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CiCe
Institute for Policy Studies in Education
London Metropolitan University
166 – 220 Holloway Road
London N7 8DB
UK

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An innovative humanistic approach to analysing students' perceptions of the lesson

*Sandra Rone and Māra Vidnere
Riga Teacher Training and Educational Management Academy (Latvia)*

Abstract

A changing paradigm of education in Latvia shows shift from transmission-based pedagogies to one that understands education as problem-centred in which pupil-teacher/teacher-pupil relations are central. This humanitarian approach with focus on the individual as a personality necessitates that the role of the teacher is not merely to transmit knowledge but rather to try to form their students as free, independent and responsible personalities. This research has focus on student perceptions of lesson content in order to identify opportunities to improve teacher performance. Research was carried out with 307 students from 4 gymnasiums where the primary study languages were Latvian and Russian. Analysis presented in this paper focuses on differences between gnostic, emotional and behavioural components towards students' preferred subjects and the thematic content of lessons.

Keywords: *student perception of the lesson, modern student, humanistic education.*

Introduction

A changing paradigm of education in Latvia shows shift from transmission-based pedagogies to one that understands education as problem-centred in which pupil-teacher/teacher-pupil relations are central. This humanitarian approach with focus on the individual as a personality necessitates that the role of the teacher is not merely to transmit knowledge but rather to try to form their students as free, independent and responsible personalities. Moreover, principles of democracy mean that purposeful cooperation between students and educators during the educational process is based on mutual respect.

Human pedagogics encourages students to reflect. Reflection correlates with introspection. Introspection is the way of looking inside oneself, linking external effects with inner systems of meaning. Therefore the notions about personality within humanistic psychology (Rogers, 1980; Maslow, 1954; Olport, 1986; and others) are inseparable from notions of human pedagogics which emphasise inner conditions of personality, ways of perception which are connected with the image of 'I', needs, motivations, characteristic features of the individual as a whole.

It is Roger's (1980) notion that 'everyone has the need to retain, to defend and improve... [one's]... own conception of "I" and it relies on the power of renewable, incentive, motivating effect of self-realization'. Olport (1986) asserts that a precise definition of 'the concept of personality' is impossible, theorising that personality is in entirety; that it is a unitary system; dynamic; determined by inner strength; that

personality is unique; and, personal internal processes determine or affect external behaviour.

Internal processes include reflexes, skills, abilities, beliefs, intentions, orientations, values, ideals, features. The essence of personality – the substance is the self, it is the only criterion for our identity and existence and this manifests as a sense of self. The development of personality is the development of self basically. Sense of personality evolves: physically; in a continuous and uniformed self-perception; with self-esteem expanding from oneself to others. Olport's notion of self-expanding is used by the authors in their research, linking it with socialisation. Self-expanding takes place from his ego to the others in the process of socialisation – 'we develop the attitude of solidarity or belonging to these groups and individuals, based on moral principles and ideals' (Karpova, 1998). The 'self' is in the centre of this model - the schema which affects and determines manifestation of personality. Personality traits are closely associated with particular emotions of the personality - cognitive processes; will; motivation; goals. They, in their turn, appear in behaviour, communication, action. The external environment is the possibility of self-expanding of the personality as well as it is its possible condition and determinant that may or not promote personal sense of self.

The external environment has a significant impact on the internal processes of personality. Humanistic pedagogy emphasises an approach 'from personalization to socialization', where 'I' is in the center. The central element of the structure of human personality is activity – this core develops only in the interaction with the culture, people, education, learning environment. The base of human personality is its path of development from consciousness of 'I' to the process of socialisation: to identified and accepted values; to the other personality; to the development of abilities to assume responsibility; to the ability to take decisions independently and to disclose them in work; to critical perception of oneself and the world; to acquiring and acceptance of the values developed by humanity by oneself - as an internal standard. So, the development of human personality is derived from the development of consciousness of 'I' or the acceptance of the values of personalisation to acculturation, socialisation within oneself.

Orientation in values of different cultures differs, so tolerance is essential and necessary for reinvigorating humanism in a definite cultural background. Cultural pluralism gives the opportunity to identify oneself and to adopt others adequately. The school's mission is to fulfil the study and educational content with the sense, for the personality to form a conscious meaningful opinion about the situation of the cultural heritage today when we are in the European Union which has lasting values and traditions of democracy. Culturalisation is interacting with socialisation and personalisation. Personality develops within a definite cultural environment.

