

The Teacher of the 21st Century

The Teacher of the 21st Century: Quality Education for Quality Teaching

Edited by

Linda Daniela, Ineta Lūka,
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The Teacher of the 21st Century: Quality Education for Quality Teaching
Edited by Linda Daniela, Ineta Lūka, Lūcija Rutka and Irēna Žogla

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ATEE SPRING CONFERENCE 2013



The overarching theme of the Spring conferences in Riga remains as it has been for several years *Teacher of the 21st Century: Quality education for quality teaching*. However, each year, the organizers ask the participants to consider narrower problems related to teacher education and to leave space for innovative ideas and their implementation.

Over the past two decades and even longer, countries have been trying to build standards-based accountability as a foundation for a higher-achieving education system. In practice, however, we have created several experiences with certain domains, including test-based accountability and internal and external evaluation of the achievements. Also, a function of control appears, instead of facilitating students and pupil self-regulated learning, context knowledge and understanding, higher-order thinking, problem solving, and creativity needed for teachers to succeed in the 21st century.

The organizing and academic committee of the Spring Conference 2013 highly appreciate the participants' attempts to consider the quality of tertiary teacher education and teaching–learning in institutions affected by constant changes.

Pedagogy, coupled with accountability and evaluation, new paradigms in learning sciences, as well as in communication technologies, and digitally-based tutoring that influence teaching and learning, from time to time is still narrowing creativity and flexibility in teaching and learning. Implementation of productive findings does not always lead to student and pupil success. Why? How can tertiary teacher education obtain a stronger educative function, become more personalized, and invite teachers to be constantly aware of the quality of teaching, while catching up with the on-going changes in our social life and education, as well?

How can educators, teachers and researchers create a dynamic pedagogy and a multifaceted approach to teaching and learning in order to

integrate teaching, learning, and assessment, thereby leading to teacher flexibility, creativity and innovative practices that meet the high standards of 21st century education?

What successful practices should we share and how can teacher education meet the need for change in the tertiary educational process and teacher life-long professional development?

EDITORIAL BOARD

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ABOUT THE ARTICLES

Linda Daniela, Dita Nīmane and Gunta Kraģe write about research-based preventive support systems for decreasing the social exclusion risk for children and young people from age 7 to 25 in the article “Development of Support Systems for Decreasing Social Exclusion”. These ensure successful inclusion of those learners who are at high risk of dropping out of general comprehensive school, or not receiving primary education or a certificate of general secondary education and the basic knowledge and key skills that have been developed, for the first time in Latvia, within the framework of the project “Development and implementation of support programs for young people at the risk of exclusion”.

Dimitris Alimisis, in his article “Educational Robotics in Teacher Education: An innovative tool for promoting quality education”, writes about robotics, which has acquired a high interest of teachers and researchers in European countries as a valuable tool to develop cognitive and manual skills in students from pre-school to high school and as a learning tool in the teaching of science, mathematics, technology, informatics and other school subjects or in interdisciplinary learning activities. The paper concludes with a proposal for creation of a European-wide network in educational robotics including teachers and researchers in the field.

Alaster Scott Douglas, in his article “Addressing Diverse Learning Needs: Differentiation behaviours of five teachers towards the same class of students”, writes about a study which addresses teachers’ differential behaviour and follows one class of Year 8 students (12/13 year olds) being taught by five teachers in different subjects in one secondary school in London. The research explores how teachers differentiate among their students and identifies the individual student characteristics and group characteristics that teachers take into account in their teaching practice. The findings consider why classroom differentiation exists between the five subject teachers. The data analysis uses a cultural historical activity theory framework to give suggestions as to what may constrain the development of future teaching activity for the students in the Year 8 class.

Paulo Dias, John Mergendoller and Ana Sofia Bastos, in their article “Problem-based learning in Portugal: Contributions of the SCENE project in promoting teacher/trainer skills for the 21st century”, describe a part of a European project on problem-based learning (PBL) in education. Its aim is to explore the use of this innovative pedagogical model in the Portuguese context. In PBL, unlike “traditional” pedagogical teaching models where the teacher is the centre and “knowledge provider” (Savery, 2006), student thinking and action is at the centre of the teaching-learning interaction. PBL is a constructivist pedagogy emphasizing real-world problem solving, group learning and discussion, and subsequent reflection about what has been learned and accomplished (Hmelo-Silver and Barrows, 2006). They discuss interview results and, propose, based on these data, a program of continuing education for teachers and adult trainers, to enable them to promote 21st century skills of their students.

