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Multilateral Intelligence Identity Choice Possibilities of Education in Latvia

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Abstract

Multilateral intelligence identity choice possibilities are the outstanding problems in education system in Latvia nowadays. This paper is based on a poster presentation and is the outcome of a collaboration project MCI (2005-2009) in which partners in Latvia together with other European cooperation partners studied the 7-step-theory in the aspect of multilateral intelligence identity choice. The theoretical basis of this European project is the “Multiple Choice Identity”, intelligence theory by Howard Gardner, which with “Five Minds for the future” open everybody’s understanding about future education. We have analyzed CiCe materials about identity and other theoretical materials, as well as undertaking both an empirical investigation and statistical data of analysis. The theoretical research empirical investigation was successively done in the primary school “Atvase”, Jurmala State gymnasium and RTTEMA during 5 years. About 1500 respondents in three different groups are involved in the project. The result is a process as discussion, changes of attitude, understanding of learning. Conclusions: Investigation encouraged free, creative thinking based on humane pedagogics, opportunity of choice in pedagogical process, flexible attitude towards different in nowadays society – in education and culture.

Key words: *Multilateral intelligence, Identity, Succession, Choice possibility.*

Introduction

During the period of 2005 to 2009, the authors of the present study took part in the Project ‘Multiple Choice Identity in Europe’ (MCI). The MCI project has identified five ‘learning routes’ (see <http://to-gather.org/page/5-routes>) which support educators in their work with children and young people of different ages and in different cultural and educational contexts. Activity focused on Learning Route 4 ‘Migration and Mobility’, Learning Route 2 ‘Family and friends’ and Route 5 ‘The Others’. This paper reports on some of the activities

The project leader Professor Wim Kratsborn presented the MCI project ideas during his visit to Latvia at the Jurmala Gymnasium, Latvia, in 2005. The project was initially established at Jurmala Gymnasium by Sandra Rone who was later joined by Anna Līduma, who implemented the project among students of a higher educational establishment (17-25 year olds) disciplines for Year 1 and Year 2 students of the Bachelor Degree programme. The project also involved the *Atvase* Primary School, Jurmala. People of different professions

assisted in the project implementation, including computer experts: high-quality music records for 2nd Route 'Family and Friends' were prepared by a musical expert of the Latvian Radio *Klasika*; and a high-quality photo show in s-Hertogenbosh on the issues of identity was created by the artist-photographer Zigurds Bilzonis.

This paper reports on some of the activities carried out as part of the project in Latvia with particular reference to activity focused on Learning Route 4 'Migration and Mobility', Learning Route 2 'Family and friends' and Route 5 'The Others'.

The Unity of Theory and Practice in Implementation of the MCI Project in Latvia

When working on the project, the authors studied the theoretical sources on citizenship and identity formation opportunities on all levels of the education system – starting from kindergartens (3-7-year-olds) to the higher educational establishments. The contents and forms of citizenship education in a multicultural society of Latvia were studied. We stated that the preschool education program was worked out pursuant to the Ministry of Education and Science Regulations regarding obligatory preschool preparation of five- and six-year-olds for school, and using CiCe guidelines (CiCe, 2004) and in view of pedagogical scientists' conclusions on the holistic approach in upbringing/education (Spona, 2001). The program aims are to promote the development of a child's balanced comprehensive (physical, psychic and social) and harmonious (intellectual, emotional and volitional) personality. The 13 subjects: speech development, environment and public life, nature, literature, mathematics, drawing, modelling, application, designing, handicraft, exercises preparing child's had for writing at school, sports and music form an integrated content, which promotes child's well-balanced development.

Pedagogical observations show that child's emotions manifest themselves through voice intonation, verbal and nonverbal communication, and body language. Children learn such notions as motherland, cultural identity, common and different Latvian and other peoples' traditions, attitude to one's native place, home, environment, labour virtues; attitude to one's body, clothes, things. Working together provides each child with an opportunity to express his/her ideas and feelings. Participation promoted by positive cooperation leads to responsibility, which manifests itself in child's active and productive everyday work. Therefore, the teacher's important task is purposeful organization of the lesson contents so that children should acquire notions about social processes, citizenship and sense of belonging to the Latvian multicultural society. Varied methods and work forms: Verbal, Visual, Game and Play, Practical and Research are used for mastering the preschool contents.

