connecting link with many bodies of knowledge (Buchanan, 1998).

Art triggers the imagination, a process that involves participants more actively. Nielsen’s (2006) study on imaginative teaching highlights several teaching methods, such as exploration, storytelling, discussion and empathy to encourage the imagination. Ilyenkov (2007) argues that the imagination refers not only to imagining that which does not exist, but also to seeing and recognising that which really exists. Ilyenkov (2007) refers to Goethe who wrote that the imagination is the basis of our interaction between people, but that the most difficult action is to “see with one’s own eyes what lies before them” (p. 81). We are confined to our constructed social and personal categories and stereotypes. Without the imagination, according to Ilyenkov (2007), we see what we already know and not what is really there. It is necessary to examine and deconstruct critically that which we observe. The imagination is also necessary to imagine what we cannot see or experience. We could, for instance, imagine life through another person’s eyes. The value of such an exercise could positively stimulate appreciation of cultural diversity.

The imagination keeps the mind active, stimulating creative and innovative thinking. The wonder of new knowledge is what keeps the artist continuing in their journey of discovering or combining to create novel ideas. The active participation in discovering new ideas is also important for motivation. Imaginative thinking relates to deep thinking. An active imagination also stimulates self-discovery and self-reflection. Shannon (1990) points to the value of art education to develop one’s own identity. Buchanan (1989) encourages art and design students to present not only their successes, but also their problems because art and design are perfect vehicles for discovery and development of the self.

The pressure to produce new ideas requires critical analysis of one’s social environment to enable the creation of new metaphors and analogies. Using metaphors or analogies is an indirect way of communication that involves the viewer in resolving the mystery of the message. Art that uses metaphors concretely involves participants both consciously and sub-consciously and serves to encourage the opening up of more possibilities for a diversity of interpretation. The gestalt concept of closure argues that when eighty percent of an image or concept is revealed, the viewers would complete the rest in their imagination and in that way be actively involved.

Theory and practice is integrated in praxis where praxis refers to learning by doing, reflection-in-action or reflective practice (Schön, 1987). Praxis in this module included creative practical activities, such as drawings, photo documentations and sound recordings. It also included explorations, such as mapping issues on the ground with coloured powder or leaves, drawing the problem in an abstract way and collecting objects related to the problem and creating collages. Collected data was, then, acted out, discussed or translated into visual imagery. The creative process of compiling data randomly and forcing new meanings by putting sensory and visual imagery together was a way of finding alternative or unexpected solutions, and this created new meanings. In that creative process of making variations of meanings, it was pointed out that there could be a variety of solutions, but all the variations could be valid. The process or product was then related back to issues such as diversity, power relations, colour divisions or whiteness/blackness. Projection exercises were also included as part of discussions and practical tasks, for instance, the students were

asked to put themselves in the shoes of their learning partners and to make drawings of the person and combine it with a drawing of themselves. The students were more emotionally involved in their assignments because activities, such as drawing, acting and others, involve them physically and mentally. It resulted in an embodied experience, and learning involving both the body and the mind has the potential to be more effective.

An example of a project was where the elements and principles of art (line, space, shape, texture and size and balance, emphasis, unity and rhythm) were used and related to a social issue in the participants' own world. Line, for instance, related to racial or economic divisions, and space referred to the mental or physical space of society. The concepts (line, shape, etc.) were then acted out in a play. Drawings of the acts, a typographic collage or photos of the acts were then used to explain the concepts visually. Discussions and written reflections were included in the process. Sensitive issues were touched on, especially taking into consideration a colonial and recent apartheid past that is still visible in many aspects of everyday life in South Africa.

### *The role of conversation and reflection*

A Socratic discussion style was followed in the conversations where questions were asked about a certain issue and various viewpoints were then discussed. The participants were divided in groups and argued from a certain viewpoint regardless of whether they agreed with that viewpoint or not. In such a way, one can imagine oneself in someone else's shoes. The space for these discussions was agreed on as a safe place, and participants could communicate freely. Because of the risk of uncontained emotions, a facilitator with experience of psychological therapy assisted the groups and facilitated further discussions of issues outside the group. The risk of perpetuating power relations, skewed perceptions was an aspect that one aimed to be aware of all the time. The baggage of the colonial and apartheid past is pre-existing and often taken as the norm.

