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**World View (Weltanschauung) in
Vocational Education in Latvia**

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Abstract

Contemporary understanding of education stresses the importance of development of personality in education and personality formation process. This vision is based on the changes of understanding of notion of work, broadening the notion of rationality, subjectivity and assessing reality, value orientation and ethics.

Formation of worldview (weltanschauung) is one of the elements of personality formation and education process, therefore the aim of this paper is to offer an insight into the results of the worldview formation in vocational education in Latvia. The system of Vocational education in Latvia is characterised through marking changes in the time after regaining independence. The research methodology of weltanschauung or world view is based on phenomenology, hermeneutics and existentialism. Within a definite context of culture, the pedagogical thought reflects the world understood through language, so analysis of weltanschauung was made on the basis of 120 final exam essays in the Latvian language and literature in 2004, 2007 and 2011.

The curricula of vocational education were analysed to discover the possibilities of world view formation during education process. The technique for documents analysis is content analysis. Text analysis of essays was performed using program Weft QDA. Only separate elements of worldview are found in the state exam essays. This testifies that weltanschauung as an integrated system of knowledge, confidence and attitude based on values in vocational school students is present in rare cases.

The existence of weltanschauung is confirmed by personified values (love, family, understanding etc.). However, in issues existentially important for young people, only fragmented pieces of knowledge and no skills to use it were discovered.

Keywords: World view (Weltanschauung), attitudes, values, vocational education.

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Introduction

Currently, various spheres of life are subject to rapid changes taking place in Europe and other parts of the world. These changes increase the role of education in public life and set new requirements for it. Furthermore, development of democracy necessitates active and conscious involvement of each individual in planning their own and public life; it also requires ability to make choices and to find the way in a rapidly increasing flow of information.

The need for social skills and development of society which would be based on self-determination, co-determination and true emancipation becomes increasingly topical. This need sets new specific goals for development of personality and education as its driving force. One of the goals is to ensure that an individual becomes aware of the meaning of life and the aim in life, which, if achieved, becomes his/her world view enabling him/her to understand and be aware of himself/herself and his/her relations with the world by defining these relations on value-based personal attitudes.

From this perspective, world view can be regarded as both an essential task and a result of education which preserves personal significance of philosophical meaning of life. If world view is regarded as a result of education, its aim is to be a stimulus and a reason for individual's activity and thus to facilitate development of society.

The aim of the study is to investigate the result of world-view formation during vocational education. The study is carried out on the basis of student's essays, written for final exam in the Latvian language and literature, before finishing secondary vocational education in years 2004, 2007, 2011. A total number of 360 essays was selected, from those, 120 for in-depth analysis.

The focus on vocational education is determined by increasing of the role of this type of education in the society. Most part of students do not continue education after finishing vocational schools, so it marks the final part of their formal education. Therefore it seems important to assess the formation of the world-view (Weltanschauung) at this stage.

There are diverse vocational education institutions in Latvia; they have different names, different supervising bodies and different goals. There are state and municipal secondary vocational schools, colleges, and competence centres. During past 20 years of Latvia's independence vocational education has met several changes. After the crash of Soviet Union and the Soviet economy, several professions were not in demand any more, and vocational schools had to reorient from training of industrial workers towards educating of service personnel. At the same time there was the reform of contents of curricula of vocational education, which increased time for training and development of professional skills, decreasing the time allotted to universal (academic) education. This reform was carried out in 2004-2007, therefore those dates are important.

World view (Weltanschauung) can be looked upon as something personal and equal to indicators characterising the learning outcomes. Therefore this study will try to explore whether knowledge, skills and attitudes of the students, achieved in the process of vocational education, fuse into a uniform system of views (world views) that would be based on personally

significant values and would determine their personal attitude towards reality, themselves and direction in life.

World view as a special way for an individual to interpret his/her attitude towards the world has been of interest to many philosophers for a long time; however, world view concept was introduced in Western European philosophy only in the 19th century (Gadamer, 1999). Kant was the first to mention this concept when referring to sense perception (Naugle, 2003), and only later other philosophers described it from a philosophical perspective in a greater detail. Philosophers of the 19th and 20th century have paid great attention to world view and its role in the life of an individual. Although this phenomenon has been referred to by different terms, as well as attitudes towards it and its relation to philosophy are different, philosophers of the 19th and 20th century have given a considerable thought to the issue of world view.

