

EXPERIENCE OF THE INTEREST EDUCATION IN DEVELOPMENT OF A SOCIALLY ACTIVE PERSON IN LIEPAJAS CHILDREN AND YOUTH CENTRE (LATVIA)

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Abstract

Interest education in Latvia is an essential component of the education system. Formal education is related with school activities, while implementation of interest educational is more flexible. Interest education content has a more practical nature therefore developing specific skills that influence forming of the individual's attitudes. The development of interests has a complex and diverse nature and it is an important aspect of personal development. This establishes a special focus on pupil's education, development and improvement, as each country's future is based on children and youth. At the same time, it can be noted that the opportunities of interest education for personal development has not been properly evaluated. The paper deals with the opportunities of interest education centres in providing self-implementation possibilities in the context of the development of a socially active individual. Practical research was carried out on the basis of Liepaja Children and Youth Centre's experience. In order to identify the thematic planning of the centre and its compliance with socially active personality. Involving the students in interest education, it is possible to increase pupils' activity and involvement in social processes of city, county and state significance.

Keywords: Interest education, interest, interest education pedagogue

Introduction

Description of the problem

Education has three main tasks: the individual – to develop each individual's talents and abilities; the cultural - to deepen understanding of the world; the economic - to teach the skills necessary for individuals to be able to support themselves and become economically productive (Robinsons, 2013). Implementation of these education tasks in mutual interaction is an important aspect to help pupils integrate into the challenges posed by the 21st century. Extracurricular education or interest education plays essential role in the education system in Latvia as well as in Europe.

National documents, guidelines, standards, programmes mostly emphasise activities in formal education institutions. However it should be noted that the formal education often does not comply with the interests, needs and wishes of pupils. Formal education is related with school activities, while implementation of interest educational is more flexible and at the same time consistent with a planned structure.

Interest education includes education and upbringing activities where wishes and needs of the involved participants are of great importance. Interest education content has a more practical nature therefore developing specific skills that influence forming of the individual's attitudes. Interest education and upbringing is aimed at providing children and young people with civic and value education and development of patriotic awareness, implementation of individual needs and desires of their personal development and career growth, thoughtful spending of leisure time expanding the provision and availability of interest education. It also marks the need for a purposeful course of action to improve personal development, identify new opportunities for the implementation of interest education.

Research object:the process of implementing interest education.Research subject: Opportunities of interest education centres in providing self-implementation possibilities in the context of the development of a socially active individual.Research aim:Based on theoretical analysis of the literature and the performed research to explore and evaluate opportunities of interest education in providing self-implementation possibilities for a socially active individual. Research methods:Theoretic research methods – analysis of the theoretical literature in pedagogy, psychology and sources (documents).Empirical research methods – free association method, observation.

Implementation of interest education in the 21st century Characteristics of interest education influenced by the society globalisation

First, Interest education is explained in the Education Law (Izglītības Likums, 2013) as implementation of an individual's personal education needs and wishes regardless of age and acquired education. Taking into account the fact that education has a social nature human personality fully develops if the personal independence is being integrated with taking care of others thus discovering others based on a moral vision of the world.

Social orientation makes the interest education to raise questions about the building of mutual relationships globally, in the country, counties, cities and parishes, creating the desire and the will to engage in public life and to be able to do that as implementation of the most important issue of the democracy along with the development of a sense of responsibility. The above list of problem tasks confirms the urgency and options of interest education's implementation in order to develop students' abilities and interests in line with the active experience in addition to formal education.

Education in its broadest sense has been described as the key to learning and understanding how to cope with these challenges of life. Active citizenship focuses on the question: how people participate in all social and economic spheres of life, and whether they feel they belong to their living environment (Eiropas komisijas...,2000).