Dewey (as cited in Bringle & Hatcher, 1999) points out that a place of discomfort is the point where reflection starts. Structural reflection, in the form of writing or drawings, was used after each interaction and at the end of each project (Eyler, 2002). The Affective-Cognitive model (Smith-Tolken & Du Plessis, 2009) that makes use of layered description of emotions or feelings related to critical thinking and theoretical frameworks and context was employed.

Kolb (1984) believes in integrating emotional experience with reflection, and explains that experience alone does not teach. A theory of transformative learning elaborated by Mezirow (1991) puts critical reflection at its core; it brings "assumptions, premises and criteria into consciousness" (p. 29). Fenwick (2001) puts the focus of experiential learning on reflection and argues that individuals construct their own meaning through reflecting on their interaction with their surroundings. Kayes (2002) describes the cognitive approach to learning as leading towards simplification, but the reflective approach to learning "leads towards complicatedness" (pp. 5–6). Schön (1987) describes two different types of reflections: reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. For participants in the community

interactions, there was space for reflection-in-action to take place. Schön's (1987) interest also lies in what the actual triggers are for reflection.

## **Discussion and conclusions**

In this research, it became clear that art is, in fact, an effective medium to address sensitive issues as it makes use of indirect methods of communicating and interacting with the self. Art was also found to be an effective and expressive way to come to terms emotionally, in a non-confrontational manner, with the past and current realities in South Africa. What also emerged was that the art process on its own is not sufficient to fully address sensitive social responsibility and citizenship issues, but there were also external issues that influenced the effectiveness of the art process.

Working with such issues as racism and transformation is highly sensitive. Because of the strong emotions connected with the past, there were incidents of resistance that created barriers to learning. Some students were not motivated to participate, possibly because of fear of expressing their own emotions. It resulted in students being sick during the days when the community interactions took place and a general lack in enthusiasm during the rest of the project. In a module such as this one, it is difficult to judge the emotional state of a group; for some the conversations were confrontational and disruptive, but for others it was a challenge.

It is often assumed that the facilitator is emotionally mature enough to handle complex, sensitive issues in a class. There should be "... space for teachers to engage with painful personal legacies of the past" (Weldon, 2010, p. 353). Foucault (1986) highlights the 'care of the self' and argues that domination takes place when people do not care for themselves because they become slaves of their desires.

Other aspects that emerged were knowledge of hidden structures, discourses or oppression mechanisms in society different perspectives on what happened in history. There was a lack of relating theoretical readings and critical theory to everyday life; without linking these critical issues in one's mind the artistic process could become superficial. Accepting the fact that there are different interpretations of what happened in the colonial or apartheid past is important, and the process of listening to different interpretations of their artworks by classmates and relating that to history writing was an important process. Britzman (as cited in Kumashiro, 2000) remarks that "developing a critical consciousness involves not only learning about the processes of privileging/normalizing and marginalizing/Othering, but also unlearning what one had previously learned is 'normal' and normative" (pp. 36–37).

The imagination is necessary not only to imagine the unseen, but also to recognize what is really in front of one's eyes. Art education could be a useful tool to enable social responsibility and citizenship learning. Because it has the potential to enhance learning, art should therefore be accessible to more people. Further research and development of a future module that will be open to all students on campus to learn more about social responsibility and citizenship through the medium of art is suggested, with the guideline that this course is aimed at the development of a person's identity, not at becoming a future artist.

People's confidence in the accepted norms of the apartheid past has been shattered because of inadequacies in social status and race. Psychological and self-confidence problems might be the single major obstruction to learning, apart from language barriers. A psychoanalytic learning perspective could be used to open up and reconcile some historical injustices in South Africa. Creating more space for participants to talk, write and artistically explore their personal experiences could be a means of coming to terms with emotions of the past and create a path for rethinking social responsibility and citizenship.

Reflecting on this module brings an awareness of the interesting nature of the entire process of research. The improved knowledge of social responsibility and citizenship and variations in students' perspectives and attitudes led to an enhanced understanding of how to accommodate multicultural students within the course curriculum.

