

Open School Project (Russian Minority)

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An unfortunate legacy of Soviet rule in Latvia is an inherited, complex ethno-demographic situation characterized by ethnic discord among different groups of society. The attempt to preserve the concept of "nation" and the need for the integration of the Russian speaking population sets a difficult task for Latvian education reform. One of the strongest manifestations of ethnic fragmentation in education is the existence of two parallel school systems with Latvian and Russian languages of instruction. This presentation will provide an overview of the needs assessment study conducted by the Soros Foundation - Latvia (SFL) and describe the project "Open School", implemented by SFL in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Naturalization Board, aimed at fostering the approximation of the two school networks and its effects on curriculum, teacher training, and pedagogy.

Open School Situation survey

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1. SURVEY OUTLINE

1.1. Survey goals and objectives

The goal of the survey was to examine the current situation in schools with Latvian and non-Latvian languages of instruction, in order to facilitate effective and need-oriented planning of the "Open School" project. The objectives of the survey were to assess:

- the actual situation in the Latvian and/or bilingual learning process;
- integration-related problems and needs in schools;
- the attitude of schools to different models of bilingual education and alternative development options;
- school development perspectives.

1.2. Target groups

- Directors of schools with Latvian as the language of instruction;
- Directors, teachers and students at schools with other languages of instruction;
- Representatives of pre-service and in-service teacher training institutions.

1.3. Survey methodology and methods

In order to get comprehensive information about integration in the field of education, various sources of information were used, for example, representatives of pedagogical institutes, government officials, school directors, teachers and students. In addition, attention was focused on gaining both quantitative and qualitative data.

Quantitative data on integration in schools was obtained from the directors of Latvian and non-Latvian language schools using questionnaires. The questionnaires were distributed at regional conferences of the school directors, which took place in Riga, Daugavpils, Jekabpils, Saldus and Jelgava. Since the number of questionnaires received from the Riga and Liepaja regions was insufficient, additional questionnaires were sent to Riga, Riga District, Liepaja and Liepaja District schools. Altogether, 240 (19% of all Latvian schools) questionnaires were received from school directors, of these 141 (16.8% of all Latvian language schools) from Latvian language schools and 99 (44% of non-Latvian language schools) from schools with non-Latvian or mixed languages of instruction. In order to reinforce the data gained from the questionnaires submitted by school directors, interviews were conducted with teachers and students. Among those interviewed were:

- 93 teachers from 25 schools, among them schools in Aizkraukle, Daugavpils, Liepaja, Rezekne, Riga, Riga District and Ventspils; and
- 154 students from 8 schools in Daugavpils, Liepaja, Riga, and Riga District.

In addition, qualitative data was gained by:

- visiting schools and observing classes (15 schools);
- interviewing experts in pre-service and in-service teacher training (9 experts);
- compiling the findings of existing studies (8 master's and doctor's theses);
- analysing existing legislation and other documents.

2. SURVEY RESULTS

2.1. General information

240 questionnaires were received from school directors, of these 141 from Latvian-language schools and 99 from schools with other languages of instruction. Some of the directors of mixed-language schools identified their school as a Latvian language school and some, as a non-Latvian language school. Questionnaires were received from all regions in Latvia, with the greatest number (27.9%) from Latgale, compared to 20% from Vidzeme, 18.8% from Kurzeme, 17.5% from Riga and 15.8% from Zemgale.

A classification of data by school type shows that 56% of the respondents are from secondary schools (grades 9-11), 34% from elementary schools (grades 1-4) and 5% from primary schools (grades 1-9). The results of the survey also reflect the situation both in small rural schools (up to 100 students) and large schools (more than 1500 students).

2.2. Latvian language schools

Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) statistics show that, in the last seven years, the number of students in schools with non-Latvian languages of instruction has been decreasing, and increasing in schools with Latvian as the language of instruction. The number of children receiving instruction in Latvian has increased by 15.4%. This trend is connected not only with an increase in the birth rate in Latvian families at the end of the 80s and beginning of the 90s, but also with the increase in the number of minority children attending Latvian schools. The results of the survey confirm a trend which sees more and more non-Latvian parents choosing to send their children to Latvian schools because they feel that studying in Latvian will promote their child's integration into the social processes and the employment market of this country.