Council of European Commission evaluating Youth policy in Latvia in 2008 pointed out that Latvia has a long and successful tradition of extracurricular education, which is called interest or hobby education by offering free and cheap schools, leisure and summer activities for children and young people aged 3 to 25. At the same time that some of the lessons seemed to the Commission like rather old-fashioned afternoon schooling in needlework and handicraft for children and they recommended that teachers, who work in the interest education, modernize the offer and not only renew the teaching and monitoring methodology, but also diversify the offer (Eiropas Padomes...,2008).

Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council on the broader role of education stressed that education plays a key role in the preservation of the general cultural background and its restoration in the community, as well as acquiring such essential social and civic features as citizenship, equality, tolerance and respect, especially at a time when there is a need to address issues of how to deal with increasing social and cultural diversity. Moreover, enabling people to enter and stay in working life is an important aspect of the role of education in strengthening social cohesion (Eiropas Padomes...,2006)

In this context, an important issue for pupils' interest education is how to implement the interest education closely linking it to employment policy, social policy, cultural policy, innovation policy and other policies influencing young people and collaborating with social partners and other stakeholders on the basis of social and civic relationships.

Council Resolution of 27 November 2009 on a renewed framework for European cooperation in the youth field (2010-2018) one of the objectives put forward was - to support young people's creativity and capacity for innovation, from early childhood improving better quality access and participation in culture and expression, thereby supporting the development of individuals, greater ability to learn, sense of awareness of different cultures, understanding cultural diversity and respect for it, as well as to develop new and flexible skills for future employment opportunities, providing access to environments where young people can develop their creativity and interests and meaningfully spend their free time (Jaunatnes politikas...,2009).

Development of interest education in Latvia

To ensure the inclusion of individuals in the trends set by the epoch, Latvian Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 (2010) highlights four important future directions: promotion of creativity, understanding of the principle of tolerance, thus being open and respecting other cultures and lifestyles, the implementation of cooperation between various institutions, non-governmental organizations jointly addressing problem tasks and participation (Latvijas ilgtspējīgas...,2010). It is emphasized that the quality of education, the availability and content of education at all levels and ages - from pre-school to adult education - is Latvia's opportunity for development and the precondition of increasing the value of human capital.

Technological competence is becoming increasingly important and thus openness to international and intercultural cooperation. Therefore it is considered an important aspect to direct educational institution work as an integral part of society and a positive agent of change, rather than an isolated entity acting in isolation from the surrounding environment (Latvijas ilgtspējīgas...,2010).

Also, the Youth Policy Guidelines for 2009 - 2018 sets the target to improve young people's - aged 13 to 25 years - quality of life by fostering their initiatives, participation in decision-making and public life (Jaunatnes politikas...,2009).

The National Development Plan 2014 - 2020 (Latvijas Nacionālais...,2014) states that all pupils by 2020 should have access to such activities outside formal education, which extend the experience, create opportunities to discover and develop their talents. Thus envisaging to cut

down the rate of students with little basic competences, while increasing the number of pupils who demonstrate the highest level of competence. The implementation of such tasks would affect the strengthening and development of interest education.

Currently Latvian government has approved the Guidelines for the Development of Education 2014 - 2020 (Izglītības attīstības...,2014) an important education policy planning document for the next seven years, which sets out key principles, objectives and directions of action of the education development policy. Promotion of an individual's professional and social skills' development for life and competitiveness in the work environment has been set as an important goal. Implementation of this objective advances expansion of interest education opportunities for pupils (Izglītības attīstības...,2014).

Since the interest education is not implemented in isolation from other developments, it is closely linked to general education, teaching and upbringing process as a whole, schools, different centres, and family cooperation. During the period from 2014 to 2020, Latvia has set a number of directions in this area: to ensure the development of the content of interest education programmes and implementation of new diverse programmes; to increase the role of interest education; to create a single database of interest education programmes; to explore the field of interest education and to increase the capacity of the interest education in sustainable development (Izglītības attīstības, 2014). This establishes a special focus on pupil's education, development and improvement, as each country's future is based on children and youth.