Opinions of philosophers on world view allow concluding that world view formation depends on subjective factors and individual social realities, which also can be identified in educational process; thus, it is possible to study world view and its formation in the framework of educational process. World view is related to individual experience, in particular, moral aspects (values) and religion. By assuming that the depth of the world perception depends on individual's ability to rise above himself/herself, it is possible to seek the transcendental dimension of world view (Hegel, 2002; Kierkegaard, 1988; Dilthey, 1957). World view is revealed in individual's creative activity (Hegel, 2002; Dilthey, 1957; Husserl, 2002.). It is uniform and coherent, associated with elements of the psyche, and can be described as a model; it is expressed in one's attitudes towards reality and with the means of language (Dilthey, 1957; Jaspers, 2003; Husserl, 2002; Heidegger, 1998).

World view is a personal achievement (Husserl, 2002.) and it defines individual's attitude towards life (Husserl, 2002; Jaspers, 2003; Heidegger, 1998.); that is why it is revealed in personal attitudes. Attitudes and thus also partially world view are influenced by upbringing or personality formation (Husserl, 2002; Jaspers 2003; Heidegger, 1998.) and environment (Heidegger, 1998) which is an integral part of educational process. Despite the fact that it is impossible to establish criteria of truth of world view (Heidegger, 1998.), it is possible to establish criteria that can be used in determining the presence of world view.

Conscious humanism-based attitudes of an individual towards reality (Heidegger, 1998.) take the form of consciously defined internalised values in world views of young people. Meaning of the world is ascertained through involvement (Wittgenstein, 2002). World view, even if called differently, is a subjective, human-made construction (Derrida, 2001.) which influences the life of an individual (Foucault, 1970) and society (Berger and Luckmann, 1967.) and thus can be a focal point of the study.

Documents and methods

On the basis of opinions regarding the components of world view, namely, knowledge (theoretical and practical) and attitudes, which are

expressed through ideals, and values, which are central to world view and link between world view and transcendence, a structure of world view has been elaborated. Knowledge, as well as attitudes and values are oriented in three main directions – towards an individual, nature and society – all of which exist around certain values and are linked with transcendence.

The structure of world view allows establishing criteria that can be used in assessing the presence of world view. As world view is based on attitudes towards one's self (individual), nature and history (society in a particular phase of its historical development), three criteria are established. Each of them consists of two indicators: the first is relatively positive because it expresses positive attitude; and the second is relatively negative because it expresses negative (alienated) attitude. The first criterion is an attitude towards one's self which describes individual's ability to be aware of himself/herself and to accept himself/herself. From the perspective of the positive indicator, this attitude is expressed as dignity and, according to the structure of world view encompasses certain practical and theoretical knowledge, ideals and certain aspects of transcendence. From the perspective of the negative indicator, attitude towards one's self is alienated; nevertheless, according to the structure of the world view, it is still based on certain knowledge, ideals and values (see Table 1).

Similarly (see Table 1) positive indicators reflect one's awareness of nature as a whole and one's self as a part of it; they also reflect perception of one's own history and history of one's kin or family as a part of the general flow of history and development of society. Positive indicators cover all elements of the structure of the world- view and the theoretical knowledge on the awareness of ideals and being, which on their turn derive from values.

This study analyses world view of vocational school students reflected in their essays written during the centralised state examination in the Latvian language and literature on the basis of the criteria indicators of world view. Analysis determines whether and which components of world view are present in the essays; whether and how these essays reveal formation of world view or its results at vocational schools; and what is the content of vocational education curriculum

Knowledge of the youths and their attitudes towards various issues, which could construct world view or be its components, are studied on the basis of the structure of world view, which contains a totality of value- and transcendence-directed attitudes towards one's self, nature and society (history).

As world view is constructed in the process of becoming aware of one's self, nature and history, it is assumed that the students reflect upon values in a narrative. With the focus on the fact that the core of world view is based on values that have become personally significant, namely, internalised, are expressed as ideals or being, and create the background for knowledge, the matrix for content analysis of research documents (essays) is created. Online software Weft QDA is used when applying content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) for an in-depth assessment of students' views.

Content of the research documents (essays) is influenced by the context of their creation. Essays are written by students at the end of their studies at

vocational school. When writing their essays, young people are aware that these essays will be read and assessed by people unknown to them. Awareness of this fact can influence candour and honesty in expressing information, views, feelings and convictions that are personally significant to them. Thus there is no reason to expect that honest and candid reflection of thoughts and feelings will be present in the essays. However, as in any significant examination, essays contain the reflection of author's personal dignity and self-value, which enable the search for presence of world view in these documents.

