

The aspect of culture in the social inclusion of ethnic minorities: evaluation of the impact of inclusion policies under the open method of co-ordination in the European Union ; assessing the cultural policies of six member states ; final report Latvia

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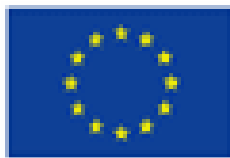
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The Aspect of Culture in the Social Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities

Evaluation of the Impact of Inclusion Policies under the
Open Method of Co-ordination in the European Union:
Assessing the Cultural Policies of Six Member States

Final Report

Latvia



An Evaluation Project under the EU's Social Protection and Social Integration Policy

**By Professor Brigita Zepa with Ilze Lāce, Evija Kļave and
Inese Šūpule**

Baltic Institute of Social Sciences

October 2006

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Foreword and Acknowledgements

This Working Paper is one in a series of country reports submitted for the European Centre for Minority Issues project “The Aspect of Culture in the Social Inclusion of Ethnic Minorities: Assessing the Cultural Policies of six Member States of the European Union” (hereafter called the OMC Project). The OMC Project was conceived by the ECMI and established with the generous support of the European Commission’s Directorate of Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and under the European Union’s Social Protection and Social Integration Policy (Grant Agreement VS/2005/0686). The present Working Paper was researched and authored by colleagues at the Baltic Institute for Social Sciences, Riga, Latvia.

The OMC Project evaluates the National Action Plans (NAPs) of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, the Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden under the European Union’s Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC) on Social Inclusion in terms of cultural policies and their impact on the social inclusion of ethnic minorities. The OMC Project is a twelve-month effort, which began in December 2005. It focuses on three domains of social exclusion:

- Education,
- The media, and
- Public participation.

The aim of the OMC Project is to enhance cultural policies and NAPs with the overall goal to promote greater inclusion of members of ethnic minorities and Roma/Sinti groups in the socio-economic life of the European Union. The specific purpose of the OMC Project is to evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of these policies in the six member states through the piloting of an index of Common Inter-Cultural Indicators (CICIs).

The problem of indicators has been a central part of the social policies adopted under the Lisbon Strategy (2000) including the OMC on Social Inclusion and ongoing efforts to develop and refine social indicators continue under the auspices of the European Commission. One of the main objectives of the OMC Project is to contribute constructively to this effort in the area of cultural indicators.

The parties most deserving of recognition for the contents of these Working Papers are the members of the six country research teams who are listed on the front page of each report. ECMI would like to thank every member of these teams for their hard work and continued interest and support for the OMC Project. The research teams have benefited from consultation with several external experts during the research. First and foremost, the OMC Project and the research for the country reports could never have been conceived without the unique modelling of effectiveness and cost-effectiveness as well as the personal and energetic dedication of Prof. Francois Grin, Director of the “Economics-Language-Education” Observatory at the University of Geneva, formerly Acting and Deputy Director of ECMI. At the same time, the application of Prof. Grin’s model could

not have been possible without the assistance and ever so patient didactic help of Mr. Michele Gazzola, of the "Economics-Language-Education" Observatory at the University of Geneva. ECMI owes much to these two experts on the economics of language policies. Credit also goes to Dr. Andreas Hieronymus of the Institute for Migration and Racism Research, Hamburg and Dr. Deborah Mabbett of the School of Politics and Sociology, Birkbeck College, University of London both of whom showed keen interest in seeing the OMC Project getting off the ground.

Within ECMI a number of dedicated persons who have worked with the OMC Project from the beginning deserve special thanks: Ms. Denika Blacklock, the first Project Manager and Ms. Ulrike Schmidt, the second Project Manager have both been indispensable as have the continued support of Project Co-ordinator Ms. Maj-Britt Risberg-Hansen and IT Manager Matthias Voigt. ECMI's Deputy Director Ewa Chylinski has been instrumental in both the initial phase of the project design and the implementation phases as well as in the relations to the European Commission, and Senior Research Associate and eminent expert on Roma issues, Dr. Eben Friedman has lend us extensive support in every aspect of the Project. Special thanks go to ECMI's Librarian Wes McKinney without whose professional dedication these reports would not reach the public. Finally, a warm thanks to those individuals who seldom get recognized: the interns who have worked every bit as hard as anyone else attached to this project: Ms. Jaimee Braun, Ms. Annika Salmi, Ms. Alina Tudose and Ms. Kate Corenthal.

ECMI hopes that these Working Papers will prove useful to researchers interested in or participating in the ongoing research on the social exclusion of ethnic minorities and the development of cultural policies within the European Union. Any inquires related to these reports should be address directly to the main authors of each Working Paper who are also individually responsible for the content of the Papers. A list of contact details as well as further information about the OMC Project can be found by visiting the homepages of the OMC Project at www.ecmi-eu.org.

Dr. Tove H. Malloy
Scientific Director of the OMC Project

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of the project was to evaluate the cultural policies of the National Action Plans (NAPs) on Social Inclusion under the European Union's Open Method of Co-ordination (OMC).

Policy documents on ethnic minority culture policies and social inclusion

The most important policy-planning document in the field of minority culture policies and social integration is the National programme entitled "Society Integration in Latvia". The programme for 2001-2006 covered policies in such areas as civic participation and political integration, social and regional society integration, education, language, culture and information. The new National programme on society integration is currently being completed.

Therefore, the Latvian National Action Plan for the Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006) and other documents analysed only hint at minority related issues, which mainly highlight the importance of ethnic composition of population and the Latvian language competences in employment and necessity for Latvian training for particular minority groups.

Education policy and language policy related issues have for a period been the most important policies in Latvia oriented towards ethnic and social integration of society.

Bilingual education policy: objective and implementation

Educational reform – introduction of bilingual education in minority schools can be considered as the most important policy issue for the period of 2004-2006 in Latvia.

The objective of the policy is the improvement of the Latvian skills for the non-Latvian population, for ethnic minorities with poor Latvian language skills or no knowledge of Latvian at all. Increased Latvian language skills thus promote the inclusion of this group into the labour market.

Choice of evaluation methods and indicators

The reform launched in 1999 when the first students began their studies according to the new minority education programmes and will enter secondary schools in 2007. Therefore, actual policy results will be not be available to evaluate until this time.

Furthermore, besides the desired goal of improved knowledge of Latvian and facilitated society integration as a result of the reform, there are no clearly defined alternative indicators given by the policy makers to evaluate the policy outcomes. Other long-term results of the policy, the impacts of the education reform on the integration of the society can be evaluated after an even longer time, so only mid-term evaluations of the policy results are possible for the time being.

Taking into account all of these limitations, two evaluation methods were applied. First, in the expert focus groups, policy makers and policy implementers discussed the policy preparation, implementation and investment of the main agents involved aimed at qualitative evaluation of the process and results, as well as identification of the most appropriate indicators for measuring policy outcomes. After that, taking into consideration the suggestions of the experts, input and outcome indicators were identified for cost-effectiveness analysis of the implementation of bilingual education policy: policy outcomes are measured as an improvement of the Latvian language competences of non-Latvian youth, and policy inputs are measured as financial incentives to the teachers of minority schools teaching in Latvian, and money allocated to the National Latvian Language Training Programme (since 2004- Agency), having contributed greatly to preparation of implementation of the policy.

Main findings

The evaluation given by the experts in the focus group discussions reveals that the preparation phase of the policy was rapid and hurried. Even though the results of the reform are evaluated positively, there is no data available on the actual achievements of the students, and as it was recognised by the experts, implementation of the reform depended highly on the school initiative and attitude.

Indicators suggested in the focus group for measuring the policy outcomes were: Latvian language skills (speech, reading skills, writing skills, listening skills), the level of academic achievements (both in the Latvian language and in those subject areas in which classes have been taught bilingually), the percentage of minority students who enter state universities, and the inclusion of minority youth within the labour market

Also, indicators used for cost-effectiveness analysis, suggest for positive outcome of the policy: the knowledge of Latvian among non-Latvian youth has improved, which despite some limitations, can be attributed to a large extent to education reform.

The indicators identified during the project focus group discussion will be elaborated further upon and included in the future policy-planning documents to measure the social inclusion capacities of minority cultural policies.

II. INTRODUCTION

The aim of the project is the evaluation of the cultural policies of the National Action Plans (NAPs) on Social Inclusion under the European Union's Open Method of Coordination (OMC) in six member states: Estonia, Latvia, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia and Sweden.

The project evaluates the effectiveness of cultural policies of the NAPs aimed at the social inclusion of ethnic minorities by identifying appropriate indicators - a set of Common Inter-Cultural Indicators (CICIs) feasible for cost-effectiveness analyses, and using a cost-effectiveness evaluation approach¹.

Latvia is traditionally a multiethnic society. Before restoration of independence in 1990 and as a result of the ethnic policy of the USSR, the proportion of multiethnic minorities comprised of 48% of the total population². It has diminished since, but ethnic and social integration is still a very important part of the national policy.

Societal integration is oriented towards the individual and mutual understanding and cooperation between different groups, based on Latvian language as the state language as well as on the loyalty towards the Latvian state. For an individual, integration is an increased opportunity to experience one's human rights and freedom, as well as to increase participation in social and political life³.

Of the minority cultural policies – culture, education, mass media and social participation - that are aimed at social inclusion of minorities, the Latvia language and education policy has been the most important recently, as education reform has been implemented and bilingual education programmes, which began in 1999, have been introduced in minority schools.