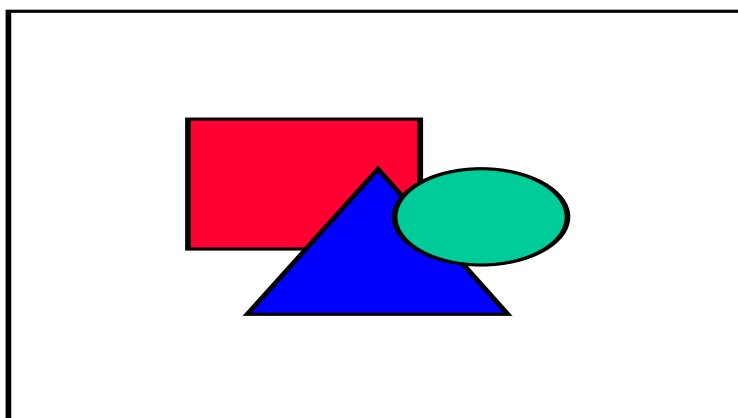
For example, 95% of the directors of Latvian language schools say that they have students whose native language is not Latvian. The survey shows that the greatest number of minority children can be found in elementary schools and secondary schools. It is important to point out that 83% of the minority children in schools with Latvian as the language of instruction attend mixed classes, and only 13% attend special segregated classes. The percentage of children of other nationalities in mixed classes is generally quite small. For example, 74% of the directors of Latvian schools said that there were only a few Russian-speaking children in their classes. 16% gave the number as one third, 6% said one half, and 6% - more than a half. Compared with other regions, the percentage of children of other nationalities is much greater in Latgale and Vidzeme. In a letter (No.4-37) sent to schools in 1995, the MoES Education and Science recommended that non-Latvian children be accepted in educational institutions with Latvian as the language of instruction, if the child and at least one of the parents have fluent command of Latvian, and if Latvian is spoken with the child at home. It was also recommended that schools with Russian as the language of instruction should, at the demand of the parents, set up special classes with Latvian as the language of instruction. Latvian sociolinguist and language policy maker Ina Druviete (1998) finds that "this phenomenon, which could have been considered as positive in the majority of European countries, has not produced the expected results in Latvia. Children arrive at the education establishment without any knowledge of Latvian, and progress is very slow. The language barrier becomes an obstacle to knowledge, the teachers have to switch to Russian quite often, and usually Latvian children learn Russian before non-Latvians learn Latvian. The communication among children takes place in Russian even if there are only two or three Russian children among twenty Latvian. Therefore, the simple mixing of children with different native languages has not been considered as an optimal solution. Instead, the emphasis is put on the strengthening of Latvian language teaching in minority schools and kindergartens so we can expect significant changes in education policy in Latvia during coming years." (Druviete, 1998)

Unfortunately, there are no studies on the growing tendency of mixed and non-Latvian families to send their children to Latvian schools. One of the sociological studies (Liepina, 1997) draws attention to the pedagogical aspects of the integration of children from non-Latvian and mixed families into Latvian elementary schools. The survey finds that the problem of integrating non-Latvian children into Latvian elementary schools is not simply the problem of individual schools, regions, or cities, but that it is becoming a national problem. According to the study, it is imperative that this process be well-considered and pedagogically regulated.

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Chart 1.

Number of students receiving instruction in Latvian or Russian in public day schools in 1989-1997 (MoES data)



Problems encountered by teachers. Survey data shows that the greatest problems faced by teachers who work with ethnically and linguistically mixed classes are:

- lack of understanding for the idiosyncrasies of different mentalities (40%), especially in Zemgale and Kurzeme;
- insufficient methodological skills (38%), especially in Vidzeme and Riga;
- lack of special textbooks and teaching materials (33%); and
- difficulties in communicating with parents (24%).

The results of the survey show that the most serious problem in elementary schools is a lack of teaching materials, in primary schools - a lack of methodological skills, but in secondary schools – a lack of understanding for the idiosyncrasies of different mentalities. The lack of understanding for different mentalities is increasing in schools with large numbers of students. In identifying the type of help that is needed, teachers in the Latgale region name teaching materials and aids, but in other regions it is in-service training, since there are no special courses for teachers.