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# EMOTIONAL ASPECT OF TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL MASTERY IN LATVIA: THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL REFLECTIONS

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## Abstract

*Within the context of re-evaluation of teacher education to meet the challenges of globalisation, the discourse about holistic understanding of teacher's professional mastery is essential. The objective of this paper is to provide theoretical and historical reflections about teacher's professional mastery, highlighting the emotional aspect as a dimension that integrates all its levels. Theoretical and historical reflections in this study follow the methodology of discourse evaluation. The discourse is contextualized in a setting of three periods of time (the 1<sup>st</sup> independence 1918–1940, Soviet occupation 1940–1990 and the 2<sup>nd</sup> independence from 1990) and grounded in Latvian national and international perspectives. The study aims to deconstruct the cognitive competency-based view on teacher education and to provide reflections on teacher education that is teachers' self-based.*

**Key words:** *teacher's professional mastery, emotional aspect, teacher's competences, teacher's self, teacher education*

## Introduction

Discourse about a holistic understanding of teacher's professional mastery has been shaped by global philosophy and practice of reorienting teacher education towards sustainable development. Under the influence of globalisation, teacher's professional mastery ought to be regarded beyond the national and ethnical boundaries (Viķe-Freiberga, 2010), beyond particular professional skills or school subjects. The issue of teacher's professional mastery is widely discussed with extensive understandings and emphases. As Zeichner, Melnick and Gomez (1996) and Sherman (2004) have argued, it is insufficient to relate teaching only to technical aspects. Teacher's professional mastery that responds to contemporary challenges integrates several broad aspects, such as contemplation and imagination (Buchmann, 1988), caring and empathy (Noddings, 2003), thoughtfulness (Van Manen, 2002), discernment (Gallegos-Nava, 2001), cognition and emotion (Storbeck & Clore, 2007) to mention but a few. The inner life of a teacher that implies hopes, beliefs, emotions, feelings and values (Sheri, 2008) should also be recognized as a crucial aspect of teacher's professional mastery. Thus, the discourse on a holistic understanding of teacher's professional mastery initiates recognition of the issues of authenticity of teacher's professional life and teacher's professional identity.

Currently in Latvia, discourse about teacher's professional mastery occurs both from a particular competence-based perspective (Maslo, 2006) and from a broader perspective

where teacher's professional mastery is viewed holistically and related to identity (Pipere, 2007). In the general ecological theory (Wilber, 1997; Wilber, Patten, Leonard, & Morelli, 2008), the explanation of holism is based on the systemic approach (Beļickis, 2000). The emotional aspect of teacher's professional mastery is the precondition for creating the environment that is oriented towards the child's development and for the management of a conscious and systemic education where the child creates his/her knowledge, skills, attitudes and basic personality traits. The view on teacher's professional mastery as a set of technical competences is incomplete for shaping a sustainable society (Beļickis, 2000), because under the dominance of the rational there is a lack of the whole-person perspective. In this article, a theoretical and historical study of the emotional aspect of teacher's professional mastery in Latvia is conducted by using the methodology of discourse evaluation (Bleakley, 2004) that follows a social constructionist view providing an analysis of the emotional aspect of teacher's professional mastery in the context of the historical, ethnographic, social, psychological and critical theory dimensions (Bleakley, 2004; Blommaert & Bulcaen, 2000; Creswell, 1998; Fairclough, 2000). Discourse, in this paper, refers to a negotiated set of meanings that are both mediated and circumscribed by particular social, historical, political and other contexts. Discourse evaluation approach is applied to highlight that the considered sets of meanings are substantial keystones that shape educational reality within particular contexts, for instance, they denote how problems are defined, what options are preferred and what is implied by success or good practice in each period. Discourses in this paper are analysed in a deconstructive way to explore how they have come into being, how they initiate particular educational activities within a community of educators, how they legitimate or illegitimate particular educational practices.