In this report, we will first provide a brief overview of the ethnic composition of the population of Latvia. Then, we will explore the relationship between the language, education and social inclusion policies in Latvia, and NAP (2004-2006) and related policy documents regulating the minority culture and social inclusion policies in Latvia.

¹ <http://www.ecmi-eu.org/projects/omc/> European Centre for Minority Issues OMC project home page

² The Ethnic Situation in Latvia. Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2002.

³ <http://www.integracija.gov.lv/?sadala=44&id=168> Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Social Integration home page

Then, we will describe the situation of the education system in Latvia and the history of implementation of bilingual education policy as well as the legal acts regulating the process.

We will also discuss the methodology applied to the focus groups and for the choice and calculation of cost-effectiveness analysis indicators. It is important to use both the qualitative evaluation method as well as to calculate the indicators, as implementation of the education reform is still on going, and only evaluation of mid-term results can be given.

Finally, the results of the focus groups and cost-effectiveness analysis of the implementation of bilingual education in Latvia along with relevant conclusions will be drawn both on the implementation of the policy and the indicators to be applied for evaluation of effectiveness of the education policy.

III. ETHNIC COMPOSITION OF POPULATION AND ETHNIC MINORITIES IN LATVIA

Ethnic composition of the population has changed drastically during the 20th century in Latvia, whose changes were related to the change of the political regime. Especially sharp changes in the composition of population occurred during the years of Soviet occupation (1940 – 41 and post-war period) when the number of Russian and other Slavonic inhabitants rose dramatically (the proportion of Russians grew from 8.8% in 1935 to 34% in 1989) and the proportion of Latvian inhabitants decreased respectively (from 75.5% in 1935 to 52% in 1989).

It is characteristic that during the years of independence, both during the period between the wars and also in the post-soviet period, the proportion of Latvians increased: in 1935, 75.5% were Latvian, and in 2003, 58.5% (Table 1).

Table 1.

Ethnic Composition of Latvia's Population (1935 - 2003)

	1935	1959	1979	1989	1993	2003
Latvians	77.0	62.0	53.7	52.0	53.5	58.5
Russians	8.8	26.6	32.8	34.0	33.5	29.0
Byelorussians	1.4	2.9	4.5	4.5	4.2	3.9
Ukrainians	0.1	1.4	2.7	3.5	3.2	2.6
Poles	2.5	2.9	2.5	2.3	2.2	2.5
Lithuanians	1.2	1.5	1.5	1.3	1.3	1.4
Jews	4.9	1.7	1.1	0.9	0.6	0.4
Gypsies	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4
Estonians	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1	0.1
Germans	3.3	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2
Others	0.2	0.5	0.8	1.0	1.0	1.0

Source: The Ethnic Situation in Latvia. Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia.2002.

IV: ETHNIC INTEGRATION, CULTURE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION OF THE POPULATION IN LATVIA

Integration policy: culture, language, education, and mass media

Ethnic integration related policies in Latvia are mainly defined in the National Programme “Society Integration in Latvia” (2001-2006). The programme covers cultural policies, language policy, education policy, also civic integration policy and partially social integration policy. In order to ensure the functioning of the programme, Society Integration foundation has been established, as well as Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Society Integration.

The goals for the language policy are also named in the National programme, as well as described in the Language Laws of 1989, 1992 and 1999.⁴ The aims of the Language policy are both establishing rights of the Latvian language as well as providing support for those, who do not know or have limited knowledge of Latvian, thus creating an environment of mutual understanding and cooperation with Latvian as the language of the dialogue.

Also, closely connected with language policy is the Radio and Television Law (1995), which regulates the use of languages in mass media, which established that up to 20% of broadcasting can be in a language other than Latvian for one of the public radio and TV channels, and up to 25% of airtime can be allocated in private channels.

The National Programme for Latvian Language Training was established in 1996 (since 2004 National Agency for Latvian Language Training), to provide support for the implementation of language and bilingual education policies. Education policy is formulated in the National programme “Society Integration in Latvia”, Language Law (1999), Education Development Conception (2002-2005), Education Law (1998), General Education Law (1999). It is aimed at the improvement of the Latvian language skills of the non-Latvian population: Ethnic minorities with poor skills of Latvian or no knowledge of Latvian at all, thus promoting inclusion of this group in the labour market.

⁴ Detailed analysis of the language policies in the Baltic countries can be found in: Järvi, P. Language Battles in Baltic States: From 1989 to 2002. In Nation Building, Ethnicity and Language Politics in Transition Countries: Budapest: European Centre for Minority Issues, Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI), 2003

Education reform, language and social inclusion

Education reform – implementation of bilingual education policy was also a way to reorganize the two separate education systems inherited from the Soviet period, thus ensuring that access to education of equal quality is available to all, irrespective of the language of instruction of school⁵.

The bilingual education policy is a part of the overall minority education policy. The goals for this are defined by the General Secondary Education Standard, the Public Integration Programme, and the sample General Secondary School Minority Programme. The Society Integration Programme states that ethnic integration is based on common civic values and Latvian language skills. The integrative function of language policy is supplemented by education policy, in which the most important role is performed by minority education reforms, including the implementation of bilingual education. This means that the goals of bilingual education policy in the broader context of public integration include the integration of society on the basis of the Latvian language, offering equal opportunities to all members of society in obtaining a higher education and in being competitive in the labour market.

Minority schools, in which bilingual education is in place and in which most lessons at the high school level are to be taught in Latvian, are one of the main institutions for the ethnic and linguistic integration of society. Educational reform in the minority schools was one of the ways to ensure that pupils in schools with mainly Russian as the language of instruction would acquire the knowledge of Latvian to the level required to study at the universities and to participate in the labour market.

Education reform (implementation of bilingual education policy) had two goals, one oriented towards strengthening Latvian language, the other towards reducing the exclusion threats to the minorities with a native language other than Latvian via the increasing importance of Latvian in the instruction process and thus ensuring they have great enough command of Latvian.

Employment is a very important aspect for social inclusion, and previous research projects by the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences have shown that language is important

⁵ Diatchkova, S. Ethnic Democracy in Latvia. In: The Fate of Ethnic Democracy in Post-Communist Europe. Budapest: European Centre for Minority Issues (ECMI), Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative (LGI), 2005

in the labour market, as administrative work is mostly done in Latvian. In the service sector, communication skills in both Latvian and Russian are important. As the Language law, which was adopted in 1992, stated that the Latvian language would be the only language of instruction at government-financed institutions of higher education. Therefore, it is important to provide the students with sufficient knowledge of Latvian, so that, the students would not face problems later in the university or in the job market.

Bilingual education reform has a goal to ensure a better knowledge of language. As the reform is not fully implemented yet, all these aspects, including the negative ones, cannot yet be fully evaluated. Still, researchers who analyse education policy in Latvia have taken an in-depth look at these documents and concluded that none of the policy documents speaks to the expected results of policies and activities, or to the indicators of such results. That, in turn, leads one to conclude that *the authors of policy have not designed any system of criteria and indicators that would enable a mid-term judgment about policy results*⁶. At this time, we can speak primarily about the *medium term results*. The systematic studies, which started in 1996⁷ regarding the knowledge and usage habits of the state language show that, even several years after regaining national independence, many Russian speakers in Latvia did not know the Latvian language but this knowledge is quite limited. According to the data from the survey of 1996, among the people whose native tongue is Russian, 22% did not know the Latvian language at all while 42% were only able to communicate about the basic topics. Only 9% had full command of the Latvian language while 27% had average skills. Looking at the results of the survey conducted at the end of 2003, it appears that major changes had affected the group who had no Latvian language knowledge at all: their number was reduced to 12%.

It should be stressed that the knowledge of Latvian has considerably increased among the Russian youth (ages 18-35). In the mid- 1990's, about 45% had good knowledge of Latvian, while in 2003, 60% of the youth possessed competent knowledge of Latvian⁸.

⁶ Golubeva, M. (2004) Valodu lietojuma proporcija mazākumtautību vidusskolās pēc 2004. gada 1. septembra: skolu sagatavotības kritēriji. Npublicēts pētījums, Rīga: Sabiedriskās politikas centrs PROVIDUS ,p 6-7.

⁷ Language 1996; Language 1997; Language 1998; Language 1999; Language 2000; Language 2001; Language 2002; Language 2003.

⁸ Comparative Research on the Language Use, Knowledge and Peculiarities of Language Environment of Inhabitants of Latvia 2001, 2003. Till 2002, Baltic Data House; since 2003 Baltic Institute of Social Sciences

The education reform towards bilingual education in minority education establishments was started in 1999, even though some activities have previously been performed. The improvement of knowledge of Latvian can certainly be attributed to the successful language policy and also educational reform, although the influence of other factors promoting improvement of language skills cannot be excluded.

The choice of the policy input and outcome indicators chosen is described in more detail later when we discuss the methodology of the calculation of cost-effectiveness indicators.

V: POLICY DOCUMENTS ON CULTURAL POLICIES CONCERNING ETHNIC MINORITIES AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

First, the Latvia National Action Plan for 2004-2006 and the Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006) are analysed in terms of cultural policies oriented towards social inclusion of ethnic minorities.