Formation of interests in personality development

Interest in psychology is seen as a conscious personality tendency to direct attention, thoughts and actions to emotionally appealing objects (Vorobjovs, 1996). A person often has a versatile range of interests, they often intertwine, provide individual's necessities, desires, passions, thus ensuring the physical existence, spiritual growth and place in the society (Pedagoģijas terminu..., 2000). Interest in specific areas is a highly individual process, which is closely related to everyone's uniqueness and originality. This indicates that the development of interests has a complex and diverse nature and it is an important aspect of personal development.

Pedagogue V. Zelmenis believes that needs and interests are the basis of the individual's value orientation in line with his or her life goals and motives. The author's findings suggest that encouraging the needs and interests and the progress of development can determine priorities and attitudes in line with the society requirements (Zelmenis, 2000).

The overall conclusion is that the interest may arise and display only in spiritual or physical activity, along with an active attitude towards the area of interest. In the process of implementing interests a person is filled with pleasant emotions, willingness to work and gradually moves to higher success. Stable interest, in the view of the psychologist A. Vorobyov, is always based on a positive emotional state which is formed by the process of satisfying major individual's needs (Vorobjovs, 1996). Observation suggests that persistent interest for any area cannot be built by the influence of negative emotions. As additional education interest education provides students with: a useful and meaningful leisure time; creative self-expression, development of talents, self-development; socialization (acquisition of a variety of life skills, prevention of anti-social behaviour, reducing social exclusion); acquisition of first professional skills, career planning; supplementing the acquired knowledge and skills in formal education (Aukšmuksta, 2011).

It should be noted that there are pupils who are not yet convinced of their own interests and who should be provided support in creating their interests. Principles developed by pedagogues Lascenko A. and L. Druzika can be considered the basis of the interest education implementation based on humane pedagogy cognitions, choosing general human values as the priority, through active and positive collaboration with others, creating an ethical interaction, integrating the world's cultural heritage and spiritual values (Druzika&I.ščenko, 2004).

Human interests often change at the same time it should be noted that interests chosen in childhood, adolescence and youth often are present throughout the life.

Several benefits of extracurricular activities may be noted to help pupils develop their talents and skills to maintain health, build confidence, integrate into public life processes and build life skills. Historian V. Clinebell studies demonstrate that by engaging in extracurricular activities students fill their free time not so much by watching television or playing videogames, but rather by a meaningful activity. Thus, interest education has the opportunity to change and make their lives better, as well as to provide support for thorough development (Clinebell, 2012). A. Aukšmuksta refers to three major benefits of interest education in the personal development - formation of self-confidence, social skills, information and knowledge acquisition (Aukšmuksta, 2011).

Characteristic of the interest education pedagogue's activity

Pupil and teacher relationship is the most important aspect in the implementation process of interest education. Teachers in communication with students tend to develop their personality, emphasizing confidence in

their own abilities in areas of their interest, facilitating making judgments, independence and responsibility.

According to the pedagogue S. Amonasvili the teacher must be able to wrangle, rejoice, and delight together with students. Moreover, for the pupils to be able to reason bravely, for independence to develop as the characteristic of the personality, for participation joy to trigger, it is necessary to create an opportunity for pupils to feel like leaders (Amonašvili, 1988). Teacher's operational efficiency is characterized by a wide range of teaching skills, empathy, patience and humility. Teachers' abilities and emotions are in close correlations with students' capacities, opportunities and emotions, while their balance could lead to a true spiritual community in the teaching process. As an essential element of humane pedagogy is the teacher's ability to engage students in their own personal development and to be on an equal footing.

Analysis of core competencies of interest education teachers reveals that the teacher must be a multi-dimensional personality, with broad vision and understanding of the pupils interests and with the ability to change with the time. This approach can increase acknowledgement of pupil's interests and active participation in public life processes. Pedagogue V. Zelmenis stresses that creation of students' attitudes and personality is a wide range teaching task that cannot be implemented only in the education process (Zelmenis, 2000).