Problems encountered by students. The results of the survey show that non-Latvian students who attend schools with Latvian as the language of instruction have greater difficulties with arts subjects than with science subjects. Interviews with students showed that there are fewer problems with mathematics and other science subjects which can be learned by heart or "crammed". Students admit that one of their greatest problems is expressing their thoughts, especially in writing. For example, it was explained that "Russian-speaking students think in Russian" and their written assignments reveal that sentences are translated literally from the native language. To improve their results, non-Latvian students in Latvian schools are advised to learn by heart or to take private lessons. One of the methods, which is successfully applied by teachers who work with mixed classes, is to have classmates (Latvian – non-Latvian) help each other.

The attitude of parents and teachers. The attitude of parents of Latvian students to the integration of minority students into schools with Latvian language of instruction is generally neutral (56%), or positive (37%). Similarly, 50% of the teachers see the integration of non-Latvian students into Latvian language schools as positive, and 40% are neutral. The most positive attitude is found in primary schools and in Vidzeme.

Conclusions and needed support. In view of the problems that were identified in the course of the survey - the difficulties that non-Latvian students have with participating in

debates and expressing their views, the passive attitude of parents to cooperation with the school, teachers' lack of training for work in a multicultural environment - it is possible to conclude that methodological and organisational support is needed for Latvian language schools (especially in Riga, Latgale and Vidzeme) which already practice the integration of non-Latvian students into a Latvian learning environment, by providing:

- teacher in-service training,
- development of teaching materials and aids;
- individual consultations in schools;
- parent support.

2.3. Non-Latvian language schools

The survey provided information about the actual situation regarding subjects taught in Latvian and/or bilingually in non-Latvian language schools, including:

- different approaches to teaching a subject in Latvian and/or bilingually,
- teaching methods most often employed by teachers when teaching subjects in Latvian and/or bilingually,
- problems encountered by teachers and students,
- initiatives which help teachers to effectively teach subjects in Latvian and/or bilingually.

Choice of subjects. When naming the factors which determine the choice of subjects to be taught in Latvian/bilingually, school directors first mention the availability of qualified teachers (66%), then - student language skills (43%), student demands/choices (40%) and parent demands (25%). The interviews confirmed that, at present, the choice of subjects to be taught either in Latvian or bilingually is primarily determined by the availability of teachers and only secondly by the specifics of the subject and the range and requirements of the curriculum.

In the course of the interviews, teachers and students were asked to name the subjects which are taught bilingually, and to give a short description of a lesson and the relative proportions of the languages used during the lesson. There was little or no difference between the answers given by teachers and students. Visits to schools revealed that, in the majority of the schools, at the elementary school level handicrafts, sports, visual arts and, in some schools, natural science and music are taught in Latvian or bilingually. The teachers say that subjects such as sports or handicrafts are easier for the students because they require less speaking and more understanding of the language, which is reinforced by motions, actions and gestures.

All find that it is logical to teach Latvian history and geography in Latvian. For example, in grade 5, the programme allows the teacher to choose the language of instruction. Knowing that bilingual instruction requires more time, the teacher may choose to leave some topics out and teaching others in Russian, but to devote more time to topics that involve Latvia and to teach these in Latvian. The civics program for grade 9 includes discussions about legislative documents. Since such documents, for example, the

constitution, are rather complicated, teachers may choose to read them in Russian to make sure that all students are able to understand and learn the subject matter.

In some schools, mathematics, computer science, the history of culture, business basics, chemistry, drafting, basic accounting, biology and ethics are taught bilingually.

Classroom procedure. Several models can be observed in teachers' work in the classroom. The choice of model is determined primarily by the teacher's language skills (whether a teacher's native language is Latvian or not), the availability of teachers and teaching materials, the school administration's level of information about bilingual education, its willingness to experiment and its attitude to teaching in general.

There are four main approaches to classroom procedure:

- primarily in Russian, with terminology translated into and learned in Latvian;
- primarily in Latvian, with explanations and translation of terminology in Russian;
- equal use of both languages;
- entirely in Latvian.

1. *Primarily in Russian, with terminology translated into and learned in Latvian*

With this approach, classes are conducted primarily in Russian and information is complemented with information from Latvian language sources. In general, bilingual education is understood mainly as putting together vocabularies and understanding what is read. This approach is employed by 66% of the teachers interviewed (32 teachers interviewed).

Elementary school handicrafts, visual arts, and natural science teachers: "Complicated topics – in Russian. Questions about subject matter that has already been dealt with - in Latvian. New subject matter – in Latvian."

A history teacher: "In Russian, with additional reading in Latvian." Students have not named this as a subject that is taught bilingually.