In Latvia, policies oriented towards ethnic integration and minority groups are defined mainly in other policy planning documents, such as the State Society Integration Programme as well as others. Therefore, the main goals and activities of the Society Integration Programme (2001) and other policy planning documents concentrated within the sphere of education and culture concerning minority social inclusion will also be described.

V.1. Latvia National Action Plan 2004-2006 (Latvia Single Programming Document Objective 1 Programme 2004 – 2006) and Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006)

The Latvia National Action Plan for 2004-2006 (Latvia Single Programming Document Objective 1 Programme 2004 – 2006)⁹ does not include statements or policies relating to the social inclusion of ethnic minorities. However, ethnic diversity is recognised and mentioned in both the General Description of the State (paragraph 2.1) as well as in the Macroeconomic Context (paragraph 2.2.), which deals with employment related issues.

⁹ http://www.esfondi.lv/upload/05-saistosie_dokumenti/spd_en_01062006.pdf, European Union Structural funds homepage in Latvia

Ethnic minorities are also referred to in connection with the Labour Market and Human Resource Development (paragraph 2.5) and Priority: Development of Human Resources and Promotion of Employment (paragraph 4.3).

The aspects concerning ethnic minority cultural policies and social inclusion examined are as follows:

- In chapter paragraph 2.1.3 on demographic situation, the ethnic composition of population is mentioned as in 2001.
- In paragraph 2.2.6, analysing the employment rate, it is recognised that employment rates in the regions of Latvia differ significantly due to uneven social and economic development: the highest employment rate in 2002 was in Riga region – 64.0% and lowest in Latgale – 52.0%.
- In paragraph 2.2.6, analysing the unemployment rate, it is recognised that in 2002 according to the statistical data of the total number unemployed 50.8% unemployed persons of Latvian ethnicity in the total number of unemployed, 35.4% of Russian origin and 13.8% represented other ethnicities. When comparing the composition of population by ethnicity (58.2% Latvian, 29.2% Russian, 12.6% other ethnicity) with composition of unemployed by ethnicity, the share of Latvians in total number of registered unemployed is less (for 7.4 percent points) than the share of Latvians in the total population. The share of other ethnicities in the total number of unemployed registered is a slightly higher than their proportion in the total population.
- In paragraph 2.5.2.3. referring to the Labour Market and Human Resource Development and Adult Continuing Training in particular, training strategy with regard to the training of Russian-speaking teachers, parents of the pupils studying in minority schools, public officers with an aim to stabilise the Latvian language as a state and instruction language, and as a tool for integration of minorities is mentioned (according to the NAP, these training activities have been addressed since 1996, receiving donations by many states and unions (EU and UNDP) until 2002. It is planned that EU Phare programme will invest an additional 1.5 mln EUR within the Phare 2001, 2002 and 2003 national programmes thus continuing the support till 2006).
- In paragraph 3.3.5, speaking about the European Social Funds policies and Developing and Promoting Active Labour Market Policies (ESF Policy Field 1), it has

been mentioned that the lack of Latvian language skills may be a risk factor for integrating non-Latvian speakers into the labour market.

– In paragraph 4.3, describing the Priority: Development of Human Resources and Promotion of Employment, among the indicative activities to be taken up, promotion of research on the labour market issues, including studies on ethnic minorities and both genders situation in the labour market is mentioned.

– In paragraph 4.3, describing the Priority: Development of Human Resources and Promotion of Employment, one of the 3 measures is Measure: Development of Education and Continuing Training (paragraph 4.3.2). The measure objective is to integrate socially excluded persons into the labour market, and among the target groups for this measure, ethnic minorities if facing risk of social exclusion are mentioned

The Latvian NAP 2004-2006 mentions ethnic minorities and social inclusion/exclusion only regarding language policy and integration, and concerning the necessity for education and continued training for minority groups.

Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006)¹⁰ was created in 2004.

In this document, ethnic minorities are mentioned in Chapter 1 Major Trends and Challenges.

In describing the Situation of Social Exclusion Risk Groups (paragraph 1.10) of the NAP, paragraph 1.10.8, among other groups, mentions ethnic minorities:

– First, reflecting on the research and statistical data, that show that there are no substantial differences in poverty and social exclusion indicators between Latvians and non-Latvians, except for a very small minority of Roma;

– Some differences between the unemployment rates are indicated in the age group 15-64 in 2002 (for Latvians - 9.2% and for non-Latvians 15.2%; in 2003 for non-Latvians 14.5%), and it is mentioned, that it might be related to the insufficient knowledge of the Latvian language.

¹⁰ http://www.lm.gov.lv/doc_upl/NAP_LATVIA_EN.doc, Latvia Ministry of Welfare home page.

– Describing the specific case of Roma, which is 0.3% (0.4% in 2002) of the population in Latvia, it is mentioned that this group is subject to a high risk of social exclusion. A high proportion of Roma children have not attained even a primary education and the representatives of this ethnic group have a lower level of education – 40% have only four grades or lower education and many are illiterate, and as a result they have limited access to the labour market – fewer than 5% of Roma of working age have official employment, only 10% of Roma of working age were officially registered as unemployed.

However, it is concluded that according to the statistical data, while there have been slight differences in the unemployment rate among Latvians and non-Latvians (except for Roma), the situation has been improving.

Even though minorities are indicated as a group possibly under the risk of social exclusion, no particular cultural policies aimed at the social inclusion of minority groups are indicated in the document.

V.2. Other policy documents concerning the ethnic minorities, cultural policies and social inclusion

National programme Society Integration in Latvia 2001-2006

Ethnic integration issues (education and culture) are covered in a separate policy document – National Programme “Society Integration in Latvia” - which is a national policy planning document for the policies oriented towards ethnic, linguistic, cultural and inclusion issues.

The existence of a separate policy document is one of the reasons why ethnicity, culture and language oriented policies are not covered in detail in previously described documents - Latvia National Action Plan 2004-2006 (Latvia Single Programming Document Objective 1 Programme 2004 – 2006) and Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006).

In the National programme “Society Integration in Latvia” (hereinafter – NP SIL), four thematic spheres related to ethnic and social integration are identified. There are several

projects included for fulfilment of specific activities in some of those thematic spheres.

NP SIL defined essential principles of integration in four areas of activity:

- 1) Civic participation and political integration (including non-governmental organisations and cooperation with the Latvian groups abroad);
- 2) Social and regional society integration (including also support to unemployed non-Latvians with poor knowledge of Latvian);
- 3) Education, language, culture (including preparation of the minority (bilingual) education programmes, courses for teachers in Latvian and bilingual education);
- 4) Information (including access to information in the minority language in public mass media).

The previous National Programme “Societal Integration in Latvia” (accepted in 2000) discussed implementation of educational reform – the transition to bilingual education in minority schools – as one of the most important goals. Other goals of the Programme were strengthening Latvian as the official language and strengthening its importance in all the spheres of everyday life, specifically the labour market. Knowledge of Latvian is seen as a prerequisite for successful ethnic and social integration of minorities.

Among the most important achievements of the National programme was the establishment of the Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Society Integration, which is responsible for implementation and coordination of the society integration policy. Also, the Society Integration Foundation (SIF) was established in 2001 with the purpose to facilitate the society integration process according to the NP SIL by raising and administrating funds for implementation of society integration projects. The activity of both the Secretariat and SIF can be considered as a success.

However, because of weak institutional coordination for implementation of the different activities stated and unsatisfactory cooperation of the institutions involved, many of the goals of the NP SIL have not been achieved, and as for now, a new National Programme “Society integration in Latvia” is being drafted.

In addition to the NP SIL, the Statement for the necessity of society integration policy monitoring was accepted in 2001, which defined indicators that should be used for monitoring the societal integration process¹¹.

- An indicator should be a characteristic measure for the observation and evaluation of changes in social, economical, educational, environment, health and other conditions. Indicators should determine a characteristic that reveals the changes in politics or a political element most precisely and allows for the making of conclusions on the necessity of changes.
- Indicators have to be clearly defined, reflect and reveal both activities and attitude. An indicator should to be used for a longer time period, and ideally, have to reveal quality information.

Education development conception 2002-2005

The education development conception 2002-2005¹² goes into more detail in describing the goals and tasks to be fulfilled in minority education policy in 2002 – 2005 as a part of education policy in general.

First, among the most important achievements of the education policy up to 2002 (paragraph 2.2.6) was the beginning of the introduction of minority (bilingual) education programmes. It is stated that minority (bilingual) education programmes would support the educational needs and social integration of the minority groups while at the same time improving the knowledge of Latvian.

In defining the main directions for education policy activities (paragraph 5.2), one of those mentioned is the accomplishment of the creation of the evaluation system for the general education reform. One of the tasks envisages introduction of centralised final exams in Latvian and mathematics in primary school in both schools with Latvian as the language of instruction and schools implementing minority education programmes. Another task for the period is improvement of the minority (bilingual) education programmes in designing new methodologies for teaching and new manuals.

¹¹ <http://www.integracija.gov.lv/index.php?id=367&sadala=135> , home page of Secretariat of the Special Assignments Minister for Society Integration

¹² <http://www.politika.lv/index.php?id=6201> , home page of Public policy site www.politika.lv

Development of appropriate programmes for continuing vocational training for teachers is the second branch of activity connected with minority education.

The document also highlights the goal of diminishing the differences of accessibility of qualitative general education, where one of the tasks would be development of bilingual education in the general education programmes (both primary and secondary).