Pedagogue V. Sibajev rightly points out that formation of the future society depends from the interest education teacher's personality, professionalism, knowledge, understanding of values, and the ability to change focusing on development. The pedagogue indicates that a teacher's success is not only based on the knowledge and ability to innovate, but also on the ability to have the courage in the context of the changing education and to continuously develop. Referring to the pedagogue V. Sibajev cognitions, teacher personality characteristics and professional competence, intertwining theoretical and practical activities, are the most important aspects to be able to purposefully implement the guidelines established in interest education (Šibajevs, 2002).

Pedagogue V. Zelmenis emphasizes that the formation of attitudes and positions is a broad pedagogical task and that it is impossible to implement it only in the teaching process (Zelmenis, 2000). While implementing interest education, pedagogues can use a variety of forms of work in their professional activities. A. Aukšmuksta points out such forms of work as individual work, work in hobby groups and teams, creative workshops, hobby clubs, camps, leisure rooms, play rooms, common events, involvement in different projects (Aukšmuksta, 2011).

Table (1): Description of forms of work in interest education in the point of view of individual pedagogues

A.Auksmuksta (2011)	V. Zelmenis (2000)	Cognitions
Individual work	Individual classes	Pupils prepare for contests or competitions, development of everyone's abilities is being fostered (Zelmenis, 2000).
Work in hobby groups	Work in hobby groups (for example, drama or literature hobby groups, photography hobby groups, visual and applied art studios) Practical hobby groups	Involvement of pupils in hobby groups in accordance with their abilities and interests (Zelmenis, 2000). Obtaining the necessary skills for life (Zelmenis, 2000).
Work in teams	Teams of artistic and sports amateurs: youth choirs; orchestras; theatre groups; dance groups	Involvement of pupils in hobby groups in accordance with their abilities and interests, contributes to the aesthetic needs and interests, develops creative abilities, develops specific skills (Zelmenis, 2000).
Creative workshops		
Interest clubs	Hobby groups of teaching subjects or science	Pupils broaden and deepen their knowledge in selected directions (Zelmenis, 2000).
Camps		
Leisure rooms		
Play rooms		
Events	Calendar events Mass events Education institution's events Sports competitions	For example, Christmas and New Year events induce strong emotional experience in pupils (Zelmenis, 2000). These events are related to national holidays/events, celebration, entertainment and sports competitions. Celebration of national events contributes to patriotic education of pupils (Zelmenis, 2000). For example, 1st September, Teacher's Day. A successfully organized festival promotes team-building and the formation of pupils' friendship (Zelmenis, 2000). Good organization of a competition may develop into a beautiful celebration by actively participating and providing emotional experiences of successes and failures (Zelmenis, 2000).
Projects	Cultural attendance of common events	Attendance of exhibitions and concerts, going on excursions contributes to aesthetic education of pupils, promotes positive international cooperation (Zelmenis, 2000).

Research of forms of work confirms a variety of options in interest education. As a result, interest education teacher works with pupils both

individually and in organizing group work, engaging in camp work and different projects.

Practical research of Liepaja children and youth centre (Latvia) activities in the development of a personality

Practical research was carried out on the basis of Liepaja Children and Youth Centre's (Latvia) experience. Liepaja Children and Youth centre (LCYC) is a public organization that organizes educational and cultural activities in Liepaja and Liepaja region. LCYC offer to schoolchildren and youngsters to spend their free time and develop their skills in arts, music, dances, technologies in hobby groups and youth clubs, to take part in different exhibitions, shows, intellectual games, summer camps, youth exchanges. LCYC cooperate with State education centre, Liepaja Educational board, Culture department, non governmental organizations and European youth exchange network "Platformnet", "Drums for peace". LCYC organize festivals, shows, exhibitions, camps, seminars and conferences for youngsters, hobby group organizers, class teachers (Liepājas Bērnu..., 2014).