The view on teacher's professional mastery in Latvia is contextualized in three periods since each of them gives a different outlook on teacher's professional mastery: the period of 1918–1940, the period of Soviet occupation during 1940–1990 and the contemporary period since 1990. This division ensures evaluation of teacher's professional mastery according to diverse historical contexts. The sources of information considered in this paper are varied: scientific theories and studies, materials from the Latvian State Historical Archives, which include normative educational documents and popular articles for mainstream educators, oral evidences, such as the life stories of people living during the period of the first independence of Latvia (n=52) from the collection of the Centre of Oral History of Daugavpils University.

Considering the complexity of the concepts being discussed, this paper does not seek to define the major concepts, such as teacher's professional mastery and emotional aspect of teacher's professional mastery. Rather, it aims to highlight different assumptions that shape understanding of the major concepts in each period of time and to identify the assumptions that provide holistic understanding and sustainable representation of the considered concepts in educational practice.

## **Emotional aspect of pedagogical mastery in 1918–1940: Footprints of idealistic humanism, national romanticism and tacit authoritarianism**

The Latvian state and its education system developed under the conditions of the First World War. Since the establishment of the state, the economic, social and educational spheres had to be created anew. Such issues as illiteracy and poverty also needed to be addressed. At the dawn of the Republic of Latvia, the role of the school in developing national identity and national awareness was emphasized (Izglītības Ministrijas Mēnešraksts, 1921; Viķe-Freiberga, 2010). Implicit reflections of the significance of the emotional aspect in teacher's professional mastery can be identified in the works of educators of that time – Dāle, Štāls, Dauge, Dēķens, Students, Pētersons, Seile, Ratnieks and others. At this period, discussions emerged about teacher's professional mastery, although pedagogical mastery and its emotional aspect were not yet explicitly defined.

Influenced by the Western European pedagogical thought, Latvian education authorities of that time emphasized the humanistic paradigm. Thus, philosophical ideas of humanists, for instance, Rousseau, Kerschensteiner, Montessori, Fröbel, Tolstoy, Ushinsky, who closely relate teacher's professional mastery to teacher's personality, highlighting the socio-emotional aspect and empathy – loving and understanding the child, promoting the child's growth with care that is regarded as the heart of creating a favourable, motivating the environment, were reflected in theoretical discourse shaped by Latvian educators.

Understanding of teacher's professional mastery can be implicitly inferred from the works of Pētersons (1931) and Štāls (1927), although they tend to focus on the way a pupil ought to do at school instead of what the teacher should be like. These sources, however, reveal the characteristics of teacher's professional mastery – teaching at school is not enough, the school should not only teach the child the 3 R's – reading, writing and arithmetic, but also educate them to be virtuous, honest and decent people. It was considered that teacher's personality is crucial in the child's development (Pētersons, 1931). Štāls indicated that "...educator ought to first and foremost be an idealist who devotes himself/herself to a worthy goal with all his/her heart and soul in order to be able to look into the child's soul and pull their heartstrings, so that educator's heartstrings resonate with the child's, and this amazing symphony plays on and on each and every moment" (Štāls, 1927, p. 14). The teacher is characterized as a social person whose soul incorporates an aspiration to live with people (Dāle, 1939; Dauge, 1928). Students (1933) posited that the secret of the growth of a teacher as a holistic person lies in an inner aspect of personality, thus beginning the discussion of the spiritual aspect in teacher's professional mastery. The teacher was valued as an advisor, facilitator, cooperation partner who understands the child's needs and provides emotional support. The public attitude towards the teacher was based on mutual respect and support. The socio-emotional aspect in teacher's professional mastery was grounded in the human meta-values – love that is manifested in attitude towards oneself and pupils (Pētersons, 1931, 1938, n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c; Ratnieks, 1940). Teacher's indifference and alienation in the teaching and upbringing processes were criticized. Teacher's professional mastery was perceived as the unity of professional knowledge, skills and teacher's personality traits, where the socio-emotional aspect – empathy – is manifested.