Karīna Brikmane and Alīda Samuseviča – “Interaction of Teachers’ Professional Development and the School Environment: Practice and possible solutions” – describe the professional development dimension of teachers in Latvia, highlighting teaching experience and the opportunities to develop skills within the school environment, based on the transformation of the teaching process and interaction with resources in the school environment. The significance of the research is determined by the need to provide modern, competitive education for the younger generation. A need for continuing professional development of teachers arises as a consequence. It is important that teacher professional development feedback should be incorporated into the teaching process and not just formally remain on paper.

The purpose of *Antra Ozola and Andrejs Geske*’s article “Where Does the Difference Between PIRLS 2006 and PISA 2009 Results Come From?” is to find out how changes in reading achievement scores can be explained. In the research, PIRLS 2006 and PISA 2009 data are used to compare situations in countries that participated in both studies. Comparing PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) 2009 and PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) 2006 results for some countries, there is a relative rise of average reading literacy performance, and for some countries there is a drop in average achievement.

Jan Watson in her article “Pushing the Boundaries: A study of higher education students’ responses to a creative, art-based learning experience” examines student responses to an open-ended, art-based task, which involved the documentation of the creative process and culminated in the

production of individual art pieces. She explores how students approached the work, and how working independently in a collaborative, learning space impacted on their personal and professional identities. The findings support the view that students are more engaged with their learning when they have access to challenging, creative experiences that enable them to demonstrate their knowledge, understanding, and skills in different ways.

Rudite Andersone in her article “Curriculum Development for Quality Teaching and Learning” writes about the digital generation, the development of a digital economy and globalization. Restrictions and the development of the branches of the national economy are significant factors for sustainable development of education for it to become one of the most significant issues in the development of society. Education in school practice takes place in a dramatically new information environment (social networking, digitalization, plenitude) and for the future, which cannot be clearly characterized and described. Given the complexity of today’s ever-changing world, contemporary approaches to curriculum development far exceed traditional understanding of curricula as merely plans of study or lists of prescribed content. One of the objectives of curriculum development is the assurance of teaching and learning in classrooms at all levels. This article analyses approaches to curriculum development in order to put into effect the principles of qualitative teaching and learning.

Anne Ryan and *Leah O’Toole* present “Towards Integrated Learning: Linking psychology, sociology and school experience in initial teacher education”. The authors, who teach Sociology and Psychology respectively to pre-service teachers in Ireland, describe their recently revised approach to the teaching and assessment of their courses. This approach, which provides for greater integration of the components in ITE, potentially enhances student teachers’ preparation for practice, and particularly acknowledges the value of the students’ cooperative learning in this process.

Sarmīte Tūbele, in her article “Teacher Education for Inclusion – Challenge for the 21st century teacher”, notes that pedagogical processes are developing very rapidly and are connected with changes in society. Although differences among countries in Europe are significant, there are also similarities that need to be taken into account. Latvia’s entry into the European Union in 2004 provided more possibilities to become acquainted with life, and especially pedagogical processes, in other European countries.

Evija Latkovska and Lūcija Rutka, in their article “Assessment of Student teacher Professional Activity during Practicum Using Validpack Instrument”, note that in teacher education, a question of assessing student teacher professional activity in practicums is still topical. A new approach to this issue is provided by Validpack: an innovative instrument meant to assess, document and validate psycho-pedagogical competence of those working in the field of education, no matter whether they have acquired it in formal, non-formal or informal learning contexts. The article provides scientifically grounded theoretical substantiation of the use of the Validpack instrument to assess student teacher professional activity and reveals student teachers’ attitudes towards efficiency of its use during practicums.