In order to identify the main thematic planning of the centre and its compliance with socially active personality development research and analysis has been carried out, covering the period from 2012 – 2014 (partly – 2015). The research aim was to find out the interest education centre's thematic offer for personality development and its compliance with cognitions of the theory.

Table (2): Description of the main activities in the implementation process of interest education in Liepaja Children and Youth centre

Work forms and activities	Thematic planning
Mass events (celebration of national events)	18 November - the Latvian Independence day. Latvian state importance day is respected. An event "My Latvia" was organized as part of the city erudition competition "Sharp mind battle" supplemented by creative workshops (2012); A concert "Let's be together at Latvia's birthday" (2013); Liepajas children and youth exhibition of drawings "My Latvia" was organised (2013, 2014); Erudition competition "Sharp mind battle" about Latvia (2014); Creative workshop "My cake for my Latvia" (2014); Grand concert "Sounds articles" at Latvia's birthday" (2014); "Lāčplēša Day" torch procession in Liepaja (2012.,2013.,2014); Check's show of the repertoire: In the way to XI Latvian School Youth Song and Dance Festival (2014)
Activities devoted to Liepaja City birthday	Environmental cognitive game contest "Get to know the environment" (2013); Musical show "Rosy flower" by Children and Youth Centre groups for Liepaja birthday (2013); City erudition competition "Sharp mind battle" on the topic "My Liepaja" (2013, 2014); Drawing contest devoted to Liepaja birthday (2013, 2014, 2015);

	Creative workshops: Liepaja - 390 "Every bird in Liepaja need his house" (2015)
Projects	Exhibition organized as part of the education project "Patterns in the dowry": colourful handloom shawls (2013); LCYC pupil exhibition and part of the project "Where the sun decorates itself" dedicated to 95 years of Latvia, series "My Latvia 95": performances and theatrical speech contest "Take a deep breath of your Latvia" (2013); Fashion Day "Colour explosion" (2014., 2015)
Cultural attendance of common events	Baltic Unity Day was marked in the international context in collaboration with Klaipeda (Lithuania) Latvian Association, by participation of LCYC / Youth Wind Orchestra of the Music Secondary School (2012); International intellectual tourney "What? Where? When? " (Klaipeda, Lithuania, 2013); International memorial exhibition cycle of the visual arts and visually plastic arts was organised for the village of Lidice in the Czech Republic "Lidice 2013", "Lidice 2014", "Lidice 2015" (2013, 2014, 2015); Strengthening the sense of family: „Family Festival” (Klaipeda, Lithuania, 2013) with participation of LCYC groups, event for parents – puppet theatre „Pifs” and „Winnie the Pooh” (2013); Family festival „ Marta the Big Mouth and Frisic the Big Mouth” (2014); Latvian folk singing competition "Nightingale 2014" in Kurzeme’s region (Latvia, 2014); Competition "Jokes Vortex 2013, 2014" semifinal and final in Lejaskurzeme (Latvia); IV International Festival "Wind Rhythms 2014": Children's and Youth wind and percussion instrument ensembles and orchestras (2014)
A link with schools	An event to mark the Knowledge Day „Let’s celebrate the 1 st day at school together!” (2012); An event „Teacher of the Year” (2012); Concert by LCYC groups and creative workshops (2012); An exhibition of creative works „What a teacher can?” (2012, 2013); An incentive is given for choosing a profession: Career Week – drawing contest, erudition contest „Know the Profession” (2013); An event „The Cocktail of Professions” (2013); Drawing contest-exhibition "I will be..." (2013); Photo Contest "Moment in the profession" (2013) An event „The Great Class Teacher” (2014); Knowledge Day activity "Another New Year" (2014); Information on free time activities (2012, 2013, 2014); The contest "The Friendliest class" (2014); Event “Excellent class teacher” (2015)
Collaboration with different institutions	Collaboration with the library "Rainbow": meeting with the writer A.Manfeldi "Enjoy this day as a coarse of bread ...". By participating theater studio "Karlson’s baggage" (2013); Collaboration with the library "Rainbow" during the poetry Days: meeting with poet M. Reinbergs . By participating musical art studio "Small berries" and hobby’s group "Winnie the Pooh" participants (2013); Erudition competition "Liepaja. Latvia. The European Union. "