A number of pieces of research have used different methodological approaches to identify teachers' knowledge and skills needed to succeed in a classroom (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Murnan et al., 1991; Shields et al, 2001; Ferrell, 1992; Wright et al, 1997). Educational researchers (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Murnanee et al, 1991; Kanstoroom & Finn, 1999), analysing teachers' mastery in definite subjects, stresses the fact that the necessary teaching experience is classified not only as knowledge of content, but pedagogical knowledge as well (Shulman, 1987). Many authors, analysing

the quality of teaching definite subjects, stress the idea that low-performing schools in comparison with high-performing schools must provide knowledge with a big content (Finn, 1999; Hirsch, 1996; Kanstoroom, 1999; Kramer, 1991; Ravitch, 2000). However, it is concluded in the researches, that it remains unclear whether the greater threat to the quality of teaching process in schools is the lack of knowledge of content or insufficient pedagogical knowledge.

Teacher's performance is evaluated by efficiency. One approach is to concentrate on the results of pupils' test as the key indicator of the performance of teachers (Kanstoroom & Finn, 1999; Finn, 1999b). The other, analyses the inadequate pedagogical knowledge, identifying the causes of low efficiency of teacher's job. Researchers emphasise that the primary cause of low efficiency is a lack of pedagogical knowledge (Finn, 1999; Gross, 1999; Hess & Finn, 2004; Hirsch, 1996; Kanstoroom & Finn, 1999; Kramer, 1991; Ravitch, 2000; Sykes, 1995). However, test results are dependent on many factors, not only on teachers' professional quality. For example, the pupils' socio-economic benefits, the amount of school resources, parent's support to education, size of class, size of school and teachers' classroom tasks (Biddle & Berliner, 2002a, 2002b; Darling-Hammond, 1986; Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000; Berliner, 1994; Kelly, 2004), however, it is not the only gauge for the assessment of the performance of the teachers. The authors indicate five factors overall that determine the quality of the teachers' work with respect to lessons: 1) knowledge of content; 2) lesson planning skills; 3) lesson implementing skills; 4) ability to create communicative relationships with the students, as well as; 5) lesson leadership skills. The first of these five factors are classified as knowledge of content, the other four factors are classified as a pedagogical knowledge. These factors are emphasised as the components of the teachers' work efficiency at the lesson. The results of the research prove that a lack of knowledge of content is less problematic than pedagogical knowledge gaps (Berg, 2003; Berliner, 1992, 1994; Darling-Hammond et al, 1999; Gellman & Berkowitz, 1992; Hunter, 1994; Perot, 1991; Searl & Kudek, 1987; Shulman, 1987; Steev & Brown, 2000; Stone, 2002; Wilkerson et al, 2000). Finally, it was noted that the knowledge of content and pedagogical knowledge refer to different stages in the process of teaching of students, and further on students' assessment of the teachers' performance analysis should be carried out.

In assessing students' academic tasks and quality of the lesson, significant importance is given to the students' academic behaviour (Dunlap & Kern, 1996). For example, it is important how students participate in the activities in one of the ways of the academic behaviour: academic behaviour, passive not academic behaviour or socially inappropriate behaviour (Lentz, 1988; Winet & Winkler, 1972). Assessment of students' academic work is connected with improved students' academic behaviour (Dunlap et al, 1993; Kern et al, 1994; Mac Office et al, 1990; Martens & Hawke, 1989; Martens et al, 1992; Neef et al, 1993; Neef et al, 1992; Neef et al, 1994), but educational researchers should continue to conduct researches of students' choices and procedures intended to make academic tasks more affordable for them, without reducing the content of the educational course (Turkish & Elliott, 1986). Research also proves that these procedures have the potential to reduce or enhance the learning and behavioural problems (Dunlap & Kern, 1996).

Assessment of the work of teachers is also characterised as subjective, so the best way to get the assessment of the teachers' work is from the first side: knowledge about the teachers' work with the students, lesson observation and assessment of the teacher in the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Snyder, 2000). Thus, analysis of student perception components is made in our research, using assessment methodology of students' lesson perception.

Material and methods

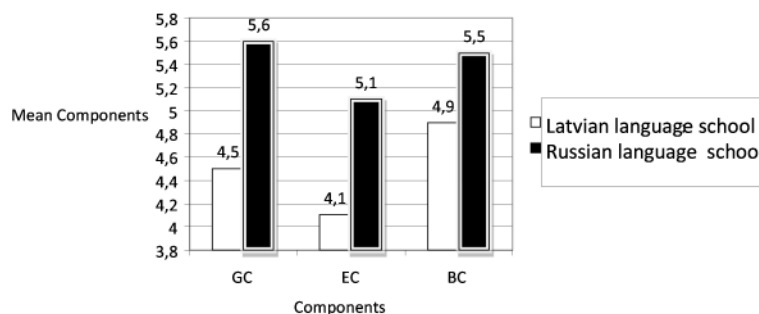
Quantitative methods: the questionnaires are developed and adapted - the questionnaire 'Student-teacher' (my favourite subject), questionnaire (adapted in Latvian by M. Vidnere, 2007). Methods of static analysis: taking data to stan scale; distribution by stan high, medium and low indexes.