A geography teacher: "The most important part of the material is explained in Russian, then the text in Latvian. New words (chosen by the students) are not written down in a vocabulary list, but on cards which are used in other classes as well. Assignments are written in work books in Latvian." Students find this method to be effective.

2. *Primarily in Latvian with explanations and translation of terminology in Russian*

With this approach, classes are conducted primarily in Latvian. Information is complemented and learning reinforced with material from Russian language sources. This approach is employed by 13% of the teachers interviewed (8 teachers interviewed).

A geography teacher: "I explain in Latvian, translate words that student's don't understand, and they write down the new words and terminology. If the topic is complicated, I repeat what I have told them 2-3 times. I use charts and maps."

A geography teacher: " To judge how much students have learned, I check to see whether a student can do an assignment, make a drawing, understand charts. It would not be logical, if all they did were learn stories by heart."

A home economics teacher: "To start with, students are given the terminology in Latvian and Russian, an explanation of the new subject matter in Latvian with translation into Russian. Home assignment questions are written in an exercise book in Latvian."

A history teacher: "We greet each other in Latvian. Questions and answers to repeat what has been learned – in Latvian. New subject matter in Latvian (if necessary, students translate on their own for each other)." The teacher explains the terminology in Latvian, students write it down in their vocabularies. Then the teacher explains in Russian. Questions about new subject matter – in Latvian. The answers – in Latvian, if there are difficulties, then in Russian. Questions are written down in exercise books in Latvian. The answers are written by the student as a home assignment.

Physical education teacher: "Teams and refereeing in Latvian. If students don't understand, the teacher translates, sometimes the students themselves translate. Remarks, conversations – in Russian. In secondary school, the students prepare for written examinations in Latvian – work books, learning by heart."

Biology teacher: "Everything is taught in Latvian, except for complicated topics."

Art teacher: "I hear, I see, I do – that is the road to understanding."

3) Equal use of both languages

This approach is used by 10% or 5 of the interviewed teachers. Equal use of Latvian and the native language has various different approaches and departures, for example:

- **classes are conducted mixing Latvian and the native (Estonian) language, without specification of the language to be used**

Natural science, mathematics, visual arts and handicrafts teachers: "Classes are conducted with mixed use of Latvian and Estonian, without specification of the language to be used. When necessary, everything is first explained in Latvian and then in Estonian."

- **information needed for work in pairs or in groups is gained from Russian and Latvian sources**

A cultural history, music and ethics teacher: "The class is conducted using cooperative learning methods."

- **integrated Latvian and Russian language groups for specific subjects**

Home economics teacher: "Terminology in Latvian, Russian and English (compiled by the teachers for all parallel classes), repetition and explanation of new material in Latvian, if something is unclear – in Russian. Questions (written) in Latvian. Answers (written) – in Latvian

and Russian, whichever the students prefer."

- **classes are conducted by two teachers working side by side. One teaches the basics of a new topic in Russian, the other speaks Latvian with the children and supervises assignments, knowledge is reinforced.**

4. Entirely in Latvian

The class is conducted in Latvian. The teacher uses the language of instruction between classes as well. All explanations are given only in Latvian. This approach is used in special classes which have been formed in schools in which Russian is the language of instruction. This approach is employed by 11% or 6 of the interviewed teachers.

Problems encountered by teachers. In the questionnaires submitted by school directors, the three main obstacles to teaching subjects in Latvian or bilingually are identified as:

- lack of teaching materials (88% of those respondents),
- teachers' lack of language skills (69%), and
- teachers' lack of methodological training (68%).

The problems encountered by teachers differ from region to region. For example, teachers in Daugavpils find that the main problem with transition to bilingual education is teachers' lack of language skills. The teachers themselves must overcome their complexes about speaking Latvian. Work in the classroom is monotonous, because, due to their lack of language skills, teachers are not able to improvise. If the teacher has a limited knowledge of the language, the prestige of Latvian suffers. A situation is created where terminology, definitions, the "necessary", the "compulsory" is learned in Latvian, but all that is substantial and interesting is dealt with in Russian. Students give critical assessments of their teachers' language skills, for example, "I would take all subjects in Latvian, if the teacher knew the language and could explain everything to me."

