LATVIA'S RESULTS IN IEA CIVIC EDUCATION STUDY

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Abstract

The article examines the results of the IEA Civic Education Study in Latvia. The civic education knowledge and skills of fourteen-year-old students and upper secondary students in Latvia are compared to other participating countries. The author analyses the dependence of the students' knowledge and skills on several factors (urban and rural schools, open classroom climate, family background) and presents an analysis of student attitudes and opinions in the sphere of civic education.

INTRODUCTION

IEA Civic education study collected data from 14-year-old students in 1999 and from upper secondary students in 2000. Twenty-eight countries participated in the study of the 14-year-old students, and 16 countries were represented in the upper secondary student study. Students completed both a test and a questionnaire concerning civic education; teachers and school principals, too, were given a questionnaire. The theoretical framework, instruments, the international data processing methodology and results are described in the following sources: Amadeo, et al., 2002; Torney – Purta, 1999; Torney – Purta, 2001.

The sample of 14-year-old students in the study included students in the 8th grade from 150 schools, one class per school. In Latvia 75 schools used Latvian as the language of instruction and in 75 schools Russian was the language of instruction. In Latvia there was 95% participation. The participating schools were divided into strata according to students' language of instruction (Latvian or Russian), placement of the school in one of Latvia's 5 regions, and in relation to the urbanization factor – whether the school is situated in the capital (Riga), a city, a small town or in the country.

A total of 2849 students in the group of 14-year-olds participated in the Civic education study. The average age of the 8th graders was 14.4 years. Table 1 shows the division of

the participants according to their nationality: 5.5% of all participants were not born in Latvia; 94% of students always speak the language of the test (Latvian or Russian) at home, 5.2% sometimes speak, and 0.8% never speak the language of the test at home.

Table 1: Distribution of the 14-year-old students participating in the Civic education study according to their ethnic group

Ethnic group	*%*
Latvians	59,0
Russians	31,7
Byelorussians	2,6
Ukrainians	2,2
Poles	2,2
Others	2,3

A total of 2756 students in the 10th grade from 125 schools participated in the upper secondary school study (for 1932 students the instruction language was Latvian, and for 824 was Russian).

The article discusses student achievement, factors that influence it, student opinions and attitudes, primarily using frequency, correlation and regression analyses.

KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

The 14-year-old students

When considering the results of the IEA Civic education study of 14-year-old students, we can point out 3 groups of countries depending on students' achievement in the test (Torney-Purta, 2001):

- countries in which the student achievement is above the international average – Poland, Finland, Cyprus, Greece, Hong Kong, the USA, Italy, Slovakia, Norway and the Czech Republic;
- countries in which student achievement does not statistically significantly differ from the international average – Australia, Hungary, Slovenia, Denmark, Germany, Russia, England, Sweden, Switzerland and Bulgaria;
- countries in which student achievement is below the international average – Portugal, Belgium (French), Estonia, Lithuania, Romania, Latvia, Chile and Columbia.

This dispersion of students' average achievement cannot be explained with only one hypothesis, e.g., that student achievement in civic education in the countries of "old" democracy is higher than in the "new" democracy countries, etc. The average achievement of Latvia's 8th graders, unfortunately, corresponds to the group of countries with results below the international average. The analysis shows that the

average achievement of Latvia's students does not statistically significantly differ from the achievement of such countries as Belgium (French), Estonia, Lithuania, Romania and Chile. Moreover, this group of countries is not homogeneous although it includes our neighbour countries Estonia and Lithuania and another "post-socialist" country – Romania. However, the group with the highest achievement includes other "post-socialist" countries – Poland, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

We must therefore consider some other factors determining student achievement on the international scale. Students' average age should be mentioned first – the older were the students who participated in the study, the higher was the average achievement of the country (correlation coefficient 0.37). The average age of students participating in the study was 14.7 years. Latvia's students were a bit younger – 14.5 years. It must be pointed out that in some countries (Hong Kong, Russia, Poland, Italy, Switzerland) students' average age reached or even exceeded 15 years, which actually was against international regulations. However, it should be noted that in the group of high achievement there is also Slovakia, where the average age of 8th graders was one of the lowest – 14.3 years.

There is a positive correlation between students' average achievement and GDP (gross domestic product) per capita – 0.32. But again, the per capita GDP in Poland is 6.5 times lower than in Belgium.

When analyzing and assessing the average achievement of Latvia's students, we should consider that Civic education as a course is being taught in our country in Grade 9, not in Grade 8, which was the grade chosen for the IEA study according to the internationally determined age of students. However, civic education topics are discussed in several other school subjects, for instance, in our country 8th graders study economics. Most countries included Grade 8 in the study, although some countries chose Grade 9 for various reasons.