Research Base: 307 students from four Latvian and Russian language gymnasiums were involved in the study.

Results

The differences of gnostic, emotional, and behavioural components of the attitude of student to his favourite school subject were researched. Questionnaire was completed by 307 students: 148 (48.2%), (studying in high school or gymnasium with the Latvian language, and 159 (51.8%) – with Russian language. Three components of the whole group of the pupils' perceptual evaluation of the lessons were found using methodology 'Student-teacher': GC-gnostic component; EC – emotional component; BC-the behaviour component. Statistically significant result (0.002): emotional component was less expressed throughout total selection, gnostic and behavioural components are approximately equal.

Figure 1. The average index in Latvian school



Behavioural component is more distinct in Latvian schools, the role of gnostic and emotional components are approximately equal (see Figure1).The result is statistically

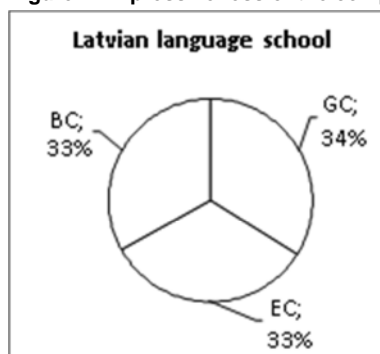
significant (0.001) the emotional component is more expressed in Russian schools, gnostic and behavioural components are approximately equal (see table1). Statistically significant result (0.01):

Table 1. Three components of perceptual evaluations of the lessons by the student hours for (GK-gnostic component; EC – emotional component; BC-behavioural component)

The language of school	Point amount				Point amount, %			
	GC	EC	BC	Total	GC%	EC,%	BC,%	Total
Latvian	818	796	809	2423	33,76	32,85	33,39	100.00
Russian	876	919	907	2702	32,42	34,01	33,57	100.00
Total	1694	1715	1716	5125	33,05	33,46	33,48	100.00

Comparative chart in percentage terms shows the high gnostic (GC), emotional (EC) and the behavioural component indicators (BC) which are similar in Latvian and Russian schools. *The behavioural* component is more expressed in Russian schools (0.01). Emotional component is less expressed in Latvian schools.

Figure 1. Expressiveness of the components



Behavioural component (0.01) is mainly observed in Latvian schools.

Behavioural component (0.01) is mainly observed in Russian schools as well.

Gnostic component is more expressed in Russian schools (0.01).

Emotional component is more expressed in Russian schools (0.01).

Figure 2. The Expressiveness of the components



Behavioural component is more expressed in Russian schools (0.01).

Comparative chart in percentage terms shows the high gnostic (GC), emotional (EC) and the behavioural component indicators (BC) in Latvian and Russian school.

The percentage differences of absolute frequency level (a) and relative frequency level (b) of gnostic components of the students in Latvian and Russian schools (see fig 3 and 4).

The emotional component. The percentage differences of absolute frequency level (a) and relative frequency level (b) of the students' in Latvian and Russian schools

Figure 5. High, medium and low indicators of the emotional component of students of Latvian schools

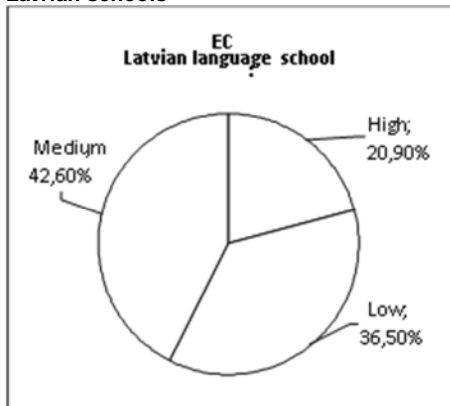
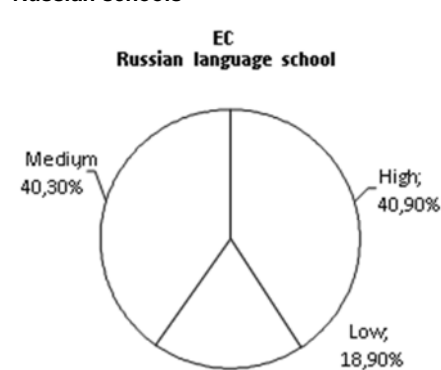


Figure 6. High, medium and low indicators of the emotional component of students in Russian schools



Figures 5 and 6 show division of students' emotional component levels in Latvian and Russian schools (a-, b-, percentage of absolute frequency and relative frequency percentage).

The behavioural component. The percentage differences of absolute frequency (a) relative frequency (b) levels of the students of Latvian and Russian schools.