Katarzyna Cybulska’s article, “In Search for Quality Language Teacher Education in the Polish Context: Attitudes and multilingualism”, is set in the context of European language policy. Her study aims to examine Polish pre-service and in-service EFL teacher attitudes to foreign languages other than English and to FL learning processes, combined with analysis of their own multilinguality and interests in new approaches/programmes. It offers valuable insights into the quality of present and future EFL teacher overall preparation for fostering students’ positive attitudes to language learning, with special attention being paid to linguistic diversity.

Sandra Smilga, Ineta Lūka and Irena Zogla’s article, “Teacher Authority as a Basis for School Culture: Pedagogical ethos, interaction culture and effective learning”, is an evaluative study conducted from 2008-2012 in Latvia. The purpose of the study was to analyse the effectiveness of teacher authority in creating interaction to promote student teacher relationship as a component of school culture, viewed here as a precondition of shifting the accent from teaching to effective learning. The findings show that pedagogical authority is a complex phenomenon in which the teacher’s subject competence is closely intertwined with the teacher’s ethos and classroom management skills. Authority is a component of teacher pedagogical ethos, which is expressed in mutual relationships and the culture of interaction.

Martins Veide, in his article “The Existential Meaning of Personal Experience in the Learning Process”, discusses the existential aspects of the learning process and content. These aspects are reviewed in the light of four learning dimensions: knowledge, abilities, living, and learning. Choice and meaning are analyzed as important prerequisites for self-

realization and development of the participants of the learning process. Based on the findings of personal experience as an important element for learning existential meaning, the author develops his proposition for the development of the learning process and content.

R.Hariharan and K. Mohanasundaram, in their article “Impact of Six Sigma – Dmaic approach in learning ICT concepts by prospective teachers”, write about renewed interest in the quality perspectives of teacher education, which has been spurred on as if it is the mother of all education. Six Sigma is the qualitative analysis method used extensively in industrial units for operational improvement – its adoption is relatively new to the teacher education process. This Six Sigma based experimentation analyses various psycho-somatic factors, which may tend to change abruptly in a particular situation and governs the process improvement of learning of the prospective teachers.

Rea Raus and Sandra Ozola, in their article “Teachers’ Beliefs and Understandings about the Learning and Teaching Process – From student years to experienced professional” notes that novice teachers quitting their jobs during the first years of teaching is a world-wide problem (Richardson, 2005). Previous research has shown that while in-service teachers form their professional identity through teaching and learning experiences, pre-service programs can make a difference. Many researchers see professional identity as an ongoing process of integration of the personal and professional sides of becoming and being a teacher.

Ineta Helmane’s article “Emotions Experienced by Prospective Teachers as Primary School Pupils in Mathematics Lessons” deals with teachers’ emotions. The quality of the study process is influenced by the prospective teacher’s emotions experienced during the educational process at school. The prospective teacher’s emotions experienced at school as a pupil are initiators of psychic and physical strengths, or can be an impediment to them. The aim of the article is to investigate the experienced emotions by prospective teachers when learning mathematics as primary school pupils and highlight the factors arousing emotions in learning mathematics in primary school. The article analyses the data obtained in empirical research about the emotions experienced by prospective teachers during mathematics lessons in primary school.

Ireta Cekse and Andrejs Geske – “The Influence of Teacher Citizenship Activities on Student Civic Knowledge and Skills”. The paradigm of citizenship and citizenship education has changed since Latvia and Estonia

regained independence and became members of international organizations, such as the European Union and NATO. Today, each member of society, including teachers, is responsible for the development of democratic values. All subject teachers are accountable for citizenship education and the development of the school environment. The research based on teacher data obtained from the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2009 (ICCS) in Estonia and Latvia.

Dace Medne, in her article “Upbringing Phenomena in Modern Families”, discusses the need to study the problems of the upbringing process in the family in the transformative society of Latvia. This is determined by changes in the economic situation and the philosophical paradigm, as they result in changes in family upbringing. From 2006 to 2010, research took place on the specifics of upbringing in present-day Latvia: “Upbringing in the Transformative Society of Latvia”. This article analyzes pedagogical techniques in the upbringing phenomena that facilitate the development of an independent and responsible personality.