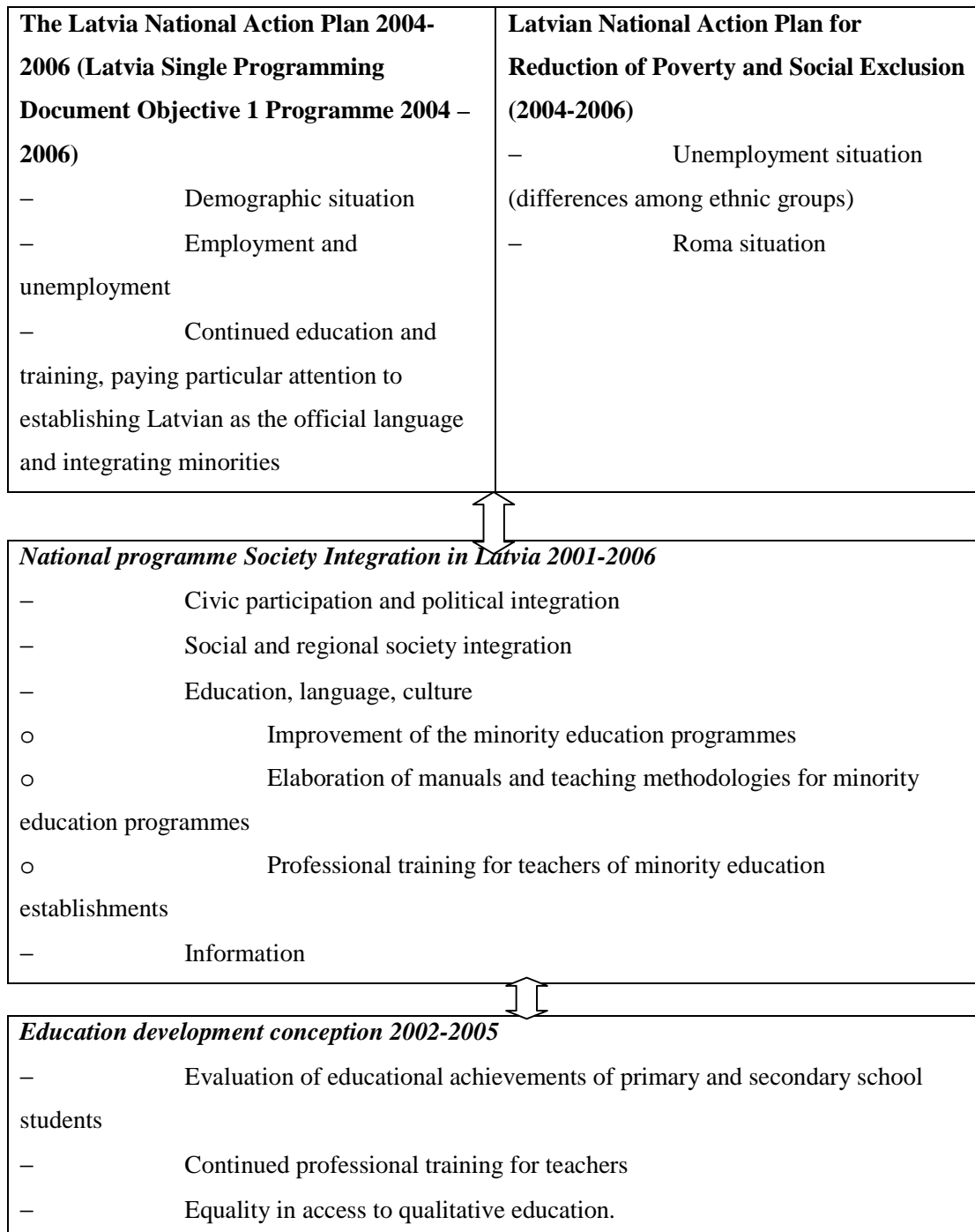
Not all the minority culture and social inclusion policy links are summarised in one document. The National Programme “Society Integration in Latvia has the most detailed information on integration policies related to the ethnic minorities and social inclusion.

The Latvian Single Programming Document Objective 1 Programme 2004 – 2006 and Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006) reflect on the ethnic minority-oriented policies only fragmentally, as these issues are covered in detail by the NP SIL.

Education development for 2002-2005 specifies the actual tasks to be performed in 2002-2005 for facilitating implementation of bilingual education within the framework of education policy (*Table 2*).

Table 2.

Summary of policy documents on cultural policies concerning the ethnic minorities and social inclusion for 2004-2006



VI: COST-EFFECTIVENESS EVALUATION OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION IN LATVIA

VI.1. Implementation of bilingual education

Minority education establishments in Latvia

It is important for the young people of Russian other non-Latvian origin to acquire education in Latvian in order to integrate into the society of Latvia in order to successfully continue their studies in higher education establishments and later become active in the labour market. To ensure that non-Latvians have the opportunity to keep their own language and the ethnic identity associated with it, minority education programmes were created, which combined the study process in Latvian with other minority languages.

Government-financed general education in Latvia is offered in eight minority languages – Russian, Polish, Hebrew, Ukrainian, Estonian, Lithuanian, Roma and Belarusian. In 2005/2006, there were 727 schools in Latvia in which classes were taught in Latvian, 152 schools where classes were taught in Russian (a bilingual education programme is being offered in those schools), and 97 where classes were taught in Latvian and in Russian (these are dual flow schools where there are both Latvian and minority classes) (Table 3). There are four schools where classes are taught in Polish, and one each where students study in Ukrainian and Belarusian. At one Estonian and one Lithuanian school, certain subjects are taught in the minority language. The Roma language is taught as an elective at two schools (*Table 3*).

Table 3.

Number of schools by language of instruction

School year	Total	Latvian	Russian	Dual flow schools - Latvian/Russian	Polish	Ukrainian	Belorussian
2005/06	983	727	152	97	4	1	1
2004/05	993	724	155	108	4	1	1
2003/04	1009	729	159	115	4	1	1
2002/03	1017	720	166	124	5	1	1
2001/02	1029	725	175	122	5	1	1
2000/01	1037	724	178	128	5	1	1
1999/00*	1057	727	189	133	5	1	*2
1998/99	1074	728	195	145	5	1	

* int. al. 1 Lithuanian school

Source: Ministry of Education and Science¹³.

Chronological overview of implementation of reform

Implementation of minority education policies – education reform towards bilingual education - involves several successive phases:

- Beginning the 1st of September 1999 – introduction of sample minority basic education programmes in minority elementary schools;
- Beginning the 1st of September 2002 – a transfer at all minority schools toward lessons that are taught on the basis of the sample minority basic education programmes and in two languages – Russian and Latvian;

¹³ http://www.izm.gov.lv/dokumenti/statistika/2005_2006/skolu_sk_05.xls , home page of Ministry of Education and Science.

– Beginning the 1st September 2004 – a transfer to a system in which most classes are taught in Latvian in minority secondary schools.

Officially, all of these steps have now been implemented, but it remains difficult to draw any concrete conclusions about the real situation in schools and the actual results of the reform.

Students who began to study bilingually in 1999 will enter secondary school in the 2007/2008 school year. This means that by 2007, full introduction of bilingual education in high schools will be completed and the results of bilingual education policy could then be evaluated for the first time. However, as the results of the focus group discussions reveal, experts consider an evaluation of results to be possible only in 2009, when “the full cycle will be complete, and we will be able to draw conclusions”.

Even though the transitional rules attached to Latvia’s Education Law said that beginning in the 1999/2000 school year, minority elementary schools began a system of teaching classes on the basis of samples (or so-called models) of minority basic education programmes. This school year could be accepted as a point of reference in terms of when bilingual education policies were first implemented, and in fact the preparation and introduction of the policies began far earlier – in the mid-1990s.

In 1995 for instance, the Ministry of Education and Science issued a regulation (No. 1-14-2, 1995), which dictated an increased number of classes taught in Latvian in schools where most classes are taught in Russian. The result was that the beginning of 1995, two subjects had to be taught in Latvian in elementary schools and three subjects had to be taught in Latvian in high schools.

The fact that bilingual education began in the mid-1990s is confirmed not just by the aforementioned ministry regulation, but also by the experience of schools. Experts who took part in the focus groups and who spoke about the situation in schools discussed this issue as well.

In 1996, the National Latvian Language Training Programme (now known as the National Latvian Language Training Agency (NLLTA)) was established. One of its first duties was to prepare school teachers for work in Latvian and other languages as well as supporting schools is still one of the main branches of activity for NLLTA.

In 1999, with the support of the Soros Foundation-Latvia, the “*Open School*” Project was launched. It existed from 1999 until 2003, and its primary goal was to support public integration in the field of education. One area of activity involved the introduction of bilingual education in minority schools. Several of the experts who took part in the focus groups also took part in that project. They felt that the activities of the “Open School” project with respect to the preparation and implementation of bilingual education was judged to be successful in most respects. Experts praised the investment made by the project in informing parents and students (a bilingual magazine, *Tilts* (Bridge) was published), in training teachers, and in promoting co-operation among schools.

According to the Latvian law on education (1998), introduction of the bilingual education policy began in the 1999/2000 school year, when “*the entire elementary school began to work on the basis of a minority education programme in two languages.*” The experience of experts also shows; however, that not all of administrators and teachers in Latvia’s minority schools began to introduce bilingual education at the elementary school level. Quite a few schools decided to wait, because they thought the legal norms would be repealed.