The results of the study prove that the differences between students' best and worse achievement within each participating country are greater than the differences in the average students' achievement of the participating countries. There are also many students with high achievement in each country (including Latvia), just as there are many students with low achievement in each country. On the whole, the difference among countries is not too great – the average achievement in 25 countries (out of 28) does not differ more than 0.5 standard deviation from the international average (except Poland, Chile and Columbia). If we compare the data of Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) for about 22 countries which also participated in this Civic education study, we find that the difference between the best and worst average achievement of the countries is 1.8 standard deviation. Therefore, the analysis of the within-country differences in achievement in the international context is one of the main purposes of the study.

The upper secondary students

It is basically impossible to compare the average achievement among countries for the group of upper secondary students as is common in large international studies. The TIMSS guidelines for the Civic test (older group) allowed countries to include

any upper secondary grade (from 10 to 12) in the study, which explains the range of student ages.

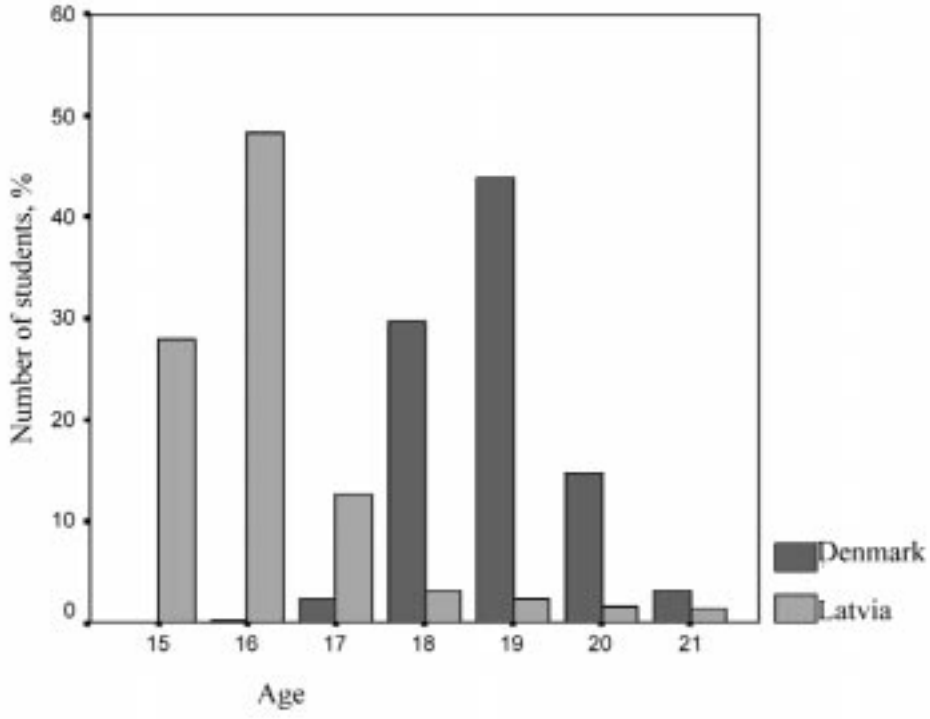
The choice of the grade depended on the aims set by the researchers of each country. The researchers in Latvia were interested in assessing the role of Civic education in relation to our students' achievement and opinions. As Civic education is taught in our schools in Grade 9, we chose Grade 10 for the study, which corresponds to an upper secondary grade (compulsory regulation of the study) and is the closest to Grade 9.

Thus Latvia's students were younger than students of other countries, as their average age was only 16.6 years. The oldest in the study were Danish students – their average age was 19.4 years (Table 2). As the standard deviation of the age of Latvia's students is rather large, it shows that many even younger students participated in the study in our country. Figure 1 shows the distribution of Latvia's students according to age, and Danish students for comparison. 28% of Latvia's students were 15-year-olds, 48% - 16-year-olds and the rest older. It is interesting to note that in the study of 14-year-old students the average age of students in four countries was 15 or even older. The comparatively older students in Latvia, whose age does not correspond to Grade 10, actually study in the trade, agriculture and technical schools.