Ivars Muzis, in his article “Primary School Staff Assessment of Features, State and Success Factors in Kurzeme District Schools”, discusses today’s primary schools that are under pressure of various changes. A random sample of four primary schools in Kurzeme was used in which 80 teachers filled in questionnaires. The data were analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The aim of the research is to analyze the expression of the staff of primary schools of Kurzeme district in terms of assessment of feature, state and success factors. It was discovered that the more diligence and dutifulness were valued, the more positive attitude was towards professional knowledge and ability improved.

Agnieszka Nowak-Lojewska, notes in her article “Directions of Changes in Teacher Thinking in the Context of Improving the Quality of Education” that changing cultural, social and political conditions must be taken into account when changing schools. It should be expressed as the so-called adequacy of school – its relevance to new expectations and the adequacy of the teacher. This, in turn, entails the need to improve the quality of teacher education, update their knowledge and develop their modes of interpretation and moral, communication, and practical competences.

Janis Poplavskis and *Janis Dzerviniks* in their article “Nature Studies and Technologies Competence and Criteria of its Development in the Context-oriented Process of Learning Physics” point out that nowadays increasingly greater attention is paid to the development of nature studies

and technologies. It is exactly in nature studies that pupils learn to observe nature and natural phenomena objectively, analyse and understand them, make assumptions and experiments, and draw conclusions. Nature studies give pupils everything needed to form and gradually broaden their understanding of the surrounding world.

Ineta Lūka, Maija Rozite and Janis Eriks Niedritis – “Learning Environment and Study Process as a Tool for Facilitating Leadership Development”. The present formative evaluation study was conducted in 2009-2011 in one of the largest tertiary education institutions of Latvia. It comprised a survey of tourism students, employers, graduates, and students of the Board of the University Student Council. This paper addresses the issue of evaluating the tourism curriculum and making improvements in order to create a curriculum that would enable the development of knowledgeable, innovative, creative specialists who are pro-active leaders and are able to efficiently manage their own and other employees’ work and can successfully operate in the century of innovation.

Evija Latkovska, Linda Daniela and Lūcija Rutka in their article “Psychologically Pedagogical Approach to Reducing Social Exclusion of Adolescents in Latvia” present their idea about research project. As a result of rapid political changes and the economic crisis, children and adolescents in Latvia are experiencing increasingly different psychosocial problems. Reasons for these problems are varied: parents go abroad in order to earn a living for their families, development of different addictions, new forms of aggression in society, and rapid reforms in the system of education. One of the most widespread problems in Latvian society is social exclusion of children and adolescents. These ask for an interdisciplinary approach and new creative methods to be solved effectively. Authors of the article offer an idea as to how the problem might be solved – psychologically pedagogical approaches to reducing social exclusion of adolescents, consisting of a scientifically grounded and practically planned content, methods, and expected results.

Lubova Vasechko’s article “Children’s Comprehensive Preparation for School in Out-of-family Institutional Care” is based on empirical research result analyses of the comprehensive preparation for school of children who are cared for in out-of-family institutions. Previous research results show that, while being in out-of-family institutional care, a child’s development is delayed due to insufficient external stimulation. Despite the fact that the institutional out-of-family care provides the child with

physical security and satisfies his/her basic needs, it cannot provide the most important aspect of the development of the child – the close relationship with at least of one of the adults, who would be able to connect with and become a trusted adult for several years. The paper raises questions about and analyses the conditions that affect the process of preparation for school.

Mariana Iancu, in her article “Formal, Non-formal and Informal Ecological Education and Environmental Education in Biology”, writes that there are two components of pupil and student education, each of them achieved through formal education, non-formal education and informal education from the perspective of educational science, which is closely related to psychology. These sciences are needed in teaching biology, namely in instructive and educational teaching process during biology classes, but also in extracurricular activities. Ecological education, which substantiates environmental ecology, is gradually realized in various interrelated stages, i.e. the cognitive stage, the awareness stage, in the formation of attitudes and values, and practice stage through various strategies and student-centred methods.

CHAPTER ONE

DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORT SYSTEMS FOR DECREASING SOCIAL EXCLUSION

LINDA DANIELA, DITA NĪMANTE
AND GUNTA KRAĢE

Summary

Research-based preventive support systems for decreasing the social exclusion risk for children and young people from age 7 to 25, which ensures successful inclusion of those learners who have a high risk of dropping out from general comprehensive school, or not receiving the certificate for the acquisition of basic education or certificate of general secondary education and the acquisition of basic knowledge and key skills in due time, has been developed for the first time in Latvia within the framework of the project “Development and implementation of the support programs for establishing the support system for young people under the exclusion risk”. The social exclusion risk in the context of the project means both the risks created by poverty and various other risks, which arise due to problems of behaviour regulation, insufficient interaction skills, and learning difficulties.