This comment by an expert makes it clear that hesitation severely hindered the implementation of bilingual education in these schools creating a gap between those schools, which launched bilingual education in the mid-1990s and those, which only began to do so in the latter half of 2002. One can thus conclude that the launch of bilingual education in Latvia’s minority schools was stretched out over almost ten years.

The beginning of the 2002/2003 school year can be seen as the conclusion of the preparatory phase of bilingual education policy (in chronological terms, it coincided with the implementation phase of the policy, which began in the 1999/2000 school year). This is when all minority elementary schools were to be using the new bilingual education models. According to Article 6 of the transitional regulations of the law on education (1998) schools had to license a sample minority education programme by 2002, based on which school would do the work. Experts confirmed this during the focus group discussions.

Analysis of laws, which regulate the operations of minority schools¹⁴

Classes at all state and local government education institutions are taught in Latvian. Education in other languages is available at private education institutions, as well as those state and local government education institutions where minority education programmes are being pursued. The state language is taught in all cases, including those when a student is pursuing his or her basic or secondary education in another language. The Latvian language examination is administered in accordance with national rules.

The legal foundations for bilingual education policy involve three laws – the Education Law (1998), the Law on General Education (1999) and the Language Law (1989 and 1999). There are also regulations from the Cabinet of Ministers and instructions from the Ministry of Education and Science. The national concept on public integration is important in a broader context.

It must be stressed that certain changes in relation to the language of instruction that was used in minority schools occurred even before the Education Law took effect in 1998. In 1995, amendments to legislation were made determining that in general basic education subjects shall be studied in the state language, but in general secondary education subjects shall be studied in the state language. A request was addressed to international organizations asking for assistance in the implementation of the requirements set by the legislation, i.e., to work out suggestions and methodology for education in Latvian in Russian schools.

These three laws have created a foundation for major changes in minority schools and they apply mostly to the language of instruction. First of all, this involves a move toward minority education programs in elementary schools, which means bilingual teaching. For the 2002/2003 school year, all elementary school classes must be taught bilingually. Secondly, this marks a gradual transition to teaching mainly in the Latvian language at minority secondary schools, beginning in the 2004/2005 school year. The overall goal is to increase the importance of the Latvian language at minority schools. Although there have been extensive debates in society about the benefits and deterrents, which have

¹⁴ *Analysis of the Implementation of Bilingual Education*. The Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. Riga, 2002

occurred as a result of bilingual education, but the fact is that the concept of “bilingual education” is not contained in any of these laws.

Article 9 of the Education Law speaks to the language of instruction and Article 41 addresses the matter of minority education programs; however, the transitional rules in the law also contain several sections, which relate to this issue. The article on the language of instruction specifies, “Education in state and local government educational institutions is obtained in the state language”. Other languages can be used in state and local government schools, which implement minority education programs.

Article 41 says that minority education programs are designed by schools themselves on the basis of recommendations from the Education Ministry on the use of languages in teaching various subjects. The programs are usually based on one of the four models, which have been approved by the Education Ministry as sample minority education programs. The article also says that the education programs must include elements that are necessary for students to learn about their ethnic culture.

The transitional rules of the Education Law said that in the 1999/2000 school year all minority schools must use one of the minority education programs (which included bilingual education). The ministry has often been accused of not providing timely information to schools about this fact.

The transitional rules also say that students in the 10th grade in minority secondary schools must be taught in Latvian (i.e. up to 60% of the total curriculum of general secondary education must be acquired in the state language in the education programmes for ethnic minorities) in the 2004/2005 school year. This creates a lot of debate because initially the rule includes the statement that secondary education will be available ‘only’ in the state language beginning in 2004. The word ‘only’ could not be stricken from the law because the article could not be reopened for discussion.

The greatest misunderstandings involved Article 6 of the transitional rules of the Education Law, which says that schools that have launched an education program “may continue to implement the program if they receive a license for the relevant program within three years time”. This means that all classes in minority elementary schools must be taught on the basis of the minority education program that the school has selected.

This is not a very clear requirement and that may be why very few people who are involved in minority education policies are aware of it.

The Law on General Education contains few norms, which regulate minority schools. It says that the basic education program, which applies to all of the schools in Latvia “may be merged with a minority education program”. This deals with the teaching of subjects, which relate to minority languages and culture, as well as public integration. As was noted above, the Law On General Education and the Education Law are in contradiction to one another when it comes to the use of languages – the Education Law says that everything must be taught in the state language, while the Law on General Education says that “the general education program can be merged with a minority education program, including the native language of the ethnic minority, as well as content which relates to minority identity and integration into Latvian society”. This norm has usually been interpreted as meaning that even after 2004; approximately 25% of the education content in minority secondary schools will be taught in Russian or another language.

It should be noted that the documents which regulate education are closely linked to other norms, especially the 1989 Language Law. The State Language Law says that “the language of meetings at state and local government institutions is the state language”. This means that pedagogical meetings at schools must be held in Latvian.

The models of basic minority education

The Education Ministry has offered four models for organizing bilingual education in minority schools¹⁵. In all 4 models there are a fixed number of hours to be spent on language and literature in both languages. Other subjects are taught in Latvian, the minority language, or bilingually. In following the proposed models are characterised (Table 4).

In the first model the subjects taught in minority language are only mathematics in grade 1 – 4 (and health in grade 5).

In the second model the subjects taught in minority language are computer science (1 hour in grade 7) and physics/chemistry (4 – 5 hours in grade 8 – 9). In this model many subjects are taught bilingually.

¹⁵ Batelaan Pieter. Bilingual Education: The Case of Latvia from a Comparative Perspective. In: *Bilingual Education in Latvia: International Expertise*. Riga, 2002

In the third model more subjects are taught in minority language until grade 9. In grade 9 almost all subjects are taught in Latvian.

In the fourth model mathematics, natural science, sports and arts are taught in minority language until grade 3.

Table 4.

Model programmes for primary education of ethnic minorities

	Latvian language & literature	Minority language & literature	Subjects in minority language	Subjects taught bilingually	Subjects in Latvian
Model 1	Gr 1 2hrs Gr 2-3 3-4hrs Gr 4-9 4hrs	Gr 1-3 7-9hrs Gr 5-9 4-9hrs	Gr 1-4 mathematics Gr 5 health	Gr 1-3 sports Gr 1-3 natural sciences Gr 2-3 arts Gr 5-9 mathematics Gr 6 biology	Gr 3-9 English Gr 4-9 sports Gr 4-9 arts Gr 5-9 home economics Gr 5-9 history Gr 7 computer sciences Gr 7-9 biology Gr 7-9 geography Gr 8 health Gr 8-9 physics Gr 8-9 chemistry Gr 1-9 extra curricular
Model 2	Gr 1 2hrs Gr 2-3 3-4hrs Gr 4-9 4hrs	Gr 1-3 7-9hrs Gr 5-9 4-6hrs	Gr 7 computer science Gr 8-9 physics Gr 8-9 chemistry	Gr 1-9 mathematics Gr 1-9 sports Gr 1-9 arts Gr 1-4 natural sciences Gr 5 health Gr 5-9 history Gr 5-9 home economics Gr 6-9 geography Gr 6-9 biology Gr 7-9 social sciences	Gr 3-9 English Gr 7 computer science Gr 8 health Gr 1-9 extra curricular

	Latvian language & literature	Minority language & literature	Subjects in minority language	Subjects taught bilingually	Subjects in Latvian
Model 3	Gr 1 2hrs Gr 2-3 3-4hrs Gr 4-9 4 hrs	Gr 1-3 7-9hrs Gr 5-9 4-6 hrs	Gr 1-8 mathematics Gr 1-3 arts Gr 7 computer science Gr 5-8 history Gr 7 social sciences Gr 8-9 physics Gr 8-9 chemistry	Gr 1-4 natural sciences Gr 6 geography Gr 7-9 social sciences	Gr 1-9 sports Gr 2-9 arts Gr 3-9 English Gr 5 and 9 health Gr 5-9 home economics Gr 6-9 biology Gr 7-9 geography Gr 8-9 social sciences Gr 9 history Gr 9 mathematics Gr 1-9 extra curricular
Model 4	Gr 1 2hrs Gr 2-3 3-4hrs Gr 4-9 4hrs	Gr 1-3 7-9hrs Gr 5-9 4-6hrs	Gr 1-3 mathematics Gr 1-3 natural sciences Gr 1-3 sports Gr 1-3 arts	Gr 7 computer science Gr 7-9 biology Gr 8-9 physics	Gr 3-9 English Gr 4-6 mathematics Gr 4 natural sciences Gr 4-9 sports Gr 4-6 arts Gr 6 biology Gr 5 and 9 health Gr 5-9 home economics Gr 5-9 history Gr 6-9 geography Gr 7-9 social science Gr 8-9 chemistry

Source: Batelaan Pieter. *Bilingual Education: The Case of Latvia from a Comparative Perspective*. In: *Bilingual Education in Latvia: International Expertise*. Riga, 2002

All four models are aimed at the overall command of Latvian. The possibility of maintenance may crucially impede the process of integration. However, much depends on other factors such as the attitudes of teachers, didactics, and pedagogical climate.