Table 2: Characteristics of the participants' age and sample of the Civic education study (upper secondary students)

Country	*Average age*	*Standard deviation of the age*	*Grade*	*Relative size of the target population (%)*
Czech Republic	17,9	0,7	12	78
Chile	17,9	0,8	12	64
Denmark	19,4	0,9	12	55
Hong Kong	18,5	0,8	12	29
Estonia	18,2	0,4	12	49
Israel	16,8	0,4	11	
Cyprus	17,7	0,4	12	67
Columbia	17,7	1,3	11	50
Russia	17,0	0,4	11	50
Latvia	16,6	1,2	10	89
Norway	18,1	0,7	12	99
Poland	17,6	0,4	11	90
Portugal	17,6	1,1	11	76
Slovenia	18,4	0,5	12	68
Switzerland	17,9	1,1	11	39
Sweden	18,9	0,5	12	82

Figure 1: Distribution of Latvian and Danish upper secondary students according to age



The target population of the study – i.e., the group of students who comprise the sample, is another important factor for international comparison of results. The primary and lower secondary school studies usually take all students of the respective grade in the country as the target group. The situation is more complex at the upper secondary stage. First, it should be taken into consideration that not all students continue their studies in upper secondary school. Secondly, in Latvia – as in many countries – students are divided into several streams in the secondary education stage. In Latvia, such streams are: gymnasiums, general secondary schools, technical schools, trade schools including secondary education, vocational training of different lengths without providing secondary education, agricultural schools. Each of type of school has its own teaching/learning standard and the choice of stream depends primarily on students' academic achievement. If the sample included only students from gymnasiums then we could unequivocally forecast that the average achievement would be higher compared to a sample that also included trade school students. The sample in Latvia included students from all the respective schools and our target population was 89% of all the youth of the corresponding age. The remaining 11% were the youth who studied in specialized educational institutions, in very small schools or did not study at all. The target population in several countries participating in the study was less than 50% of the young people of the corresponding age. For instance, in Estonia the target population was 12th graders of the general secondary school; the relation of the students and the total

number of students of the corresponding age was 0.49. In Norway this relation was 0.99. The relative size of the target populations in all participating countries is shown in Table 2.

For many reasons, therefore, it is not possible to have a simple comparison of the achievement in the upper secondary group as was done in the 14-year old group. The straight comparison of the average achievement of Latvian and Danish students says very little because the age difference is so great. A possible solution is not to compare the achievement of the students, but their increment in comparison with the achievement of the 14-year-old students, taking into consideration the age difference. Students' average increment of achievement ranges from 2 points in Poland to 8.9 points in Estonia per year. These results are shown in Table 3. Among 15 countries (the countries that participated both in 14–year-old and upper secondary study) Latvia's increment is comparatively high – 6.1 points, thus it takes 6th place among the participating countries.

Table 3: Increment in students' achievement in one year's time

Country	*Average age in the 14-year-olds study*	*Average age in the upper secondary study*	*Increase in achievement in Civic education per year (in points)*
Czech Republic	14,4	17,9	5,3
Chile	14,3	17,9	5,3
Denmark	14,8	19,4	7,0
Hong Kong (SAR)	15,3	18,5	5,8
Estonia	14,7	18,2	8,9
Cyprus	14,8	17,7	3,5
Columbia	14,6	17,7	5,1
Russia	15,1	17,0	5,7
Latvia	14,5	16,6	6,1
Norway	14,8	18,1	5,8
Poland	15,0	17,6	2,8
Portugal	14,5	17,6	8,1
Slovenia	14,8	18,4	4,0
Switzerland	15,0	17,9	8,5
Sweden	14,3	18,9	6,7

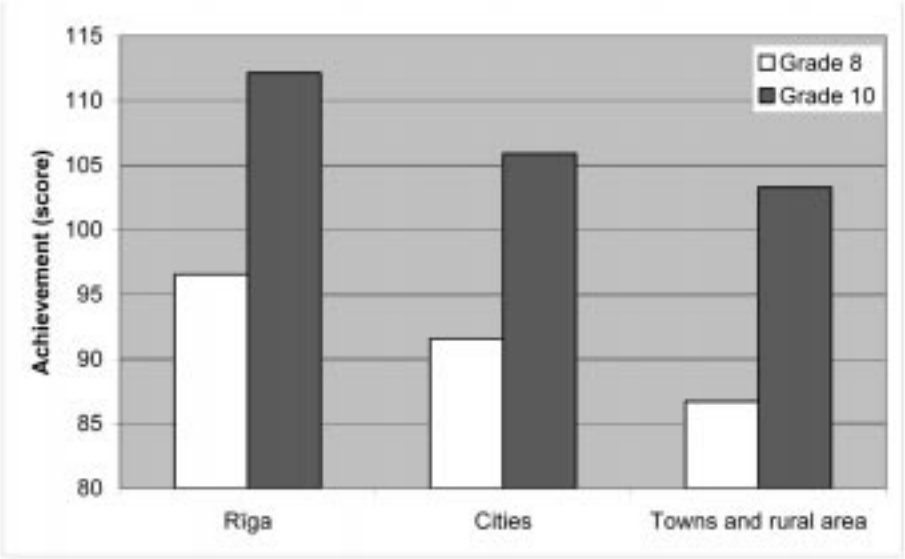
Another possibility is to take into account the differences in target population in different countries. The increment of average achievement has a negative correlation with the relative size of the target population. The simplest way is to measure the regression equation and to re-calculate the average increment per year, thus obtaining the corrected increment of the average achievement (Drivdale-Karu_kina, 2003). With this calculation, Latvia's situation (i.e., the increment of achievement) in relation to other countries improves even more.