Teachers frequently point out that they have received insufficient methodological training. At present, institutions of higher education have not yet included specific, target-oriented bilingual education training courses for future teachers in their programmes. The Riga Teacher Training and Education Management Academy (RTTEMA) has included an experimental 32-class course, "Methods of Teaching Subjects in a Second Language," in its 1998/99 programme for elementary school teachers. In-service training courses are offered by the Teacher's Educational Support Center (TESC), the Riga School Board, regional and city school boards, the educational centres and associations of institutes of higher education. However, these courses are often very short, are not available to all who would like to participate, and do not take into consideration the different levels of professional qualification of the participants.

When speaking about teaching materials, teachers point out that the choice of available books is adequate. "Books are available, all you need is money". But bilingual teaching requires additional teaching aids, a lot of copies must be made, and, at the same time, more textbooks and work books are needed. For example, "it is not possible to buy, and the schools don't have a large political map of the world in Latvian". Schools usually use the parallel text method – textbooks in Latvian with a Russian translation, but this does not encourage interest in a subject.

The quality of textbooks and teaching materials can also be a problem. For example, it is sometimes impossible for the teacher to identify a certain plant from its illustration in a work book. The dictionary does not have the name in Latvian and the teacher does not know the name in Russian. To date, there is one textbook of Latvian as a second language for grade 5, which has been written specifically for dealing with issues of second language acquisition and bilingual education.

Teachers mention other problems as well. One is that normative regulations disregard the concept of bilingual education and its needs. For example, since it is possible to choose the language of instruction, students may be taking subjects such as mathematics, physics or geography in Russian, but for the national subject competitions, the assignments are prepared only in Latvian. This means that students who have been learning in Russian do not have the same starting position as those who have been taking these subjects in Latvian. Regional competitions sometimes use translators who are not specialists and translate inaccurately, so that students need more time to understand the assignments, but the time limit is the same for all participants. Ministries will sometimes send Russian schools examination papers in Russian (for example, civics examinations), although, at the start of the school year, the school has informed the ministry that the subject is being taught in Latvian. Teachers feel that, if examination papers are prepared in Latvian for all schools, students who are learning a subject bilingually should at least be given more time to complete the assignments.

School initiatives which have facilitated teaching of subjects in Latvian or bilingually. When naming school initiatives which have helped to start teaching subjects in Latvian or bilingually, school directors mention:

- in-service teacher training courses, particularly on teaching methodology (72%),
- Latvian language courses (61%),
- school action plans (59%),
- development of dictionaries (41%),
- development of teaching materials (27%).

Subject teachers' associations and in-service teacher training courses. In answer to the question about what has helped them to teach a subject in Latvian, teachers name in-service teacher training courses first. Non-Latvian teachers also mention Latvian language courses (mainly those organised and financed by the State Latvian Language Programme). Several teachers note that cooperation between subject teachers' associations is particularly important. 16% of the teachers say that they have received needed information from subject teachers' associations, 32% have shared or gained experience in bilingual teaching. For example, in Liepaja, in answer to the question about what has helped them most in their work, teachers mention work in subject teachers' associations. Here non-Latvian teachers have the opportunity to practice their Latvian by speaking about profession-related topics. However, in Daugavpils, the language used in subject teachers' associations is Russian, and methods of teaching a subject in a second language are not discussed.

Taking advantage of the experience made in other countries. In some schools, bilingual teaching has been started on the basis of experience gained from other countries. Several schools hold regular teaching methodology workshops in which this experience is

examined and evaluated. There is a positive attitude to participation in larger projects that stimulate the initiative of teachers and students and provide experience, such as the Soros Foundation Latvia "I*earn" and "Step by Step" educational projects. Students benefit from participation in projects such as UNESCO-Latvia, because the language used here is Latvian.

Cooperation with teachers of Latvian as a second language (LAT 2). 10 % of the teachers who teach bilingually replied that they cooperate with a teacher of Latvian as a second language (LAT 2), if they have difficulties with terminology. In such cases, LAT 2 teachers provide consultations or organise courses. A small number of subject teachers (8%) cooperate with LAT 2 teachers in projects and methodology questions. According to the teachers, cooperation is hampered by a lack of coordination between curricula. Some schools have started to think about the need to integrate the subject matter of bilingually taught subjects and Latvian. Subject teachers in different departments develop special subject vocabularies which are to be taught preferentially in Latvian class. Teachers recommend that when students start to learn a subject in Latvian, in the first year the class should be divided into groups, and that work would be more interesting if the class had two teachers (the subject teacher and a LAT 2 teachers).