The support system was developed on the basis of research results (Nīmante, Daniela, Samusēviča, Moļņika, 2012; Raščevska, Raževa, Martinsone, Tūbele, Vučenlazdāns, Vazne, 2012), and has been tested in 15 local municipalities and 25 educational institutions in Latvia. It has been developed to work in two directions:

1) a program for decreasing social exclusion implemented in educational institutions ensuring versatile support to all children and young people of the educational institutions involved in the project to prevent or decrease the influence of social exclusion risks. The program consists of 6 mutually related parts – **Support of positive behaviour; *Social and emotional upbringing; *Peer learning for promoting reading literacy; *Career support activities; *Mentoring for alternative life*

*experience “Lakstīgala” (Nightingale), as well as parts for parents *Improvement of parent competence in supporting children’s education, and cooperation with the educational institution, local municipality, and state.* The program in the educational institutions minimizes factors that facilitate social exclusion risks, including learning difficulties, problems of behaviour regulation, social emotional problems, and lack of family support that result in decreasing the number of learners who do not attend school for a long period of time or drop out;

2) inter-institutional cooperation where working out and testing cooperation models for ensuring support outside school is provided for both for learners and their families, helping them reduce risks caused by socio-economics, organizing support activities for learners inside and outside school, as well as giving support to schools in implementing the program for decreasing social exclusion and working together to introduce systemic support on different levels.

Keywords: decreasing social exclusion, support system.

Introduction

The implementation of the project “Development and implementation of the support programs for establishing the support system for the young people under the exclusion risk” (Agreement Nr.2010/0328/1DP/1.2.2.4.1/10/IPIA/VIAA/002) within the framework of the European Social Fund (hereafter in the text ESF) 1.2.2.4.1 “The establishment of inclusive education and the support system for young people under the social exclusion risk, the training, supply, and increasing of the competence of needed personnel” began on January 3, 2011.

The aim of the project was to explore, model, test, and evaluate the system for decreasing and preventing the risk of social exclusion for young people aged 13 to 25 in 15 municipalities by decreasing the social exclusion risks and the number of those young people who are early dropouts, as well as to promote vocationally-oriented education and employment by strengthening the capacity of the institutions involved, developing support systems, and increasing the competence level of the personnel involved in the project.

The need of the project was determined by several aspects, the most important of which was the negative data on the increase in the number of early dropouts (Nīmante, Daniela, Tūbele, Raščevska, Kraģe, et al., 2009). Dropping out of school causes both indirect and direct social exclusion risks – young people do not acquire basic or vocational education and do not join the labor market and society as a whole.

Several studies performed in Latvia after 2000 identified these problems: Students drop out in primary school – Solutions to the problem (Bebriša, Ieviņa, Krastiņa, 2007); Students who have dropped out from primary education and its consequences (Kraitone, et al, 2006); and Students leaving primary school (Dedze, el at, 2004). Recommendations summarized in the studies urge solving the problem on all levels: educational institutions, universities, local municipalities, and state. Researchers from leading higher education institutions, cooperation partners from municipalities, and state and non-governmental organizations were invited to participate in the implementation of the project “Development and implementation of support programs for establishing support systems for young people at risk of exclusion” at the University of Latvia, in order to work together on developing a systemic approach for decreasing social exclusion in educational institutions and municipalities, which would decrease the number of early school dropouts from primary or secondary education. The article describes the system of decreasing social exclusion that has been implemented in 25 educational institutions and 15 municipalities; it provides the theoretical background and shows the implementation of the system.