Figure 7. High, medium and low indicators of the behavioural component of students of Latvian schools

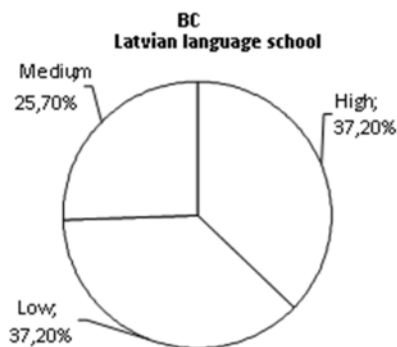
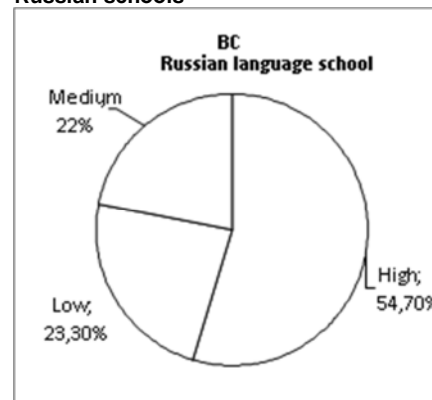


Figure 8. High, medium and low indicators of the behavioural component of students in Russian schools



Figures 7 and 8 show division of students' behavioural component levels in Latvian and Russian schools (a-, b-, absolute frequency and relative frequency percentage).

Conclusions

1. In terms of percentage, the number of the students with low *gnostic component* in Latvian schools exceed the level of that percentage of the Russian school students' (0.01) statistically significantly.

In terms of percentage, the number of the students with medium *gnostic component* in Latvian schools does not differ from the level of that percentage of the Russian school students' statistically significantly.

In terms of percentage, the number of the students with high *gnostic component* in Latvian schools is lower statistically significantly than the level of percentage of the Russian school students' (0.01).

2. The percentage structure of groups of students with low, medium and high *gnostic component indicators* differ from each other among the students of the schools with Latvian language (0.01) significantly. The low percentage indicator is the highest, followed by the medium and the high percentage indicator is the smallest.

Among the students from the schools with Russian language the average percentage of medium indicators of *gnostic component* exceeds the percentage of the students with low indicators (0.01) statistically significantly. Percentage of students with high indicators of *gnostic of component* exceeds the percentage of pupils with low indicators (0.05) statistically significantly. Percentage of the students with high and medium level indicators do not differ significantly.

3. In terms of percentage, the number of the students with low emotional component in Latvian schools exceeds the level of that percentage of the Russian school students' (0.01) statistically significantly.

In terms of percentage, the number of the students with medium emotional component in Latvian schools does not differ from that percentage of the students' of Russian school statistically significantly (0.01).

In terms of percentage, the number of the students with high emotional component in Latvian schools is lower than percentage of the students ' of Russian school (0.01) statistically significantly.

4. The percentage structure of groups of students with low, medium and high *emotional component indicators* differ from each other among the students from the schools with Latvian language (0.01) statistically significantly. The low percentage indicator exceeds high percentage indicator (0.01) statistically significantly. The medium percentage indicator exceeds high percentage indicator (0.01) statistically significantly.

Among the students from the schools with Russian language the percentage of medium and high indicators of *emotional component* does not differ statistically significantly. These both indicators exceed the percentage of the students with low indicators (0.01) statistically significantly.

5. In terms of percentage, the number of the students with low level of behavioural component exceeds the level of that percentage of the Russian school students' (0.01) statistically significantly.

In terms of percentage, the number of the students with medium behavioural component in Latvian schools does not differ from that percentage of the students' of Russian schools (0.01) statistically significantly.

In terms of percentage, the number of the students with high behavioural component in Latvian schools is lower than percentage of the students' of Russian school (0.01) statistically significantly.

6. The statistical difference is not significant of the percentage structure of groups of students with low and medium *behavioural component indicators* among the students from the schools with Latvian language. Average percentage indicator is lower than high percentage indicator (0.05) statistically significantly.

Among the students from the schools with Russian language the percentage of medium and low indicators do not differ statistically significantly. These both indicators exceed the percentage of the students with high indicators (0.01) statistically significantly.

7. *The level of gnostic component* of the students' of Russian schools is higher than that of students from the schools with Latvian language (0.001).
8. *The level of emotional component* of the students' of Russian schools is higher than of the students from the schools with Latvian language (0.001).
9. *The level of behavioural component* of the students' of Russian schools is higher than of the students from the schools with Latvian language (0.001).
10. The behavioural component is mainly observed in Latvian schools (0.01).

The *behavioural* component is mainly observed in Russian schools as well (0.01).

11. *The level of gnostic component* of the students' of Russian schools is higher than that of students from the schools with Latvian language (0.001).
12. The *behavioural* component is mainly observed in Latvian schools (0.01).

The *behavioural* component is mainly observed in Russian schools as well (0.01).

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