The attitude of students. The interviews disclosed that the attitude of students to taking subjects in Latvian/bilingually is generally positive. They can explain why they take subjects in Latvian. "We don't have an environment where we can use the language. Class is the place where we can use Latvian." Schools query students to find out whether they feel that their language skills have improved, which subjects they would or would not like to take bilingually, however, none of the schools discuss strategies of bilingual education with the students. There are discussions about whether or not the students are making progress in learning a subject, but no attention is paid to the skills that are developed as the result of bilingual learning.

The attitude of parents. Schools have differing information about the attitude of parents. In general, parents want their children to have good command of Latvian. Some parents would like more subjects to be taught in Latvian. Some of the schools do not know the views of the parents. Although the teachers also agree that the goals of bilingual education should be discussed in parent councils, so far, this has not been done.

2.4. School development perspectives

In the questionnaires, the directors of both Latvian and non-Latvian schools evaluated six education models for the development of minority schools in Latvia, including four MoES bilingual education models. School directors were also given the opportunity to propose alternative models. Each model was evaluated according to a five-point system, for example, 5 – the most recommended, and 1- entirely unacceptable. When the questionnaires were analysed, the positive evaluations (*the most recommended and could be recommended*) and the negative ones (*unlikely that the model could be applicable, and entirely unacceptable*) were compiled.

BILINGUAL EDUCATION MODELS OFFERED IN THE QUESTIONNAIRE

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MoES bilingual education models

A bilingual education model which gradually prepares students for instruction in Latvian. In this model, in grades 1-4 Latvian is used as the language of instruction in five subjects: visual arts and handicrafts, sports, music, natural science. In grades 5 and 6, geography, biology and mathematics are taught bilingually. In grades 7-9 all subjects, except the native language and literature are taught in Latvian.

A bilingual education model in which Latvian is used as the language of communication and instruction. In grades 1-2, 70%-95% of each subject are taught bilingually. In grades 3-6, 50%-75% are taught bilingually, and the native language and the block of cultural subjects are taught in the native language. In grades 7-9, 40%-60% of geography, history, social studies, health, biology and mathematics are taught bilingually. With this model, students gain the same level of knowledge both in Latvian and in their native language.

A bilingual education model which implements a gradual transition to instruction in Latvian. Starting from grade 1, one subject is taught entirely in Latvian and each year another subject is added.

A bilingual education model in which, in grades 1-3, all subjects are taught in the native language and Latvian is taught as a second language. In grades 4-6, 50% of the optional subjects are taught in Latvian. In grades 7-9, foreign languages, mathematics, biology, physics, chemistry, music, computer science, and health are taught bilingually. Geography, social studies, visual arts, home economics and sports are taught in Latvian.

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Additional models offered in the questionnaire

Instruction entirely in Latvian In this model, all subjects are taught only in Latvian.

Instruction in Latvian, with the exception of the native language and culture In this model, all subjects, except for the native language and the block of cultural subjects are taught in Latvian.

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The views of the directors of non-Latvian schools. School directors evaluated each of the proposed models. The directors of non-Latvian schools see the future of their schools, in connection with introduction of a MoES bilingual education model, as follows:

- 52% positively assessed MoES bilingual education model 1;
- 50% positively assessed bilingual education model 3;
- 50% positively assessed bilingual education model 4;
- 47% positively assessed bilingual education model 2.

Only 8% of the directors of non-Latvian schools opted for instruction entirely in Latvian as the best model for their school. It is important to note that 59% of the directors of non-Latvian schools feel that instruction entirely in Latvian, with the exception of the native language and culture, is absolutely unacceptable.

An analysis of the survey results by regions shows that the situation in Riga is similar to the situation in the country as a whole. In Zemgale all the proposed models were more or less equally acceptable, including transition to instruction entirely in Latvian in non-Latvian schools. In Kurzeme, model 3 received a positive assessment from 69.3% of the respondents, model 4 - by 46%, models 1 and 2 - by 38%, and instruction entirely in Latvian, with the exception of the native language and culture, was acceptable to 23%. The majority of the school directors in Kurzeme (69.8%) had negative views on the transition to instruction entirely in Latvian in non-Latvian schools.