At the stage of development of a multicultural society – the aim of today's upbringing is humane personality, which is based on a freedom, independence and responsibility entity, which forms and develops through activity (Spona, 2001). The aim of upbringing is only real in case the personality understands and voluntarily accepts it. At all times, the family has been the main educator. The current economic instability and unemployment in Latvia have

lead to a situation when a child in the family feels indifference or even aggressive attitude on the part of the parents. Hence, the growing significance of the school and teachers' work forms in humane upbringing of schoolchildren aimed at promotion of humane attitudes and values. A child learns from attitudes towards him. Human behaviour manifests itself in a person's attitude to certain things, phenomena and facts (Spona, 2001). Watching how the father treats the mother in the family, the child learns how a man should treat a woman; the parent's attitude to the child determines the child's attitude towards other children. Spona believes that the content of education is realization and improvement of attitudes towards themselves, other people, work, nature, culture, state and society (Spona, 2004). Relationships are formed and consolidated as a result of interaction between activity and knowledge, choice and experience. It should be noted that one of the forms of public integration education is celebration and preparation for holidays – emotional experience, feeling of unity, which excite and unite all family members, groups or even strangers. Preparation for a holiday may be regarded as a process of mastering an integrative content of citizenship education. It manifests itself in the pupil's "independence and responsibility habits". When preparing for a holiday, each person must fulfil a concrete task, whereby he acquires the following attitudes: *Attitude to other people; Attitude to labour/work; Attitude to the culture; Attitude to the state and society; Attitude to the nature.* (Rone, Liduma 2006)

Learning Route 4 'Migration and Mobility': a student survey

To provide contextual background for the Learning Routes a survey of students was conducted into attitudes to migration and mobility as well as to 'the Other' as a related learning Route.

Our study on migration and mobility involved 613 respondents: 430 from Latvia and 183 from Lithuania. To find out the students' attitude to migration, we questioned (using questionnaires) 20 groups 359 Latvian students from Cesis, Ventspils, Daugavpils, Jekabpils, Kuldiga, Bauska and Riga, and 93 from Kaunas and 90 from Klaipeda. This has shown that Latvian students are well-disposed to their country and cultural identity. And that they thought there should be more positivism about the country in the mass media in order to promote understanding of the country so that mobility and migration would be the driving force of today's versatile society. This is viewed in the context of data that shows that the Latvian population's internal and external migration has been growing rapidly. The population's emigration from the country is promoted by: the economic crisis in the country, low wages, as well as the need for self-realization of each personality in today's versatile society. Many Latvian residents make use of the situation in a mobile way to change their lives totally – as a result, they either never return to Latvia or spend a certain span of their lives abroad. Among the emigrants are mostly people with comprehensive or vocational secondary education and go-getting middle-aged women with higher education. The motives for workforce migration: 1) the need to earn a living for oneself and one's family, to repair/buy a house/apartment, to pay tuition for oneself or one's children; to buy property or a car; to repay credit; 2) the willingness to get to know other countries, acquire new experience, master foreign languages; 3) search for social guarantees, positive attitude to a

person, protection of human rights and a normal life. Most emigrants achieve the above aims within less than a year, more rarely - 2 or 3 years. On average, most of them return to their families in 2 years to start their own business. A new wave of migration takes place at present - 2009 and 2010. Therefore, the problem of migration and mobility becomes very topical in the country.

The survey relating to 'The Other' involved 719 respondents from the three Baltic states: 101 Lithuanian, 118 Estonian respondents and 500 RTTEMA students. 7 questions of the questionnaire addressed the Baltic youth's understanding of the concept 'the Other': (Q.1), readiness to accept the Other (Q.2), unacceptable things (Q.3), willingness to change something in one's life (Q.4), attitude to the impact of the Other on their personality (Q.5) and attitude to the slogan 'Away with the Other!' Question 7 inquires comments on the Other. The obtained data showed that Latvian youth's attitude to the Other is loyal, not repulsive, since any person is 'different' in the eyes of the other people. Some of the respondents would accept 'the Other', some are neutral towards 'the Other' unless it concerns them directly or endanger their families, some 'should be ready to come across the Other', some are ready to accept but sometimes it is hard for them to get along with 'the Other'. Latvian students do not accept violence to a child, in the family, in the society and the state, as a whole. They refute treason, war, aggression, slavery, chaos, drunkards, criminals and socially dangerous persons, drug addiction, gangs, 'Satanists', sectarians. Some have objections against unisex marriages and sexual minorities. It must be noted that Latvian respondents express a positive attitude towards the Other saying that the Other makes the world richer, creates innovations both in technologies and human relations; however, they are against obtrusive imposing of a different opinion. In general, the Other makes you more disciplined and has an overall positive effect.