	<p>In cooperation with “Europe Direct” Information Centre / Liepaja department of Latvian Chamber of Commerce (2013); Storyteller festival "Flowing, flowing my speech" (2013., 2014); Storyteller festival "Fish soup" (2014);</p> <p>Latvian pupils championship of space models in the world: rockets' cosmic modelisme at the Air Base in Vainode (Latvia, 2015);</p> <p>Ship models competition in Perkone's channel (Latvia, 2014, 2015)</p>
Free time activities	<p>Autumn holiday activities and creative workshops for children "Pumpkin's secret thing" (2013);</p> <p>Meaningfully spent time during pupil's holidays with „Spring holiday creative workshop for the city kids” (2013., 2014,2015);</p> <p>Summer camp "Karlson's secret thing" (2014)</p>

Research of the thematic offer suggests that it covers a wide thematic range and forms of work. Christmas and New Year are especially welcome when the Masquerade processions take place in Liepaja streets, concerts and other performances are prepared.

Research of interest education from pupils' perspective

The research aims to clarify pupils' association with the *interest education opportunities in the comparative context of formal education*. The research involved 45 LCYC participants of groups "The Little Jewellery School" and "Visual Arts".

Analysis of pupils' responses confirm that the involvement in groups of interests makes it possible for: self-affirmation, useful spending of free time, participation in hobby groups appropriate to one's interests, gaining new skills and making friends, educating in culture, engaging in important activities, feeling free and being joyful.

Some examples of positive aspects from pupil's point of view: there are no grades; may be late / absent, a lot of excursions; can take part in shows and competitions. The cognitions gained are in accordance with the theoretical knowledge of the scientific research context. Students notes that would love to club activities are not interrupted during the summer. The cognitions gained are in accordance with the theoretical cognitions of the scientists. Students note that they would love the group activities to continue also during the summer.

Analysis of pupils' responses on the teaching process of general education confirms that the school in the implementation of the pedagogical process also organizes excursions, hiking, there are also happy moments. Not-so-positive views were revealed in such answers as: a long sitting, short breaks, a lot of homework, boring, mandatory attendance, can meet not only friends but also enemies and bad classmates.

In general, it can be noted that implementing school and interest education's closer cooperation has to be improved; more targeted forms of work should be considered in the implementation of the teaching process, substantive offer must be continually improved in the context of the 21st century.

Conclusion

Interest education in Latvia is an essential component of the education system, in the implementation of which some experience of proving individual needs, desires and interests, acquisition of skills and spending meaningful leisure time has been built up. According to the Latvian Education Law it is freely available to all students who wish to get involved. At the same time, it can be noted that the opportunities of interest education for personal development has not been properly evaluated.

Latvian interest education system is being implemented and its development is carried out in accordance with international and country specific frameworks, guidelines, recommendations and documents on education. At the same time, it can be concluded that the Latvian interest education needs more dynamic changes in its implementation and updating, in solving topical national problems, in the acquisition and expansion of active experience, in improvement of the interest education curriculum content and implementation of new programmes according to the context of the 21st century.

Involving the students in interest education, it is possible to increase pupils' activity and involvement in social processes of city, county and state significance, to contribute to the formation of patriotic feelings, to provide purposeful leisure time, to encourage the development of self-confidence and motivation, career development, help integrate in public life activities thus promoting the formation of an active life position in an individual.

Teachers involved in interest education must be flexible and creative, with the ability to change, to be the consultant, interlocutor, like-minded, they must have the propensity to self-realize and appreciate. Teachers need to be in self-development, towards improving, with the ability to act and collaborate, with the ability live up to.

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