Thus, the analysis of the increment in achievement indicates that the achievement of Latvia's upper secondary students in the Civic education study is better than the achievement of the 14-year-old students. Though the results in the primary school are low the achievement of our students in the secondary school has much improved.

FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS

Notable differences in student achievement are revealed when students are divided into strata according to the urbanization factor. Figure 2 shows student achievement in the Civic education study where students are divided into three strata – students of Riga (the capital), cities and towns and the countryside. Riga students have the highest achievement, students of small towns and country schools – the lowest. The difference between the average achievement of students of these two strata is 10 points in the 14-year-old-study and 9 points in the upper secondary phase. As the standard deviation of student achievement of all participating countries is 20, the difference between student achievement in Riga and that in small town and rural schools is approximately 0.5 standard deviation. This corresponds to the difference between the international average and the average achievement of the very best countries, or to the difference between the international average and the average achievement of the very worst countries (here, certainly, the description "best" and "worst" country refers only to the students' average achievement in the test) in the international scale.

Figure 2: Dependence of students' achievement on the placement of the school (urbanization factor)



An analogous situation is evidenced in the results of international comparative education studies over the last 12 years: in Latvia, Riga students always have the highest average achievement, followed by students of cities, then small towns and rural schools. This phenomenon can fairly be called general because it is expressed

over a relatively long period of time and at all stages of education (primary, lower secondary and upper secondary school) and in all subjects (mathematics, science, reading, civic education, information technologies).

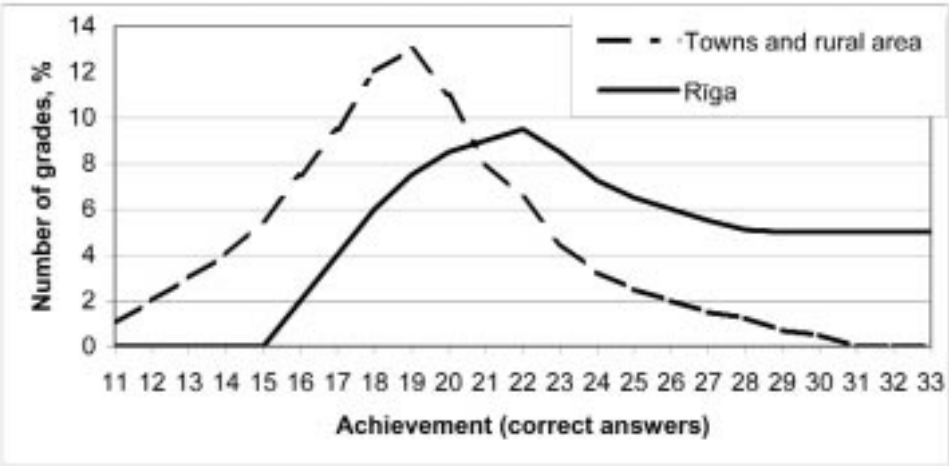
Figure 3 presents the distribution of student achievement in Riga, small town and rural schools in the 14-year-old group (the figure does not include the student achievement in cities, which on average are worse than the achievement of Riga students and better than the achievement of the rural students). Thus we may unequivocally state that the achievement of rural students – their knowledge and skills in the field of civic education- is considerably lower than the achievement of urban students.

Certainly, school is not the only source of information of students' knowledge and skills in civic education. If we analyze the data further (Drivdale-Karu_kina, 2003), it is seen that family and other factors have a significant role in civic education but here the inability of rural schools to compensate the limitations characteristic to rural community is expressed.

The data from the student questionnaires also show that on the whole 49% of 8th graders in Latvia "Agree" and "Fully agree" with the statement that "Children who live in the country regions have fewer possibilities to acquire good secondary education". At secondary school, 58% of the 10th graders hold this opinion. Moreover, the Riga students are even more convinced of their greater possibilities to acquire good secondary education – 65%; 52% of students from small town and rural schools (10th graders) are also of the same opinion; 37% of the 10th graders do not agree with this statement.