Learning Route 2 'Family and friends'

When preparing for the Conference 'Week of Europe' in February 2007 in Groningen, we worked with Learning Route 2 'Family and friends'. The study involved 7 full-time students of Year 1, and 8 full-time students of Year 2 and 3. Actively participating students were grateful for the self-expression opportunity and the students produced some significant presentational material. Discussion was then taken back to the RTTEMA Student Parliament. The discussions about the family covered a variety of topics: The family theme in animation; The family in music; family holidays; family's memorable days; the family theme in cinematography; human rights in my family; teachers' information about the family; conflicts; students' families; topical TV shows regarding the family. Discussion was stimulated by student presentations including, for example, shows covering such urgent problems as family violence, violence against women and children; moral terrorism in the family; the problem of alcoholism and gambling. The discussions with the students revealed some considerations, notably that it is untypical for Latvians to take their family matters into the open; with concerns that Latvian society is not ready to accommodate unconventional families regarding them as 'deviations from the norm'.

The *Family and Friends* Learning Route was especially popular among schoolchildren of adolescent age. The children reconstructed various situations in the family, in the context of generations. The theme of one's family and friends is especially topical for adolescents, therefore, the theatre circle's performance showed a typical Latvian family of three generations still sharing the same household. The schoolchildren showed a special interest to the family-tree.

Learning Route 5 'The Other'

On 6 November 2008 the Project leader Wim Kratsborn visited Latvia and the Jurmala State Gymnasium and the *Atvase* Primary School, where he familiarized himself with the schoolchildren's Drama circle, Culinary Circle and Psychological circle, and at RPIVA he met full-time students, masters and teachers. By a carefully prepared Spanish, Jewish and Irish dancing performance, Year 1 students of Dancing and Rhythm expressed their attitude to the Other: other national cultures. A music group of Year 1 students elastically and creatively presented Latgalian, Russian and English songs. Talking at the seminars, the students confessed that they had to work hard to prepare the performance but it was worthwhile doing since they had never before thought about the concept 'the Other'. The event closed with a tradition of Latvian hospitality – a loaf shaped in the form of MCI 2008!

At the *Atvase* Primary School, Jurmala, a group of seven- to eleven-year-olds is engaged in the project. The school has been involved in the project for the fifth year already, so those children, who started as first-formers, now learn in the fifth form. Our school decided to include many-sided identity formation into the theatre activities. One of the brightest moments of the project was the theatre's performance, which covered all the five topics of the project and was called '*Mu Story*'. *Mu* is a small flower, which is also the project's symbol and the children's confidant. Each participant of the project in all the member-states is familiar with this character and its story, which is very helpful for the participants to understand the project topics better, since they do it in the form of a fairy-tale and play. By paying with *Mu*, it was much easier to communicate with children since for them telling one's story to the little flower was like telling it to a friend who would always listen to them with joy. Sometimes the children were so carried away by playing with *Mu* that afterwards *Mu* was in need of mending! In general, the project covered a wide range of activities: the children made a performance, played in several sketches, designed posters, collected information, made presentations and publicize it in various European countries and learn their own cultures and family traditions better.

Conclusions

It is only for the last two decades in our society that a person has been able to develop into a humane personality and freely express his/her opinion of 'the Other' and of family life which may be that might deviate from a stereotypical norm. So today we may say in public and at school that a successful education process can only take place wherever a self-developing and self-regulating personality actively participates in his/her development process. Co-

thinking and co-working promote each person's self-regulation attitude change. In the 21st century people need purposeful self-improvement activity from an early childhood. We must be more responsive to people with special needs. Raising the issue of the Other is essential for socialization in the society. It allows conclude that Latvian young people are tolerant and open to change and novelties.

Latvian youths think of the country's future. One's family, friends and kids are important to them. Also important are values and culture in communication and cooperation. The MCI project implementation in Latvia involved many people directly and still many indirectly, which means that the project encourages people to be creative, proactive and mobile. In the course of the project implementation, it was concluded that the Latvian education system needs change to meet today's requirements of a dynamic society.

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