The human paradigm emphasizes such notions as spirit, soul, understanding, compassion, solidarity and, in the contemporary perspective, is complemented with emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995; Mayer, Salovey, Caruso & Sitarenios, 2003; Mayer, Salovey, Caruso, 2004; Gardner, 2000). In the opinion of contemporary authors (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), emotional intelligence is characterized by awareness of one's emotions, control over one's emotions, self-motivation, empathy, communication skills and ability to nurture other people's emotions. Contemporary authors evaluate the pedagogical ideas of this historical period regarding teacher's professional mastery and argue that the dominant educational approach in Latvia in the 1920s–1930s was the cognitive approach – pupils making conclusions, learning by doing research (Beļickis, 2000) that, in a sense, can be considered as the beginnings of action research in Latvia. Viķe-Freiberga (2010) observes that the period from 1934 was marked by polemics in the sphere of the Latvian culture and education on the balance between Latvianness and internationality, characterized by levelling the Marxist populism and an authoritarian stance towards culture and education, with a strong critique of the aspects of democracy. Popularisation and support of the leading socio-political ideology were considered the main function of education and the main goal of upbringing at schools. Thus, this period cannot be judged unambiguously in what relates to the issue of teacher's professional mastery since it theoretically highlighted the importance of teacher's personality and, at the same time, was marked by tacit but perceptible authoritarianism.

Eyewitnesses' narratives confirm the practical activity manifestations of teacher's professional mastery during this historical period. These accounts are located in various archives, for instance, the Centre of Oral History of Daugavpils University (hereafter DU COH) where one can find life story interviews relating to the sphere of education during this period in Latvia. The eyewitnesses' narratives highlight the manifestations of teacher's personality traits – empathy, emotional expression – in their professional mastery, especially in the interpersonal “pupil-teacher” communication. As Šeimans observes, “Teachers sometimes treated their pupils with irony if the latter understood or knew little. For instance, a biology teacher particularly ridiculed his pupils. They were called to the board and, in case of failing to answer, were ridiculed. Teachers emphasized that the most important things in life were knowledge and love for work.” (Šeimans, 2003, January 9). Thus, although the theory was enriched with philosophical ideas of the idealistic humanism, the practice revealed a limited view of the components of educational content – emphasis on the knowledge and skills component and failing to underscore the attitude component which is based on the inner world and the emotional aspect.

As Grīnberga reveals, “Parents cooperated with the school, attended the school meetings and the parent's meetings. Parents required children to have a very serious attitude to school and teachers; everyone wanted their children to be educated” (Grīnberga, 2002, December 22). This observation suggests that the school and teachers were regarded by the nation as sources of knowledge and skills. This perspective could be explained by the influence of the ethnographic dimension – after gaining independence, the Latvians, originally a farming nation, felt the urge to leave the social stratum to which they were restricted over the centuries (Viķe-Freiberga, 2010). It also indicates that, at that time, education was considered a basic value.

Examination of historical sources in the Latvian State Archives revealed that the pedagogical ideas of the period in question can be found in the Latvian Ministry of Education Monthly which published articles that supported the state socio-political ideology. Prior to publishing, the articles underwent strict reviewing and decisions were made as to their appropriateness and permission to be published (Viķe-Freiberga, 2010). An analysis of archive materials (session protocols of the Ministry of Education) reveals that frequently some authors were banned from publishing for a particular period. Schools and other educational institutions were informed about the works of the Latvian authors that were forbidden to be included in the school curricula. This situation illustrates an authoritarian stance in educational policy, in accordance with the socio-political ideology. The ideas in the articles published in the Ministry of Education Monthly indicate that the essence of valuable education was perceived in the quest for truth in human activity, emotional experiences, self-transformation, national identity and the dimension of spirituality. Teacher's personality was particularly valued – the influence of intellectual, voluntary and emotional aspects in the organisation of the educational process. It was emphasized that the teacher ought to be a facilitator, advisor and co-worker who loves children (Pētersons, 1938, n.d.a, n.d.b, n.d.c; Ratnieks, 1940).