According to Pedersen¹⁶, the transition in the first model is too early; it gives better chances for assimilation than integration. The quality of the second model, which is characterized by “subjects taught bilingually”, depends on the quality of implementation of this programme. Theoretically there is a possibility for integration, but it completely depends on how the teacher interprets “bilingually”.

The advantages of the third model lie in maintenance of the minority language. One of the disadvantages is that the linguistic competence might be tied to subjects. This can be prevented by interdisciplinary work across the curriculum that includes both languages. The third model offers most possibilities for maintenance and transition at a time that cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) is developed in the mother tongue. In the fourth model the development of bilingualism is not a continuing process.

As showed results of study called “Analysis of the Introduction of Bilingual Education”¹⁷ schools which are using the first model of minority education are basically implementing a process of “voluntary assimilation”, because the Latvian language is very important in the teaching process. Attitudes toward bilingual education are mostly positive among principals, parents and teachers in these schools. The first model is mostly being implemented in Latgale, where there is a distinctly Russian environment. These schools are chosen by parents who are strongly motivated in terms of the desire for their children to learn the Latvian language.

The second model is recommended by the Education Ministry for students who are able to converse in Latvian but who do not live in an area where the Latvian language is spoken very often, but this minority program has been chosen quite often in regions where there is a Latvian environment – Kurzeme and Zemgale. Parents of children who attend schools with the second model are more likely to want to send their children to a “*Russian school*”. Attitudes toward bilingual education reforms and toward teaching mainly in Latvian language in secondary schools are very varied – approximately equal shares of respondents support and reject the process.

¹⁶ Pedersen Karen Margrethe. A Search to Merge. In: *Bilingual Education in Latvia: International Expertise*. Riga, 2002

¹⁷ *Analysis of the Introduction of Bilingual Education*. The Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. Riga, 2002

The third model is chosen by schools which are still preparing for the changes that are about to occur – most often in Latgale and in Rīga. The third model involves the fewest teachers who work bilingually.

The fourth model is used mostly in schools which are standing apart from any Latvian-speaking environment, and in these schools we find more sceptical views about bilingual education and about the transition to teaching mainly in Latvian. Teachers at these schools had the lowest opinion of their own ability to work bilingually. Teachers at schools where the fourth model is being used were most likely to say that the attitudes of children are rather negative.

In 2002, experts who were surveyed by the Baltic Institute of Social Sciences under the auspices of a study “Analysis of the Introduction of Bilingual Education” said that the introduction of bilingual education in elementary schools, which began in 1999, was a process that was organised in too great hurry. It was only three months before the beginning of the school year (on May 27, 1999), that the Ministry of Education and Science approved four sample education programmes for minority schools. The models were selected in a great hurry and without much thought. There was no time to consult with the parents of students or to prepare teachers and teaching resources. Most schools chose the model that would mean the fewest changes in the educational process.

Currently in force is Instruction No. 303 of the Education Ministry, “Sample minority education programs”, which include adjusted sample programs. It took effect on May 16, 2001. One of the goals in the programs is to “promote the integration of the person who is receiving an education into Latvia’s society and to ensure the learning of the Latvian language at a level which allows the individual to continue his or her education in the Latvian language” (Instruction 303, Chapter 2, Article 5.I). We must note that the law says that a higher education in Latvia’s state universities must be obtained in the Latvian language.

An alternative model programme

The Association of Russian Language in Latvia (LAŠOR) has worked out some general comments to the model programmes for primary education of ethnic minorities and it has elaborated an alternative programme. From the association’s their point of view the four programmes are transition types. It finds that the programmes “cannot ensure the

preservation and development of the minority language and do not contribute to reproduction of the national and cultural identity of the minorities represented in Latvia”¹⁸.

In an alternative programme, the association wants to ensure the status of the minority. At the same time it guarantees that it will be possible for the pupils to continue secondary education in Latvian if that is going to be the only opportunity. The association suggests minority secondary education.

In the “Model programs for primary education of ethnic minorities” offered by LAŠOR, the objectives special to minority education are different from those of the governmental paper. The association developed an alternative model. In this alternative subjects are taught in minority language until grade 8, in grade 9 subjects are taught bilingually with exception of 1-hour civics in Latvian (Table 5).

Table 5.

An alternative model of minority education programme

	Latvian language & literature	Minority language & literature	Subjects in minority language	Subjects taught bilingually	Subjects in Latvian
LAŠOR	Gr 1 2hrs – Gr 9 4hrs	Gr 1-7 7-8hrs Gr 5-9 3hrs	All subjects with exceptions in next columns	Gr 1-9 sports, arts Gr 8-9 mathematics Gr 7 computer sciences Gr 9 biology, physics, chemistry, geography, social sciences Gr 5-9 home economics	Gr 9 social studies (civics)

Source: Batelaan Pieter. *Bilingual Education: The Case of Latvia from a Comparative Perspective*. In: *Bilingual Education in Latvia: International Expertise*. Riga, 2002

¹⁸ Model programs for primary education of ethnic minorities. Developed by The Association of Russian language schools in Latvia (LAŠOR).

According to Diackov¹⁹, this model is more political than educational. The aim of LAŠOR is to preserve the Russian language, which – from Diackov’s point of view – can only happen in Russia. In this model there is not enough attention paid to learning of Latvian language.

Attitude toward bilingual education and education reform

We must remember that attitudes toward bilingual education and toward the transfer of minority high schools to a situation in which 60% of classes will be taught in Latvian and 40% will be taught in the minority language differ. Results of study called “Integration of Minority Youth in the Society of Latvia in the Context of the Education Reform”²⁰ showed that students and teachers have a positive attitude toward bilingual education, believing that it represents a compromise in terms of minority education reforms. Dominant attitudes about the shift toward a system in which most classes are taught in Latvian, however, were negative.

During the latter phase of education reform implementation, negative attitudes among target groups, particularly students, have been exacerbated. In 2002, The Baltic Institute of Social Sciences conducted a study that was called “Analysis of the Introduction of Bilingual Education” found that 40% of students, 42% of teachers and 42% of parents supported the shift toward a system in which most classes at the high school level are taught in Latvian. In 2004, however, found that the transfer toward a system in which 60% of classes are taught in Latvian and 40% - in the minority language was supported only by 15% of students, 13% of parents and 30% of teachers. In interpreting these data, it is very important to keep the socio-political context of the study firmly in mind. While the research was being conducted, there were important socio-political events in Latvia, which surrounded the education reform issue – the education law was amended, there was vast public debate about those amendments, there were various kinds of protests. In this context it has to be noted that only 10% of those students who did not take part in any protests said that they support the need for reforms.

¹⁹ Diackov Mark. Integration of Society through Latvian Learning. In: *Bilingual Education in Latvia: International Expertise*. Riga, 2002

²⁰ *Integration of Minority Youth in the Society of Latvia in the Context of the Education Reform*. The Baltic Institute of Social Sciences. Riga, 2004

Students based their critical attitudes on argumentation schemes that are disseminated in private (family) and public (the mass media, schools) situations. They parrot views that have been formulated in the past. Typically, students did not analyse or reveal their own experiences and related attitudes. Instead, they used the transfer tactic in speaking about “others” who, as a result of the reforms, are losing their native Russian language and culture, as well as their competitiveness in higher education and the labour market. Young people, in other words, are confirming solidarity with their linguistic community, but, on the other hand, they are also justifying their negative attitudes by shifting the responsibility on to the shoulders of “others”.

Also results of study called “Integration of Minority Youth in the Society of Latvia in the Context of the Education Reform” showed that students expressed the certainty that the reforms have caused inter-ethnic relations in Latvia to become harsher, thus promoting an ethnic split in the country. This idea is based on the commonly held belief among non-Latvians that those who are organising education policies are all ethnic Latvians. This means that opposition against the political elite and its decisions indirectly manifests a dislike of the Latvian speaking community in Latvia. Survey data confirm this conclusion. When asked to agree or disagree with the statement that “over the last six months, my relations with Latvians have worsened”, 20% of students agreed, as opposed to just 8% of parents and 4% of teachers. The application of discourse analysis made it evident that at the level of ideas, negative ethnic relations result in conflicts. At the discourse level, this is identified as an ethnic conflict, but in essence it is an ethno-political conflict, because it is based more on political than purely on ethnic interests.

VI.2. Methodology for cost- effectiveness evaluation

Two methods were used for cost-effectiveness analysis of implementation of the bilingual education in Latvia.

As was mentioned before, the policy is introduced, though its results cannot be evaluated by the quantitative indicators, as the first pupils having started the minority education programme after the education reform will graduate primary school in 2007. That is why qualitative method – focus group discussion – was used to receive evaluation of the preparatory phase of the policy, implementation of the policy, the role of the stakeholders, and finally, evaluation of the midterm results of bilingual education policy.

Besides, taking into the consideration the goals of the policy, the most relevant indicators to be used for measuring the different outcomes of the reform were also discussed.

For the cost-effectiveness analysis, the relevant and measurable indicators were identified and calculated.

VI.4. Cost-effectiveness evaluation of bilingual education

Objective of the policy measure

It is important for the young people of Russian and other non-Latvian origin to acquire education in Latvian in order to integrate in the society of Latvia so that they can successfully continue their studies in higher education establishments and later become active in the labour market. Thus education and language are seen as very important aspects for social inclusion of minority groups.