Essays are written in groups (essays written in 2004, 2007 and 2011) and in different parts of Latvia; duration of examination is a set and limited number of hours during one day. During the study, the following aspects are neither determined nor taken into account: vocational education curricula which is acquired by each author of an essay; location of a vocational school (city, rural area, small town, etc.); nationality of author and language in which he/she was taught at primary school; gender of an author; exact age of an author.

Content of the analysed documents is also restricted by the fact that the students have to choose the theme of their essay from the set list; thus, it is impossible to identify potential knowledge and reflections of the young people on issues that are not covered by theme chosen for essay.

During the initial analysis of research documents, particular attention is paid to several aspects that implicate the presence of world view in these documents. On the basis of conclusion that world view is a value-based system of attitudes oriented towards one's self, others (society) and the world, two linguistically determined levels of analysis of research documents were set: personalised (personally *participate*) and indirectly personalised (personally *do not participate*). Internalised attitude linguistically is expressed in a form of personal attitudes (singular subject pronoun *I* is used) or in the form of one's belonging to a relevant group (plural subject pronoun *we* is used). Indirectly internalised attitude is reflected in use of other pronouns such as *you, he, she, or they*.

Results and discussion

Initial analysis of research documents indicates that essays written in 2004, 2007 and 2011 do not reveal convincing knowledge and skills of the youths. Mentioning of facts indicates the existence of knowledge, and interpretation of these facts indicates the existence of skills; however, 100 essays out of those written in 2004 contain only every day facts of life, and only 9 essays contain historical facts. Only some essays reveal attempts to interpret these facts. Out of essays written in 2007, political facts are mentioned in 4 essays, historical facts – in 2 essays, and authors of 5 essays refer to sources of literature or literary characters. As the task of essays changed, 102 essays out of those written in 2011 refer to sources of literature; unfortunately, in a great number of cases these references are incorrect and are not analysed. Just like in essays written 2004 and 2007, facts referred to in

essays written in 2011 are mainly associated to an individual, communication and social environment.

Similarly to essays written in 2004, facts referred to in essays written in 2007 and 2011 are not analysed; therefore, it is impossible to assess students' skills which reveal their ability to draw conclusions from the facts referred to in essays written in 2004 and 2011. Facts, which are mainly every day facts of life and are not of scientific character, are used by authors only for illustration.

This allows concluding that the youths are interested in themselves, communication and social processes, but there is the lack of knowledge in these areas. Therefore, it is difficult to determine whether the young people are able to get involved in social processes and contribute to social development in general.

Comparison of essays written in 2004, 2007 and 2011 allows concluding that degree of internalisation in essays written in 2011 is higher in comparison to essays written in 2007; furthermore, the degree of internalisation in essays written in 2007 has increased in comparison to essays written in 2004. However, other aspects indicate that there is no reason to believe that students which graduate from vocational schools have constructed their world views as uniform value-based systems of knowledge, convictions and attitudes. Even regarding those issues, on which the personal involvement and interest of the young people can be identified, students' knowledge is fragmented and students lack skills to use it. Increasingly unskilful use of language as a means for self-expression also is causing concern.

Therefore, it can be concluded, that world views are not being constructed and thus the process of comprehensive development of personality is jeopardised. Although, essays written by students reveal the presence of world view as a process, they do not offer a reason to regard students' world views as a result of this process.

During an in-depth analysis of students' world views by applying content analysis and the Weft QDA software, the data obtained during the secondary selection of essays are encoded. Computer software provides an opportunity to find relevant fragments in research documents. Research documents selected from essays written in 2004, 2007 and 2011 are enumerated from 1 to 40, from 41 to 80, and from 81 to 120 accordingly.

Three groups of codes are established: degree of internalisation, criteria indicators and presence of values. Values, present in essays, were identified after the initial data processing, and coded accordingly. During identification of internalisation, criteria indicators and values in the research documents, presence of world view components was verified in accordance with the structure of world view.

Thus it was determined whether and how many documents contain positive criteria indicators and internalised values.