Žukovs and Kopeloviča (1997) state that, between 1920–1930, Latvia had four teacher training institutes – in Rīga, Daugavpils, Jelgava and Rēzekne. These institutions educated basic school teachers who were trained not only to perform their direct teaching duties, but also to become cultural workers – organize the cultural life of the local community. This is indicated in the “Law on the Nation’s Education” (Likums par tautas izglītību, 1921), amended and ratified by the Latvian State Ministry of Education. The law describes the aims of teacher training institutes and the subjects to be taught there. The main aim of teacher education was to prepare teachers for work in folk schools. In order to reach the aim, future teachers had to master the following study courses: religious studies, morals, native language, modern languages, history and social sciences, geography, mathematics, natural sciences with agronomy and hygiene, physics, chemistry with technology, calligraphy, drawing, technical drawing, modelling, singing and music, gymnastics, housekeeping (for girls), craft (for boys), psychology, pedagogy and subject methods. Thus, it can be indicated that teacher training was comprehensive in its nature since it integrated study courses from varied areas – arts, humanities, exact sciences, social sciences, pedagogy and psychology, although we cannot deny the presence of the atomistic approach in the organisation of teacher education. As reflected by Belousa (2005), education in Latvia was based on the synthesis of humanism and national romanticism, emphasising teacher’s inner world and spirituality. Yet, Viķe-Freiberga (2010) argues that acquisition of education, the range of the acquired knowledge, was not the crucial aspect which ensured that each graduate immediately became a renaissance person, a spiritual altruist and a humanist. This consideration reveals the crucial role of teacher’s personality, the self-teacher, in developing teacher’s professional mastery that is a universal frame of reference that exceeds contextual influence of history and nation.

In modern day terms, the teachers working at that time can be called media – the bearers of the ideas of independence, nationality, unity and education who are aware of their mission and ready to devote themselves to implementing it.

## **Emotional aspect of pedagogical mastery in 1940–1990: Deconstruction of national ideals and immersion in behaviourism and the Soviet ideology**

Since 1940 Latvia was incorporated in the Soviet Union. During this period that ended in 1990, the field of education was complemented by various notions and terms from natural sciences. This tendency can be explained by the dominant pragmatist paradigm (Beļickis, 2000). Higher education institutions and research centres that were established during the first independence of Latvia continued to exist, but research in social sciences was influenced by the Soviet ideology. It means that the content of education had lost its humanistic and existential basis; instead, it was grounded in the positivist philosophy and oriented towards personality development under the influence of socialist ideology (Ceruzis & Stradiņš, 2000). The approach to teaching and upbringing was based on authoritarianism, and manifested in the use of destructive emotions. For instance, anger, contempt and threat could ensure discipline and order in the classroom. Teacher-centred approach and authoritarian relationships dominated in the educational process. The issues of emotionality and teacher's inner life contradicted the conception of communist ideology in education that, as Barghoorn and Remington (1986) put it, was based on three cornerstones of a single triangle: politically dogmatic instruction, work education and moral education. Within the pragmatist paradigm, discussion of the emotional aspect of teacher's professional mastery was sustained neither in philosophical nor in practical dimensions of teacher education or in education in general. Sources in this period related to education focused particularly on upbringing, on art in educational process and in extracurricular activities, for instance, organising hobby groups, pioneer camps, excursions, seminars, festivals, meetings with popular artists, excellent workers. Hiden and Salmon (1991) argue that these activities exemplify the influence modes of the covert political ideology that considered teacher's task to be that of representing the desirable reality of socialistic realism. Philosophy and practice of upbringing implied indirect concern for the emotional aspect in teacher's professional mastery, however, the emotional aspect, instead of collaboration, revealed the characteristics of the influence of persuasion instead of facilitation, using emotions as a means to an end.

Anspaks (2003) argues that this period led to destruction of the education system of the first independence period, eradicating its approaches and pedagogical ideals. Educators who still worked in the sphere of education could only retain the pedagogical ideals of the first independence period buried deep within their hearts (Belousa, 2005).

Teacher education in this period was based on the competence approach originated in the behaviouristic educational theory that was dominant at that time (Elliot, 1993, 2002; Elliot & Kushner, 2007). Teachers were trained as technicians who can manage the teaching and learning process according to instructions and normative prescriptions. Yet, it was an incomplete fraction of pedagogical activity (Beļickis, 2000), which nevertheless did not permit a holistic view on teacher's professional mastery. The normative, competence-based approach to teacher education contradicted the awareness of the emotional aspect in teacher's professional mastery.