The aim of the policy is to ensure that non-Latvians have the opportunity to acquire knowledge of Latvian on a level necessary to study in Latvian and integrate in the society of Latvia, and at the same time to keep their own language and the ethnic identity associated with it. As a result, of students having graduated minority education programme, should have a good command of Latvian to be able to enter higher educational establishment, continue education and successfully integrate in the labour market.

Input indicators

The positions that have been used here in the report are not exhaustive. It is very difficult to identify all the expenditure for all the financial positions for activities involved. Neither is the expenditure positions disaggregated to the necessary level, so sometimes estimates are used.

It is difficult to evaluate the finance allocated particularly for implementation of the bilingual education, and the data gathered includes several approximations and assumptions that restrict the interpretation of data. In general, the minority education establishments receive government finance in the same way as the schools with only Latvian language of instruction.

However, two sources of finance can be identified that have been assigned only or mainly to preparation and implementation of the bilingual education reform. These are additional payments to teachers that teach bilingually or in Latvian in minority education establishments, and assignments to National Agency for Latvian Language Training (up to 200 4 – National Programme for Latvian Language Training).

Even though these two financing sources cannot be considered exhaustive and do not incorporate all the sums spent on different activities aimed at implementation of the bilingual education policy, these two inputs are the most relevant and most closely connected with the goals of the policy.

Teachers are the main implementers of the policy, as also the focus group experts acknowledged, their input is crucial for the success of reform., so the finance allocated to the additional payments acknowledging their efforts, and finance towards training of the teachers, are greatly contributing to successful implementation of the policy.

Additional payments for teachers in minority education establishments

The first identifiable flow of finance for implementation of the bilingual education policy is finance allocated for the **additional payments for teachers in minority education establishments**, teaching Latvian as the second language and teaching other subjects in Latvian or bilingually.

Minority schools are financed in the same way as the schools with Latvian as the language of instruction. Government finances the salaries of the teachers and allocated

certain amount of finance for manuals; the municipality is responsible for the school premises. In some cases the municipality might may pay certain premiums to the teachers, and finance additional support for manuals. Some municipalities finance also for further education and training of the teachers, which is obligatory.

After the implementation of the bilingual education reform was started in 1999, in order to motivate and compensate the effort of the teachers working in the minority schools, government-financed additional payments to the wage were introduced to the teachers of minority schools, teaching Latvian or their subject in Latvian or bilingually.

Such additional payments are done since 1999. This money can be identified up to 2004. Up to 2000, the finance was available only for teachers of Latvian language, but from 2001 also to the teachers teaching subjects bilingually. The additional payment could reach up to 30% of the regular wage of a teacher.

Data is taken from the laws on state budget for the respective years 1999-2006, where this position is indicated as special purpose grant. For 2005 and 2006, it is an estimate, based on the proportion assigned for the previous years, as the number of teachers receiving payments has not changed considerably.

Data is adjusted to the changes in the consumer prices 1999-2006 and transferred to EUR according to the exchange rate of the respective year (*Table 7*). The total amount of finance spent on the additional payments' position can be estimated as 6 480 977 LVL or 10 261 233 EUR.

Table 7

Assignments for additional payments for teachers

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005*	2006*
Assignments for additional payments for teachers, LVL	600 000	595 316	742 501	835 525	911946	1 220 598	1 251 454	1 372 754
Consumer price changes as a per cent of the previous period, % ²¹	100	2.6	5.1	7.0	9.9	16.1	22.8	26.6**
Adjusted to the inflation, LVL	600 000	579 838	704633	777 038	821 663	1 024 082	966122	1007 601
<i>In Euro</i> ²²	906 965	984 816	1 269 484	1 395 543	1 341 929	1 531 910	1 384 130	1 446 456

* Estimate as a proportion from the total, based on the proportions of the previous years – 1.3%. In 2005, 108 909020 LVL and in 2006 119 369 894 LVL total was assigned for teachers' wages. It has to be noted, however, that the teachers' wages in the time period have also grown.

** Consumer price changes from December 2005 to June 2006.

National Latvian Language Training Programme (since 2004 - National Latvian Language Training Agency)

National Latvian Language Training Programme (since 2004 - National Latvian Language Training Agency) was established in 1996, and One of its first duties was to prepare schoolteachers for work in Latvian and bilingually, and support to schools is still one of the main branches of activity for NLLTA.

During 1996-2006 NLLTA has been actively involved in elaboration of manuals for minority education programmes, providing professional training courses for teachers in teaching in Latvian and bilingually, as well as Latvian language courses for the teachers and other professional groups. NLLTA has been active also in other integration-oriented projects. During 1996 – 2006, in total 206 different publications – manuals, informative

²¹ <http://www.csb.gov.lv/Satr/rad/F1a.cfm?akurs3=F1a>, home page of Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

²² http://ec.europa.eu/budget/inforeuro/index.cfm?fuseaction=currency_historique¤cy=119&Language=en

materials, teaching aids have been published by NLLTA²³. Starting from 1996, 28 445 pedagogues of educational establishments have attended Latvian language courses, 8752 teachers have attended NLLTA training courses on teaching bilingually, and since 2003, course have been also provided for 542 teachers on how to teach particular subjects in Latvian and/or bilingually²⁴.

Even though the education reform started in 1999, the preparations of implementation of bilingual education started well before. NLLTA has mainly been involved in the preparatory phase of in implementation of the bilingual education reform, but, as it is also recognised by the focus group participants, the reform was introduced in a hurry, so the preparatory phase and implementation phases have been running in parallel for a while. Many of the implementers of the reform – mainly school teachers, needed methodological support also after the reform was launched.

The NLLTA, after having been founded in 1996, was first financially supported by financial donations of different organisations and unions. As it is stated in Latvia National Action Plan 2004-2006 (Latvia Single Programming Document Objective 1 Programme 2004 – 2006), the continuing training strategy with regard to training of Russian speaking teachers, parents of the pupils studying in minority schools, public officers with an aim to stabilise Latvian language as a state language, instruction language, and as a tool for integration of minorities, has been addressed since 1996, using altogether 9 906 725 USD, donated by many states and unions (EU and UNDP) until 2002. Starting from 2001, NLLTA is granted finance from the state budget.

In the Table 8, the total amount of financing assigned for the organisation is represented (as given in the budget law, including also administrative expenses and expensed dedicated also to other activities, as, for example, activities oriented towards promotion of the general integration process, for example, organising summer camps for young people, etc; or teaching Latvian for other professional groups and unemployed).

²³ http://www.lvavp.lv/user_images/documents/produkcija_lat.htm, home page of National Agency of Latvian Language Training

²⁴ http://www.lvava.lv/frameset.php?PHPSESSID=6ba242a4cadc26478b272ad1c5decdb2&lang_code=_lat , home page of National Agency of Latvian Language Training

Table 8

Finance for National Latvian Language Training Programme (Agency)

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005*	2006***
Assignments for NALLT, LVL	1049602*	155 000	1 109 326	568 432	1 115 453	1 210 737	765 166	398 026
Finance allocated in 1996-1998 divided by years**	51 2016	51 2016	51 2016	51 2016	51 2016	51 2016	51 2016	51 2016
Total	1 561 618	667 016	1 621 342	1 080 448	1 627 469	1 722 753	1 277 182	910 042
Consumer price changes as a per cent of the previous period ²⁵	100	102.6	105.1	107.0	109.9	116.1	122.8	126.6**
Adjusted to the inflation	1 561 718	649 674	1 538 654	1 004 817	1 466 350	1 445 390	985 985	667 971
In Euro ²⁶	2 360 706	1 103 427	2 772 074	1 804 628	2 394 822	2 162 139	1 412 585	958 902

* Estimated as a proportion.

** Exchange rates for USD dollars 1996 – 1999, as stated by Bank of Latvia,

<http://test.csb.gov.lv:8080/Dialog/Saveshow.asp>, home page of Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

*** Consumer price changes from December 2005 to June 2006.

First, government assignments are given (as indicated in the respective state budget law, including also administrative expenses). For years 1996 -1998, the allocated sum was first transformed to the Latvian national currency, lats by using the average exchange rate of US dollars to Latvian lats, and then divided by the 8 years taken for implementation of the first cycle of the bilingual education - from 1999 to 2007, the share for 2007 not included in the calculations. Data is adjusted to the changes in the consumer prices 1999-2006 and transferred to EUR according to the exchange rate of the respective year.

According to the estimations, the total amount of lats spent on this position is 7 781 905 LVL or 14 969 283 EUR. The total amount of finance spent on these lines of implementation of bilingual education policy are respectively 14 262 882 LVL or 25 230 516 EUR.

²⁵ <http://www.csb.gov.lv/Satr/rad/F1a.cfm?akurs3=F1a>, home page of Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia

²⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/budget/inforeuro/index.cfm?fuseaction=currency_historique¤cy=119&Language=en

Outcomes

Description of bilingual education policy objectives is integration in society and its institutions – secondary and higher educational establishments and labour market which function mainly in Latvian, as the aims to be achieved, thus language and education serving as means of integration and social inclusion.

However, as the experts of in the focus group recognize, that the policy goals have not been very clearly formulated, and neither are concrete, measurable indicators named for evaluation of policy.