The majority of school directors in Vidzeme (61%) preferred model 3. 54% of the school directors chose model 2, 46% - models 4 and 1, and 31% would like to have instruction entirely in Latvian, with the exception of the native language and culture. In a parallel with Kurzeme, 69.2% of the school directors in Vidzeme were negative about transition to instruction entirely in Latvian in non-Latvian schools.

In Latgale, 72% of the school directors gave a positive assessment of model 4, 55% chose model 1, 51% - model 2, and 48% - model 3. 79.3% of the respondents in Latgale feel that instruction entirely in Latvian, with the exception of the native language and culture, is the least appropriate model for the development of non-Latvian schools.

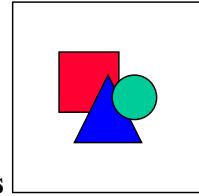
The views of the directors of Latvian schools. The directors of Latvian schools feel that the following models are best suited for the development of non-Latvian schools:

- bilingual education model 1 (41%),
- instruction entirely in Latvian (38%),
- bilingual education model 3 (37%),
- bilingual education model 4 (32%),
- instruction entirely in Latvian, with the exception of the native language and culture (23%),
- bilingual education model 2 (20%).

It is apparent that the directors of Latvian and non-Latvian schools have basically similar views about the development of non-Latvian schools in Latvia (see chart 2). For example, quite a large number of both Latvian and non-Latvian school directors give a positive assessment of MoES bilingual education models 1 and 3. Views differ strongly with regard to the transition of non-Latvian schools to instruction entirely in Latvian, or in Latvian, with the exception of the native language and culture. The directors of Latvian schools are quite positive about this option, but for the majority of the directors of non-Latvian schools (59%) it is completely unacceptable.

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The views of school directors on



development perspectives for non-Latvian schools

Alternative bilingual education models. 10 of the non-Latvian schools submitted their own models and comments. As alternatives to the MoES models, directors of the non-Latvian schools propose:

- up to 50% of the subject matter taught in Latvian/bilingually, with preference to teaching in Latvian rather than bilingually;
- examination of the question whether the science subjects should be taught bilingually, (2 opposite views);
- various modifications of MoES model 2 (4 proposals).

2.5. School cooperation opportunities

The answers received from school directors show that the directors of both Latvian and non-Latvian schools would like to improve cooperation between schools. For example, 92% of the non-Latvian and 73% of the Latvian schools would like to establish cooperation with each other. The results of the survey also show that cooperation is already taking place between 69% of the non-Latvian schools and 65% of the Latvian schools. The activities mentioned most frequently are:

- extracurricular activities (45% non-Latvian and 38% Latvian),
- camps (24% non-Latvian and 21% Latvian),
- joint projects (22% non-Latvian and 18% Latvian),
- exchanges (12% non-Latvian and 12% Latvian).

Conclusions and needed support. The results of the survey show that most directors of non-Latvian schools are interested in introducing bilingual education models in their schools. Some schools have already taken positive steps in this direction. There are, however, problems which hamper successful implementation of bilingual models, for example, teachers' lack of methodological skills (use of traditional methods in the bilingual teaching process, for example, translation methods), lack of a language environment, lack of teaching materials, teachers' limited knowledge of Latvian, lack of cooperation between teachers, etc.

In the context of this project, special attention will be devoted to activities in the following areas:

- development and implementation of curricula and teaching methods for bilingual education,
- use of interactive methods for teaching subjects, especially the arts subjects, which would promote effective use of the language by students,
- development of bilingual methodology courses and introduction of these courses in pedagogical institutes of higher education, which would ensure a balance between theory and practice in in-service training courses as well,

- development of models of cooperation between LAT2 teachers and subject teachers,
- development of cooperation between Latvian and non-Latvian schools, which both Latvian and non-Latvian school representatives regard as positive and would like to see improved.

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Notes

An unfortunate legacy of Soviet rule in Latvia is an inherited, complex ethno-demographic situation characterized by ethnic discord among different groups of society. The attempt to preserve the concept of "nation" and the need for the integration of the Russian speaking population sets a difficult task for Latvian education reform. One of the strongest manifestations of ethnic fragmentation in education is the existence of two parallel school systems with Latvian and Russian languages of instruction. This presentation will provide an overview of the needs assessment study conducted by the Soros Foundation - Latvia (SFL) and describe the project "Open School", implemented by SFL in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Naturalization Board, aimed at fostering the approximation of the two school networks and its effects on curriculum, teacher training, and pedagogy