Even more students agree with the statement "Students from needy families have fewer possibilities to acquire good secondary education" – 61% and 57% in grades 10 and 8, respectively; 36% (10th graders) and 29% (8th graders) do not agree with this statement. In Riga more 10th graders – 64% agree that the social economic situation of the family influences the possibility of acquiring good education; in the small town and rural schools 57% agree with this statement.

Figure 3: Distribution of achievement of the 14-year-old students in two strata (Riga, small town and rural schools) on class level



The last fact is connected with another important result of the analyses: student achievement in the Civic education study depends on the social economic situation of the family, which in this case is measured by the level of parents' education and the number of books at home (Drivdale-Karu_kina, 2003). The socio-economic status of Riga students' families is higher. However, although significant, this is not the only factor which determines better academic achievement of Riga students.

The number of students per class in Latvia varies substantially, from less than ten to more than thirty students per class. The correlation coefficient for the number of students in class and student achievement is 0.14 (in the 14-year-old group). While not high, it is nevertheless a statistically significant result. Moreover, the correlation coefficient does not show causal relationships.

In analyzing these data, we must take into account the fact that smaller schools and classrooms in Latvia are found specifically in rural areas and small towns. The upkeep of educational institutions in such areas costs relatively more when the cost is calculated on a per-student basis, and that is because schools and classrooms are small and the student-teacher ratio is low. Here we must remember that poorer results in terms of skills and knowledge in Latvia are shown by students from rural and small-town schools. This means that the low ratio of students to teachers in small rural schools is not necessarily a good thing, taking into account the limited resources which are available in the system. This does not, of course, mean that the small number of students is automatically the cause for lower levels of knowledge and skills. Quite the contrary – under conditions where a teacher has only a small number of students, one might well expect the best quality of education. In some other countries of the world, students in large inner-city schools post the worst achievements.

The results of the research, in other words, do not lead to any obvious conclusions, but they do point to the existing situation in Latvia. Reforms are needed in this area – more money must be awarded, and perhaps the number of small schools needs to be reduced so that resources can be concentrated in the larger ones. It is clear that the initiative for such reforms will not come from schools or local governments – this is a matter for educational and regional development policy at the national level.

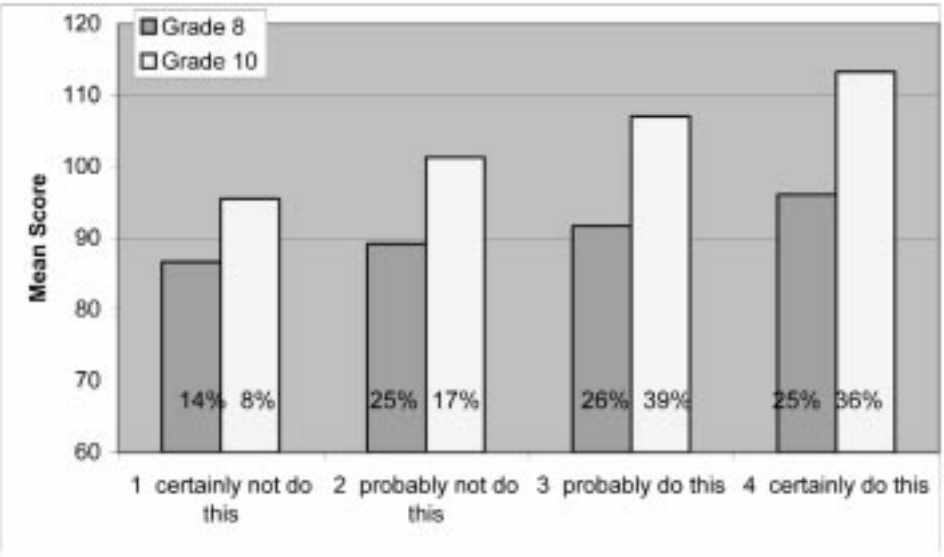
One unarguable conclusion is that many problems should be solved in the educational system of Latvia, so that there are equal opportunities for qualitative education in all schools of Latvia, especially in the small rural schools.

Student achievement and its increment in Grade 10 compared with Grade 8 is also influenced by a more open atmosphere during the lessons. Thus, for instance, the number of student answers "Often" and "Sometimes" to the statement "Students may freely disagree with their teachers when discussing political and social issues at the lesson" has increased from 61% in Grade 8 to 75% in Grade 10. There is a similar situation concerning other similar statements. Thus upper secondary students are more encouraged to develop and openly express their opinion.