Conceptual basis of the support system

As the problem of decreasing social exclusion is a complex phenomenon, its solution needs a complex and all-embracing approach. We believe that social exclusion is a socially multidimensional marginalization process that involves economic and social, as well as cultural and political aspects. It is described by the inability of individuals or groups of people to join society fully or partially because they do not have access, or access is limited to such resources, services, and activities that are vitally important for the development of a fully-fledged functioning individual in society. It is connected with insufficient social participation and social integration and the inability to participate in processes taking place in society (Nīmante, Daniela, Tūbele, Raščevska, Kraģe, et al., 2009).

The developers of the support system have based their work conceptually on the results of two studies carried out within the project. Researchers singled out four main factors that teachers mention that explain key problems students face at school and why they could drop out of school. The study “Credibility and validity of the teachers’ survey on students’ learning and behaviour” (Raščevska, Raževa, Martinsone, Tūbele, Vucenlazdāns, Vazne, 2012) reveals: 1) learning difficulties, 2)

problems connected with behaviour regulation, 3) lack of family support, and 4) social emotional problems. The results of the study confirm that there is not one single factor that negatively influences the development of problems at school; the factors are diverse and can combine. Thus, further pedagogical intervention for lessening the factors also should be diverse and combined.

As a result of the study “Description of the situation for decreasing young people’s social exclusion in municipalities: the opinion of young people, teachers, specialists of the support staff, representatives of school administration, leading specialists of the municipalities and parents” (Nīmante, Daniela, Samuseviča, Molnīka, 2012) about trends pertaining to educational institutions of Latvia, schools that have support staff functioned successfully – there was a support system for students with learning difficulties; but in schools where there were no support specialists, such systemic support for students with learning difficulties was not provided. Secondly, there is no unified system on how to promote positive behaviour at school and how to react in case of violating school rules, which included simple to complicated cases. Schools also had not developed a common support system in cases of early dropouts. Although the responsibility and competences of the municipal institutions were known, it was not always implemented according to regulations and did not serve as a support to educational institutions in solving serious cases.

When starting the project, the situation was characterized by the complexity and scale of the problem to be solved. The situation in schools in municipalities indicated the necessity for complex solutions that would influence as large a number of students as possible. The study showed it was not always possible to predict clearly the social exclusion risks. Factors that influence the formation of students’ problems at school are diverse, and they can mutually overlap and combine. Besides, the mechanism of causes of these problems is not always clear. Not only do those students, who already have difficulties at school and are under the threat of dropping out face problems, but also the actual number of students, who need support or will need it in the near future, is much larger. It is important to define the link between cause and consequences in order to solve the problems and avert the possible consequences.

Any system is a part of a much larger system within which any changes in one system causes changes in another system. This includes education. Midgley (2000) points out that one of the challenges of the 21st century is to decrease social exclusion by not only predicting what is good or bad, but what services should be accessible, what the level of life should be to ensure the basic needs, and also predict the mobility

possibilities of the system so that in cases where social exclusion arises, due to the influence of several and changeable factors, the system is able to adjust to these changeable needs (Midgley, 2000).

All systems have aims, even if the aim is self-preservation or survival. The aim is the desired state of the system in which the system is in a state of peace or balance. A system cannot function better than its weakest link; what is good for each link of the system, in turn, often is good for the whole system (O'Connor, McDermott, 1997). Each of us is in continuous interaction with the surrounding world, thus with different systems. Individuals belong to these systems and their quality influences the individual's existence, relations, emotions, thoughts, intentions, and behaviour, as well as health. Thus, the quality of systems determines the quality of the individual's life, which confirms the importance of system improvement in the development of society and in the development of each individual, especially the child/youth. This proves the necessity of improving the support system, which is important for every child or youth's acquisition of education and for ensuring the quality of life.

When working with systems, it should be taken into consideration that effect or changes have a time delay. The changes will not give immediate results, but all that we do in the present will have future consequences (O'Connor, McDermott, 1997).

Description of the support system

The support system for decreasing social exclusion includes several mutually connected elements: development and introduction of programs for decreasing social exclusion in 25 educational institutions, development and introduction of interinstitutional cooperation models in 15 municipalities, and establishment and introduction of a common e-environment in 25 educational institutions and 15 municipalities.

Program for decreasing social exclusion as part of the support system

The program was developed on the basis of the analysis of studies performed in Latvia (2004 – 2009) and the results and recommendations, summary of good practice experiences (Latvia, Norway, Lithuania, Germany), and theoretical analysis. The aim of the program is to decrease social exclusion risks (factors of negative influence) for as large a number of young people in 15 municipalities and 25 educational institutions in 5 regions of Latvia, as possible.