Testimonies of teachers' and pupils' attitudes and communication, manifestations of teacher's professional mastery and the nature of teaching and upbringing abound in the

eyewitnesses' memories. As Goļdina relates: "The teacher of the Latvian language, well, she scolded us something dreadful about our wrong pronunciation and our regional Latgalian accent during the lessons and even during recess... Rules to be followed at school were quite strict. Punishments for breaking the rules were diverse; we were made to stand in the hall..." (Goļdina, 2003, January 8). Goļdina's experience points out the linear nature of teaching and upbringing, dominated by authoritarian communication where the teacher is regarded as pupils' natural enemy. It affirms that the educational process was based on the authoritarian teaching paradigm (Barr & Tagg, 1995) whereas the emotional aspect and the role of teacher's personality became insignificant. The teaching paradigm permitted the use of destructive, negative emotions in the educational process. Authoritarian thinking presupposed support of a one single "right" truth, one "right" belief and one "right" action (Viķe-Freiberga, 2010). Such situation could lead to the awareness of a "false Self" when neither teachers nor pupils can implement the true purposes of their existence and are oriented towards creativity because of being used to deal with different situations in conformist circumstances. Authoritarian learning environment that disregarded the emotional aspect of teacher's professional mastery contradicted the preconditions of a safe and creative environment, directed towards fostering awareness of individual's personal identity, and therefore was not oriented towards sustainable development.

At this period, the teacher's image cannot be regarded unequivocally, considering the contemporary holistic perspective on teacher's professional mastery and synthesis of personality within it. This idea is confirmed by Rimša: "Relationships with teachers were different – there were these so-called strict teachers who frequently punished their pupils for failing to do their homework or learn the lesson, but then there were others, with whom I am still on friendly terms even now, long after graduation. They helped, they were benevolent..." (Rimša, 2002, December 22). The narrative suggests that emotional expression of teacher's personality, which manifests a natural desire to help pupils and take care of them, is crucial for meaningful education. Nevertheless, at this period, teacher's professional mastery was grounded in behaviouristic theory, thus contributing to a competence-based vision of pedagogical mastery.

### **Emotional aspect of pedagogical mastery since 1990: Competence-based and identity-based perspectives**

Regaining national independence in 1990 caused significant changes in the national education system. The core principles of the Latvian state, education, science and culture developed during the initial years of the first independence and were deconstructed during the Soviet times. It was, therefore, necessary to re-evaluate and nationalize the education system, which had been common for the entire Soviet system during the Soviet period and totally renovate the system according to the principles of a democratic state. Educational reform was performed in the context of a paradigm shift (Beļickis, 2000) from the traditional normatively-oriented paradigm to the human paradigm. The period witnessed reorientation from the authoritarian, normatively-oriented teaching process to a process where questions lack definite answers, where there is no single truth, no recipes for



concrete actions (Belousa & Stakle, 2007). Teacher-centred educational process was reoriented towards a child-centred educational process, and this reorientation was accompanied by changes in the teacher's role. Thus, the discussions of teachers' professional mastery, particularly in the first decade of this period, reflected the context of a paradigm shift.

Contemporary discourse in Latvia about teacher's professional mastery has a specific competence-based perspective (Maslo, 2006; Lieģeniece, 2009; Andersone, 2009; Čehlovs & Čehlova, 2009; Rutka, 2009) and a holistic perspective (Belousa, 2005; Pipere, 2007; Salīte, Mičule, Kravale, Iliško, & Stakle, 2007). The competence-based perspective highlights the emotional aspect of teacher's professional mastery through the structure of teacher's professional competence: knowledge and skills. In the context of holism, the emotional aspect appears in the process of the development of teacher's professional identity. Thus, the current educational discourse in Latvia introduces a twofold view on teacher's professional mastery.