Freer atmosphere and discussions in the classroom are also positively connected with students' knowledge and skills in the sphere of civic education. The correlation

coefficient between students' knowledge and skills in tests and answers to the above-mentioned group of questions in the questionnaire in Grade 8 was 0.21. In Grade 10 the relation between the atmosphere in the classroom and students' knowledge and skills in civic education is even more pronounced – the respective correlation coefficient is 0.31. This is well-illustrated in Figure 4, which presents the relation between the answers to the statement "Students may freely disagree with their teachers when discussing political and social issues at the lesson" and the results in the civic education test in Grades 8 and 10. The numbers in the figure show the percentage of students who have chosen the respective answer to this statement.

Figure 4: Relation between the answers to the statement "Students may freely disagree with their teachers when discussing political and social issues at the lesson" and the results in the civic education test in Grades 8 and 10 in Latvia.



The Civic education study affords a wealth of information on students' opinions and attitudes in the sphere of civic education (Amadeo, 2002; Drivdale-Karuskina, 2003; Torney-Purta , 2001).

During the national analysis of the data we investigated the opinions and attitudes in civic education of different student groups in Latvia – students from Latvian or Russian language instruction school, urban and rural students, boys and girls.

It should be explained here that in Latvia's schools studies have for a long time been carried out mainly in two languages – Latvian and Russian. The ethnic composition of the population in Latvia is presented in Table 4. The distribution of participants

in the study according to the ethnic group is given in Table 1. Usually the Russian, Byelorussian and Ukrainian students attend Russian language instruction schools, although since Latvia's independence in 1991, the situation has been changing. Children from mixed families, in which the father is Latvian and the mother Russian or vice versa, often choose to attend Latvian language instruction school. The national minority schools with the Ukrainian, Byelorussian, Jewish, Lithuanian and other languages as the instruction languages have been established in independent Latvia since 1991. At present, even in the Russian language instruction schools more and more subjects will be taught in the state language – Latvian. In future this change in upper secondary schools will occur even more rapidly as the changes in the respective legislation are being made.

Table 4. Population of Latvia according to ethnic composition (2000)

Ethnic group	*%*
Latvians	57,8
Russians	29,6
Byelorussians	4,1
Ukrainians	2,7
Poles	2,5
Lithuanians	1,4
Jews	0,3
Gipsies	0,1
Estonians	0,1
Germans	0,1
Others	1,2

The analysis of data shows that differences in opinions and attitudes about social processes and their role in them are greater among the students from Latvian and Russian language instruction schools than between the rural and urban students or between boys and girls. The knowledge and skills in the civic education test, in their turn, are the same for Latvian language and Russian language students (Drivdale-Karuškina, 2003).

A very significant difference is observed in the attitudes of Latvian language students and Russian language students in regard to Latvia's state, its flag and achievements (Table 5). The opinions of Latvia students are close to the international average but these of the Russian language-speaking students are different. The senior group of the study (10th graders) presents even a sharper difference of opinions – there are fewer upper secondary Russian-speaking students who are positive about Latvia's state and its flag. Moreover, more Russian-speaking students would like to live in another country.

Differences are also observed among students with different languages of instruction in their response to the statement "There is nothing much in Latvia's history to be proud of" – 19% of 10th graders with Latvian as the instruction language agree to that compared to 41% of students with Russian as the instruction language. Though the majority (77%) of the students of Latvian language schools and even more than half (52%) of students of Russian language schools have a negative opinion for this statement, the fact that there are so many who agree is worrying.

Students of Russian language schools trust less Latvia's government and other state institutions, political parties and media (Figure 5). 15% students of Latvian language schools and 12% of Russian language schools (10th graders) trust the political parties. 70% of 10th graders of Latvian language schools and only 51% of students of Russian language schools trust television news, the radio news – 68% and 51% respectively, and news in the press – 59% and 39%. The opinion of the Latvian language students exceeds the international average (63% for television news, 64% for radio news, 56% for press news). The level of trusting mass media expressed by the Russian-speaking students is lower.

Table 5: Positive attitudes toward one's nation (percentages of responses of "agree" and "strongly agree")

Item	*International Item Frequencies (14-year-old, survey in 1999)*	*International Item Frequencies (upper secondary students, survey in 2000)*	*Latvia 14-year-old, survey in 1999 (grade 8)*		*Latvia 16-year-old, survey in 2000 (grade 10)*	
			Latvian Language of instruction	*Russian Language of instruction*	*Latvian Language of instruction*	*Russian Language of instruction*
The flag of this country is important to me.	82	79	86	43	89	34
I have great love for this country.	87	88	84	63	82	53
This country should be proud of what it has achieved.	86	86	83	70	81	59
I would prefer to live permanently in another country. (negative)	23	23	28	33	27	42

The 14-year-old students and the upper secondary students of Latvia in the international comparison are characterized by a greater wish to participate in such political activities as joining a political party, to run for elections, etc. in future. However, here also the same desire of the Russian–speaking students is smaller – 35% of upper secondary Latvian-speaking students think about joining the political party and only 17% of Russian-speaking students have this wish.