Midgley recommends taking into consideration a factor of decreasing social exclusion – the solution of the problems of one socially rejected group should not take place at the expense of other groups, meaning it should not create new problems of social exclusion (Midgley, 2000). This principle is integrated in the model developed in the project. The work is carried out with all students without selecting those students who are more subject to social exclusion risks by offering everyone special services or assistance. Support and assistance are given within the whole system to children, who are currently subjected to and who could be subjected to social exclusion. The objectives were to improve the quality of the functioning of school as a system, in order to ensure greater support to young people in their education and development, according to their needs, and to promote the cooperation of school and other support institutions in the municipality in decreasing the factors that facilitate social exclusion and ensuring education possibilities (including alternative).

The basis of implementing the program is the social approach or social model. This is based on the understanding that obstacles to the learning process and participation can exist in the environment, or arise as a result of interaction between students and the context – surrounding people, politics, laws, educational and other institutions, and social and economic conditions. The program includes several interventions aimed at decreasing the risks and strengthening the impact of proactive factors promoting social inclusion.

The program incorporates several interventions in different combinations that seek to decrease the impact of diverse negative factors. The primary target group of the program is students from Grades 1 to 12, including young people up to age 25.

The secondary target group is teachers, support staff and technical staff of the school, students' parents, and employees of municipal institutions. The whole school participates in the implementation of the program.

Structure of the support program for decreasing social exclusion

The program consists of 6 mutually related integrated parts:

- Support of positive behaviour (SPB);
- Social emotional upbringing (SEU);
- Peer learning for promoting reading literacy (PLPRL);
- Career support program for students at risk of social exclusion;

- Mentoring for alternative life experience: “Lakstīgala” (Nightingale);
- Improvement of parents’ competence for supporting student education; and
- Cooperation on the level of educational institution, municipality, and state (IPC).

All students from Grade 1 to Grade 12 participated in two parts of the program *Support for positive behaviour* and *Social emotional upbringing*.

The aim of SPB is to develop a common system for promoting positive behaviour at school. The aim of SEU is to facilitate the development of students’ emotional intelligence. Initially, students from Grades 5-7 were involved in PLPRL, and gradually students from other grades were included. The aim of PLPRL is to use peer learning to promote active participation of every student in the reading process and thus promote the development of reading competence.

The aim of IPC is to improve parents’ competence in supporting their children’s education, promoting positive behaviour in the family, and facilitating cooperation on the level of the educational institution, municipality, and state.

Individual young people aged 14-25 were nominated by schools to participate in the career support program for students at social exclusion risk and mentoring for the alternative life experience “Lakstīgala”. The aim of the career support program is to promote the choice of career and learning for real life on the basis of cooperation between the school, municipality, and employers. The “Lakstīgala” program offers school students cooperation with university student-mentors to acquire life skills and develop motivation to participate in school life.

Interinstitutional cooperation models as part of the support system

In order for the tasks delegated to the municipalities to be carried out in a coordinated way, the support system developed in the project envisages that the Interinstitutional cooperation model is established in the municipality for supporting children/youth subject to social exclusion. This includes the idea that municipality specialists cooperate purposefully to solve problems to prevent social exclusion in a proactive way or to seek solutions for averting already existing risks. The legal justification for establishing the cooperation unit is found in Chapter VII of the “Law on State management”, *Cooperation in state management*, which defines the

procedure for establishing, functioning and termination of the cooperation structure of the municipality and Article 61 of the “Law on municipalities”. It notes that it is possible to establish boards, commissions, or working groups for executing particular functions of the municipality or for managing administrative territories of the municipality by municipal deputies or the local inhabitants.

The system envisages that the education board, school, social services, custody court, and police participate in the cooperation model and solve problems via cooperation: Decrease systemically different social exclusion risks, including support for the improvement of the pedagogical processes of the school, taking into account different factors that influence the exclusion processes in solving problem cases. Such a cooperation model is approved as a structural unit of the municipality, which has the right to become acquainted with the information, make decisions, and develop recommendations for improving the system.