On the basis of these findings, it can be concluded that students' world view is in the process of construction because documents reveal students' attitude towards themselves, nature and society that is shaped on the basis of internalised values. Concurrently, it has to be noted that world view formation is more evident in essays written in 2011 and 2007 than in essays written in 2004. (Table 2). Degree of internalisation is higher in documents obtained in

2007 and 2011 which reveals that students' desire to understand and assess essay themes is increasing; that is achieved by personal involvement and attempts to relate essay themes to their lives and personal experience, to describe their attitude towards the world, and to understand their place in it. Concurrently, the presence of non-internalised essays as well as inconsistency in internalisation indicates that this trend is not entirely conscientious and it is not supported by necessary skills.

Criteria indicators, which indicate positive attitude towards one's self, nature and history, are identified in a greater number of research documents obtained in 2007 and 2011 than in research documents obtained in 2004. (Table 2). Also the number of essays where there is a concurrent presence of positive criteria indicators and internalisation is greater among research documents obtained in 2011 than in documents obtained in 2007 and 2004 (21 documents in 2011 in comparison to 16 documents in 2007, and 10 documents in 2004).

Majority of research documents reveal values as a core of world view. However, students in their essays do not refer to them (40% in 2004, 15% in 2007, and 10% in 2011). Documents obtained in 2007 only refer to values which are essential for the young people of the relevant age or values which directly influence their lives (friendship, love, family, trust and understanding). Research documents obtained in 2007 more often than research documents obtained in 2004 (20 documents or 50% in comparison to 9 documents or 23%) refer to internalised values; that is indicative of construction of the core of world view (Table 2).

In comparison to research documents obtained in 2004 and 2007, construction of students' world views is more distinct in research documents obtained in 2011 (26 essays or 65% in 2011 in comparison to 14 essays or 35% in 2007, and 6 essays or 15% in 2004); they reveal students' attitude towards themselves, nature and society based on internalised values; that is indicative of the presence of world view.

In addition to study of students' exam essays, comparative analysis of the contents of vocational programmes has been made. Five vocational programmes have been analysed.

The main attention in all the programmes is paid to professional subjects and professional training and qualification practice (Table 3). Communication and social sciences classes, which are the main value-orientated subjects, have less than half of the time, provided for the professional subjects.

However, the analysis of the students exam essays shows that in the years, when these programmes have been implemented (2007 and 2011, see Table 2) process of world view construction is more clearly seen than in the year (2004) when the reform of vocational education was started. (Table 2). That shows that there is no direct connection between contents of vocational school programmes and the world view of students. It makes it possible to assume, that main task of world view formation lies on learning environment and methods used in education and personality formation process in vocational schools.

Conclusions

1. World view (weltanschauung) contains personal attitudes, based on values; this is revealed through personification.
2. Growing levels of personification can be seen among the components of world view in the results of study of documents in 2004, 2007 and 2011.
3. The progression of coherency of personified values and positive indicators of criteria confirms that there is a formation of world view as a unified system of views (about self, nature and society), based on personified values.
4. Values, increased levels of personifications and positive indicators of criteria point to the young people being personally involved in the study process, interest and reflections on issues and values they find significant.
5. Probably formation of world view in vocational school students is not dependant on contents of vocational curricula, but is influenced by learning environment and study methods.

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Table 1. Criteria and indicators of world view

Criterion/Indicator	Positive	Negative
Attitude towards one's self	Dignity	Alienation
Attitude towards nature	Awareness of nature as a whole and one's self as a part of it	Expression of declarative views
Attitude towards history (society)	Perception of one's own history and history of one's family as a part of the general flow of history	Perception of history as a history of others which does not influence one's self

Table 2. World view construction according to research documents obtained in 2004, 2007 and 2011

Year	Internalisation and values	Internalisation and positive criteria indicators	Internalisation, positive criteria indicators and values	No values indicated
2004	9 (23%)	10 (25%)	6 (15%)	16 (40%)
2007	20 (50%)	16 (40%)	14 (35%)	6 (15%)
2011	26(65%)	21(53%)	21 (53%)	4 (10%)

Table 3. Comparative analysis of the vocational programmes (Amount of class hours for different subjects)

	Progr. 1	Progr. 2	Progr. 3	Progr. 4	Progr. 5
Communication	858	796	824	786	786
Maths, sciences	647	563	363	562	562
Social sciences	424	379	410	432	432
Professional subjects	1975	1245	2131	2812	2812
Professional training	684	1565	216	216	216
Sports	220	260	216	216	216
Qualification practice	960	960	995	960	960