51% of Latvia's 10th graders agree that they are interested in politics. There were 41% such students in Grade 8. Greater interest in politics could also be noted in the international comparison in the group of the upper secondary students. Thus the increase of interest in politics expressed by Latvia's upper secondary students corresponds to the international trend. The interest in politics in both age groups of Latvia's students corresponds to the average international level, while the students with Russian as the language of instruction still exhibit less interest.

80% of Grade 10 students from Latvian language instruction schools and only 63% of students from Russian language instruction schools think about participating in the elections by voting.

The 1999 study shows different attitudes of 14-year-old students in Latvian language instruction schools and Russian language instruction schools regarding events in Latvia after independence. Students of Latvian language instruction schools perceive the changes that have taken place as more positive while the students of Russian language instruction schools have a more negative attitude. Thus, a number of Russian-speaking students consider that changes have made life in Latvia more difficult, unjust, poorer, etc. Students of Latvian language instruction schools and classes, in their turn, stress more that life on the whole has become easier, fairer, richer, etc. To a large extent, this does not reflect the personal experience of these 8th graders, but their opinion, which has developed at schools, at home and in the community.

The analyses of other data of the study also show that the social value systems and the sense of civic belonging are different for Latvian-speaking students and Russian-speaking students.

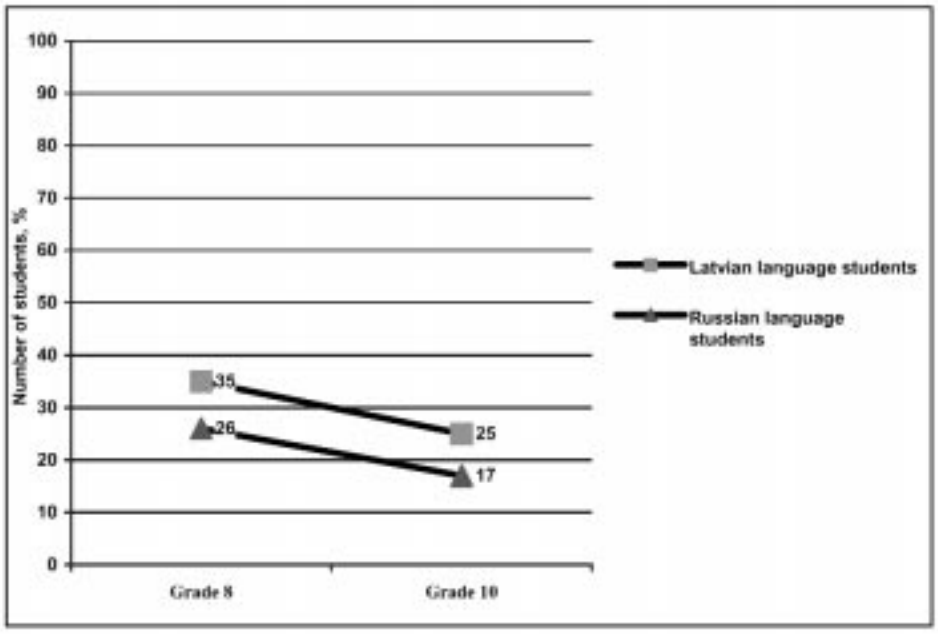
At present, a social integration programme is being developed and implemented in Latvia, which also includes ethnic integration. The results of the study show that Latvia's social integration programme should envisage a greater attention to teaching civic education at school, where focus should be placed on the development of social consolidation in the education system.

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For the first time, Latvia - within the IEA Civic education study - along with other countries of the world, has participated in the international quality comparison of civic education.

Knowledge and skills in civic education of Latvia's 8th graders (14-year-old students) is lower than the average level in the participating countries. The mean achievement of our 8th graders is not statistically significantly different in comparison with student achievement in Belgium (French), Estonia, Lithuania, Romania and Chile.

Figure 5: "Trusting government of Latvia"



The increment of knowledge and skills in civic education of Latvia's 10th graders compared with that of our 8th graders is better than the respective mean annual increment of achievement in the international comparison.