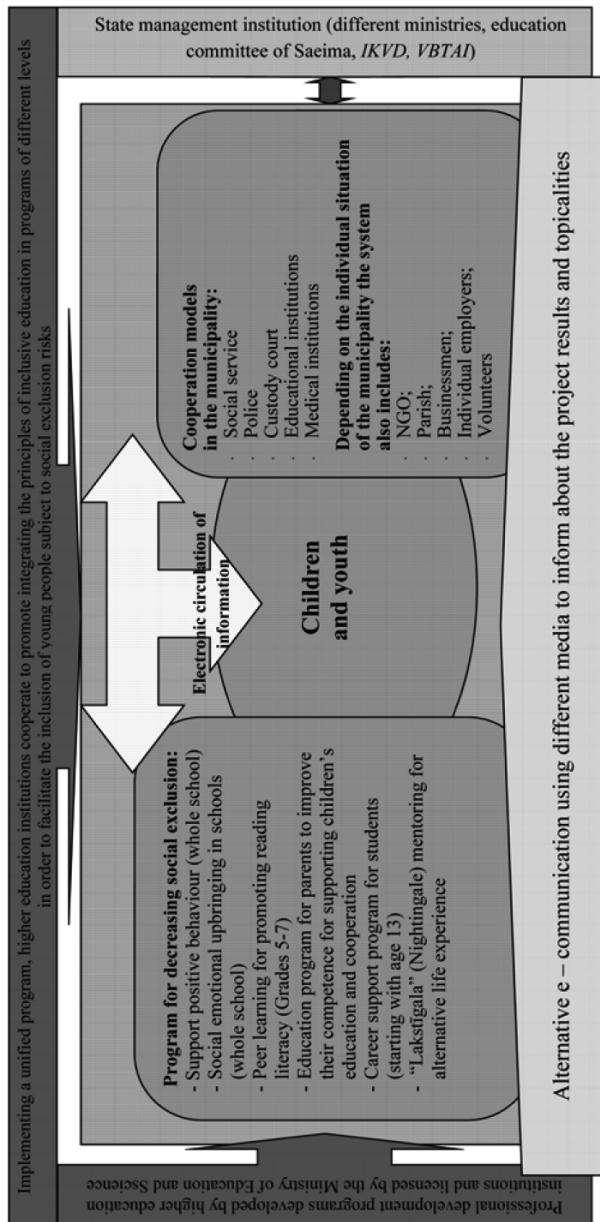
Development of a common e-system as part of the support system

The system envisages that the school uses e-journals that accumulate all records, not only about student academic achievement and absences from school, but also behaviour problems and their solutions. The municipalities participating in the project have access to an e-module, which enables exchange of information on-line, become acquainted with the information accumulated in school, and participate immediately in the solution of the problem. This speeds up the search for solutions and creates conviction in students and their families that their problems are serious and are being solved.

Introduction of the support system

The developed support system (see Fig.1) includes different components to decrease systemically the social exclusion risk by envisaging the individual risks, changing the cultural environment in the whole school, and developing support systems in municipalities. The system is based on the idea that it is forbidden to pinpoint one socially rejected group and to solve its problems at the expense of other groups. The introduction of the support system was started in February 2012 with the implementation of the preparatory stage and in practice on 1 September 2012. Many and varied components, which mutually interact and influence each other, are involved.

Figure 1. System for decreasing social exclusion risks



In order to ensure that the support system is put into practice and the aims and objectives put forward in the project are achieved, a management system for introducing the system (see Fig. 2) was developed. This ensured the introduction of the support system developed in the project in 25 educational institutions and 15 municipalities. The professional development parts of the program were carried out in the first stage; all employees of the educational institutions participated in it, learning in their own schools. Supervision was carried out during the introductory process, which ensured support to schools in the implementation of the program, gradually introducing changes at school. During the introductory process, there were consultations with the representatives of municipal institutions about the improvement of interinstitutional cooperation and the establishment of a unit for interinstitutional cooperation. Alongside the introduction of the support system, an evaluation process was organized to determine the effectiveness of the program and the attainment of the set aims and objectives.

Figure 2. Management of the system for decreasing social exclusion