The discourse regarding teacher's professional mastery in Latvia is based on different educational theories – social cognitive educational theory (Bandura, 1988, 1989) and transformative educational theory (Mezirow, 1991, 2000; O'Sullivan, 2001). Social cognitive theory grounds teacher education and development of teacher's professional mastery in knowledge, personal experience and observations of colleagues' practical activity. A significant aspect for effective education is emotional connection with the observed and self-efficacy – whether the teacher believes in his or her ability to acquire certain behavioural norms. Mezirow (1991, 2000), as a theorist of transformative education, argues that socially cognitive educational theory is incomplete – any education entails change, but not all kind of change is transformation. Transformative educational theory views education comprehensively and holistically (Mezirow, 1991, 2000; O'Sullivan, 2001). In the context of transformative education, development of teacher's professional mastery can be described as a spiritual or emotional transformation through critical self-reflection and meta-analysis – transformation of deep emotional experience, knowledge and feelings into action, whereby a values system develops. Transformative education implies shaping of teacher's identity and mission, creating a link with the surrounding people, nature, events, etc. As Elliot puts it (Elliot, 1993, 2002; Elliot & Kushner, 2007), learning is not an action, but a transaction, a process that involves emotional and intellectual synthesis. Nowadays, in the context of sustainable education, the discourse on the development of teacher's professional mastery via transformative education opens a holistic perspective on teacher's professional mastery.

Discourse on teacher's professional mastery is also affected by other education related disciplines, for instance psychology. Pedagogical psychology (Balsons, 1998; Geidžs & Berliners, 1999) emphasizes inseparability of teacher's personality and professional mastery. Teacher's personality, int. al. its emotional aspect, directly influences pupils in the educational process. In pedagogical sources the emotional aspect is understood as emotional intelligence and empathy-based care (Brostrom, 2006). Care is perceived as specific relations between people when one individual affects the other; this relationship is grounded in whether and how one person supports the other's well-being, feels empathy and desire to help. Introducing the notion of emotional intelligence and encompassing in it

self-control, diligence, persistence, ability to evaluate and guide one's actions, empathy and management of relationships (Goleman, 1995) initiates the extension of the view on teacher's professional mastery as a set of particular competences and skills. From the holistic perspective (Gallegos-Nava, 2001; Sheri, 2008), teacher's professional mastery underscores teacher self that is accessed through deep emotional reflection.

## **Conclusions**

The discourse about teacher's professional mastery is affected by the leading national, socio-political and cultural context of the period and the educational theory dominant at a particular period of time. Also, the context of the leading philosophical paradigm of each historical period shapes the understanding of teacher's professional mastery. As it was discussed, during the period of 1918–1940, teacher's professional mastery was viewed through the paradigm of romanticism and idealistic humanism. The paradigm of this epoch was a precondition for emphasis on the humanistic values. During 1940–1990, teacher's professional mastery was contextualized in a normatively-oriented paradigm which is directed towards a behaviouristic, normatively-oriented, atomistic and competence-based approach. In the period from 1990 till nowadays, the twofold understanding of teacher's professional mastery reflects the context of a paradigm shift, thus both competence-based and identity-based understandings are present in educational discourse.

Currently, teacher's professional mastery in Latvia is characterized by two perspectives: the competence-based approach and the holistic approach. Taking into consideration that the context of post-modern paradigm highlights a holistic view on teacher's professional mastery, an identity-based understanding is rather compatible with postmodern educational discourse. Also, the context of sustainable education is a precondition for a holistic perspective on teacher's professional mastery and its development via transformative education for it initiates recognition of the authenticity of teacher's professional life and identity.

The contribution of discourse evaluation to the examination of the emotional aspect of teacher's professional mastery is the recognition that hidden assumptions and values uniquely characteristic to each period of time shape the conceptual and practical reality of education. Thus, to consider any concept, approach or an example of good practice, it has to be observed in connection with particular social, historical, political and other contexts.

Evaluation of the discourse on assumptions and values that shape education within particular contexts implies a comprehensive image of the major concepts discussed in this article. The importance of this discourse evaluation study is relevant to the current time of Bologna initiative in the European Higher Education Area that a teacher's input-focused traditional way should be redefined as based on an outcome-focused approach in terms of what learners are expected to achieve. Evaluation of the discourse on the emotional aspect of teacher's professional mastery can contribute to critical consideration of whether this aspect is recognized as a learning outcome and how it is reflected, intended to be taught and assessed in modules, courses and programs of teacher education and training.

## **Acknowledgment:**

This work has been supported by the European Social Fund within the Project "Support for the implementation of doctoral studies at Daugavpils University". Agreement Nr. 2009/0140/1DP/1.1.2.1.2/09/IPIA/VIAA/015.

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