The differences between countries in mean performance on the test in general are not large. The variations of student achievement in any country participating in the IEA Civic education study are greater than the variation between the country means. Therefore the analysis of achievement variations in countries is one of the main trends in the international and national analysis of study data.

The variations of students' knowledge and skills in Latvia are determined by:

- School and classroom factors (the placement of school in a rural or urban area, open classroom climate);
- Family-related factors (home literacy resources, education level of parents);
- Individual factors (expected years of education, watching TV news).

One of the factors determining better knowledge and skills in civic education at secondary school level is more open classroom climate, a possibility for students to discuss freely the political and social issues at lessons.

In Latvia higher average achievement in civic education is observed in students from Riga, the capital, followed by large cities, small town and rural students. A similar situation is found for both age groups of the Civic education study as well as in all

other international comparative studies (for instance, TIMSS, OECD PISA, PIRLS, COMPED, etc.).

There is a relatively greater number of students with poor results in the rural schools. It is necessary to decrease the difference between the results of high and low-achievers, paying more attention to low-achievers and especially to low-achievement schools in Latvia.

The opportunity for equally qualitative education should be guaranteed in city, town and rural schools of Latvia. Detailed analyses should be made of every low-achieving country school considering the socio-economic status of its students, the role of the school in the cultural life of the community, regional development perspectives and other factors. Strategies for improvement and, if necessary, additional financial allocations or closing down the school in order to concentrate the resources in larger schools should be worked out. When optimizing the school network, financial resources should be fairly allocated (the size of the school, students/teachers ratio, etc.).

In general, the trends in opinions and attitudes of both age groups in the field of civic education in Latvia are similar to those in most countries participating in the study.

A more detailed analysis of national data shows that student attitudes related to civic education in Latvia differ greatly depending whether the students are enrolled in schools with Latvian or Russian as the language of instruction. The knowledge and skills shown in the test are the same for both sets of students, however.

Thus, for example, student attitudes to the state, its flag and achievement differ greatly. Data show that the opinions of Latvian students actually correspond to the international mean average while the opinions of Russian-speaking students are different. The difference in opinions in the senior group of the study (10^{th} grade) is even sharper. There is a similar situation regarding trusting state institutions, mass media and the wish to join political activities in future.

Also the analysis of other data shows that Latvian and Russian-speaking students have different social value systems and senses of civic belonging. Therefore, civic education at schools meet work to maximally promote the development of social cohesion in the educational system.

Our students listen to and learn from mass media and in general trust them (certainly, more than they trust government-related institutions). This means that mass media (both published in Latvian and in Russian) has a significant role and responsibility in the development of our country's young citizens.

The relatively low average level of knowledge and skills in civic education and student opinions on this subject indicate need to pay more attention to this new sphere of education in our country by introducing appropriate civic education themes as early as the junior grades.

Main trends in the improvement of civic education in Latvia should be the following:

- schools must reconsider their current methods of promoting a democratic environment in the school and decide upon more extended involvement of students in the decision-making process;

- education leaders and teachers should promote students' participation in state level civic projects, competitions and other activities; civic education activities of the school, out-of-class work in civic education and civic education activities should begin at the junior primary school level;
- teachers in the sphere of civic education should:
  - develop students' positive attitude to and trust in state institutions,
  - organize social projects with definite aims and involve students, schools and out-of-school organizations,
  - promote closer contact between students of Latvian language instruction schools and Russian language instruction schools-through joint projects, discussions and activities,
  - try to develop a wider sense of belonging – state belonging – in students of Latvian language instruction schools and Russian language instruction schools,
  - learn what the non-governmental organizations in their vicinity are offering and assess the possibilities of involving them in the improvement of their civic education lessons,
  - while promoting the rights of different groups of the society, analyze specific examples and widespread suppositions and do not accept postulating only principles,
  - use all the possible methods more extensively, both in lessons and in civic education in general;
- political parties have to assess their influence on young people and should promote the acceptance of values democracy;
- state management structures must participate more actively in the development of youths' civic consciousness and must work more on providing explanations about state institutions, their objectives and activities with the aim of creating a lasting impression on young people about the positive image of the country;

Ministry of Education and Science should attend to:

- the complete introduction of the document *National Standards of Compulsory Education* in the study process of schools. The above-mentioned document also envisages considerable improvements in teaching and learning of civic education;
- the continuation of improving the contents and methodology of civic education within the framework of the project funded by World Bank on development of education quality in Latvia, and the projects of the Soros foundation;
- professional development in pre-service and in-service teacher training in civic education.

To investigate the situation in civic education in the context of ethnic minorities and social integration in Latvia in more detail, the researchers have started a respective national study.

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