Among the indicators that would correspond to the policy aims and course of implementation, as identified by the focus group participants, academic achievements of the students should be measured, their language proficiency as well as their success later in integration in further education and labour market activities

But these are factors that prevent these indicators from being applied in this project. Students who began to study bilingually in 1999 will enter next educational stage in the 2007/2008 school year. This means that by 2007, full introduction of bilingual education in secondary schools must be completed, and the results of bilingual education policy could then be evaluated for the first time. Participants in the group discussions of this project, however, felt that an evaluation of results will be possible only in 2009, when the students will graduate the secondary general education programmes after the reform has been implemented. At this time, it is possible speak mostly about medium term results.

This limits also application possibilities for the outcome indicators to measure the success of the education policy in connection to the social inclusion, as there 1) no evaluation indicators are defined by the policy makers, and 2) some of the relevant indicators cannot be applied due to fact the policy still is being implemented.

However, because a monitoring of population language knowledge and sociolinguistic environment in Latvia is being performed each year since 1996, it is possible to evaluate the outcomes of the bilingual education implementation policy at least, indirectly.

Comparative Research on the Language Use, Knowledge and Peculiarities of Language Environment of Inhabitants of Latvia is a survey of population of Latvia that provides data on knowledge of languages, language use and language environment in the time

period 1996–2006, thus allowing for evaluation of changes and dynamics in the language use and monitoring the results of the implementation of the language policy.

It has to be noted, that even though bilingual education reform is one of the most important activities towards linguistic integration of minority youth, there are also other integration oriented activities and other environments for language contacts, so the reform is only one of the factors influencing improvement of the language knowledge.

It is almost impossible to isolate the single impact of educational reform on the level of knowledge of Latvian language among ethnic minorities. Those with better knowledge of Latvian report having used Latvian more in different domains of social life. The common linguistic environment – friends, family, public space, mass media and work experience – all these also contribute to the linguistic skills. Still, it has to be acknowledged that school is a very important agent of socialization, and positive changes in the linguistic skills of young people can certainly be attributed also to the increased use of Latvian in instruction in schools.

Therefore the outcomes of the bilingual education policy implementation were measured as the changes in proportion of those claiming their knowledge of Latvian is on an intermediate or high level (in all the three elements – reading, writing and communication), and those claiming their knowledge of Latvian is on a low level or that they do not know language at all (low score in any of the language proficiency elements – reading, writing and communication).

In the survey, the age group boundaries for inclusion in sample were 15 and older, and for the purpose of this project, the age group that has certainly been affected by the bilingual education reform, those aged 15-24. The oldest group of respondents are obviously not that much influenced by the education reform started in 1999, though they might be involved in some of the pre-reform educational activities, having started already back in 1995 and 1996 in some schools.

The level of Latvian knowledge has not been defined in the education policy documents, except for the exam results in Latvian language, which are not available yet for analysis. So we consider decrease in the proportion of those that do not know the language or know on the lowest level, and increase in proportion of those who claim it to be on the intermediate or highest level as the desirable outcome of the policy. In survey, each of the

3 elements – reading, writing and communication in Latvian is evaluated according to 4 point score. Of these values, linguistic skills index is calculated, and the overall knowledge of language is evaluated.

The knowledge of Latvian among young non-Latvians is obviously improving. In 1999, slightly more than a half (54%) of the surveyed 15 -24 year olds having as a native language other than Latvian, said that they did not know Latvian at all or knew it on the lowest level. Next year, in 2000, the proportion of those with poor or no knowledge of Latvian was only 44%. It has to be remembered, however, that together with the changes in the laws regulating education, also the Language Law was changed in 1999.

In 2003, only 30% of the surveyed population aged 15-24 evaluated their Latvian language knowledge as poor, and in 2006 only 25% of population aged 15-24 gave an answer that they do not know the language or know it on the lowest level, and 75% evaluate their Latvian knowledge as being on the intermediate or highest level.

Table 9

Knowledge of Latvian among non-Latvian youth (those with native language other than Latvian, aged 15-24 at the period of survey)

Question: How would you evaluate your knowledge of Latvian in reading, writing and communication?

	Does not know the language or knows on the lowest level, %	Good knowledge of Latvian (intermediate or highest level), %	<i>Number of respondents aged 15-24 in sample</i>
1999 II-III	54	46	148
2000 IV-V	44	65	143
2001 XII – 2002 I	40	60	165
2002 XII – 2003 I	35	65	151
2003 X- XII	30	70	114
2004 XI-XII	28	72	144
2006 II-IV	25	75	315

Source: *Comparative Research on the Language Use, Knowledge and Peculiarities of Language Environment of Inhabitants of Latvia* (1996–2006). Till 2002, Baltic Data House; since 2003 Baltic Institute of Social Sciences

If we look at the improvements of knowledge of Latvian in the period of 1999-2006, the proportion of those stating their knowledge of Latvian as good, has raised by 29 percent points. If we sum up all the expenditure on the items described above, we get 14,262.882 LVL or 25,230.516 EUR. Thus the increase of the proportion of population with higher Latvian language competences among non-Latvian youth for one percent point in the time period 1999-2006 cost 491,823.5 LVL or 870,017.8 EUR.

VII: CONCLUSIONS

Social inclusion and minority cultural policies in Latvia and the Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006)

- The Latvian National Action Plan for Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion (2004-2006) states that the ethnic composition in the country and analyses its impacts in such spheres as employment and unemployment and continued vocational training. The document also analyses the importance of linguistic competences of Latvian language for inclusion in the labour market. However, NAP does not include any policies that are dedicated especially towards social inclusion of particular ethnic minority groups.
- The National programme “Society Integration in Latvia” has been the most important policy-planning document, incorporating most of the cultural and social inclusion policies oriented towards ethnic minorities. Therefore, these are not covered in detail in the Latvian National Action Plan for the Reduction of Poverty and Social Exclusion.
- In the sphere of minority cultural policies and social inclusion, implementation of bilingual education policy was the most important policy issue in the period of 2004-2006. Educational reform – introduction of bilingual education in minority education establishments – was launched with the goal to raise the Latvian

language competences among youth of those of non- Latvian origin to ensure they would be able to study further in Latvian and to integrate successfully into labour market.

Implementation of bilingual education policy: qualitative evaluation

In analysing the results of focus group discussions among experts in the field of bilingual education policy with reference to the preparatory phase of the policy and the medium term results of policy implementation, one can draw the following major conclusions:

Evaluation of the preparatory phase of the policy

- When asked about successes and mistakes in the preparation of bilingual education, experts have differing views, which are quite polarised. The views of bilingual education experts in this area largely depend on their roles and functions in preparing and implementing the policy;
- Policy authors prefer to emphasise the positive aspects of the work – design of sample minority basic education programmes, the availability of choice, the ability of teachers to learn the Latvian language;
- Policy implementers – school representatives, teachers, as well as representatives of the public and the NGO sector – speak of the negative aspects, shortcomings and failures of the process. They refer to the haste of this process, the authoritarian nature of the policy, the lack of readiness among teachers, the lack of information among policy participants and target audiences, and the lack of materials and technologies.

Evaluation of the results of policy implementation

The theoretical framework for an analysis of the results of focus group data on bilingual education policy implementation was the work of Alex Hausen in terms of a model for evaluating bilingual education policies. Data analysis shows that the results of the bilingual education policy, as defined by experts, are in line with Hausen's factors in terms of evaluating the final products of bilingual education policy – the desired goals, the actual results and their levels – an evaluation of language skills, a definition of the level of academic knowledge, and an evaluation of attitudes and motivations. The main conclusions about the results of policy implementation, therefore, are the following:

- The goals for bilingual education policy implementation were not clearly defined, and indicators and the achievement of the goals were not identified. There were no criteria for evaluating policy results, and that has made more complicated both the medium term and the long term evaluation of policy results;
- There are very diverse and contradictory information about the results that have been achieved, and that is the result of a lack of universal data. Existing evaluations are based on the experience of those who implemented the policy, and that is why the results are contradictory. What is more, this is an evaluation of a local nature;
- The results of bilingual education policy implementation, as judged by experts are, generally speaking, in line with the broadly formulated goals of the policy – Latvian language learning and competitiveness in higher education and the labour market;
- The Latvian language skills of students, according to the experts are, generally speaking, improving but there is a lack of an academic evaluation as to the changes in the level of academic knowledge and of trends of success. Policy implementers have made both positive and negative judgments in this area, and these depend on the experience of each school in the implementation of bilingual education;
- The process of implementing bilingual education has created several major problems – exacerbated attitudes in ethno-political issues, as well as the emergence of a gap between minority and Latvian schools. This is in contradiction to the overall goal of the policy – facilitating ethnic integration.

Inputs and outcomes:

In order to evaluate the cost-effectiveness, measurable outcome indicators relevant to the goals of the policy had to be identified.

On the basis of the ideas that have been identified in the focus groups, it is possible to draw conclusions about the criteria that could be used in evaluating the implementation of bilingual education policy:

- In designing criteria for policy evaluation, they must be applied not just to students, but also other policy participants and target groups. This significantly expands the network of evaluation criteria, making it possible to conduct an all-encompassing evaluation of the policy;

- There must be objectively measurable criteria such as Latvian language skills (indicators such as speech, reading, writing, and listening skills), the level of academic knowledge (both in the Latvian language and in those subject areas in which classes have been taught bilingually), the percentage of minority students who enter state universities, and the inclusion of these people in the labour market;
- These criteria must be analysed in terms of their trends, thus making possible a long-term evaluation of the policy;
- The subjective and shifting factors related to policy implementation processes must also be defined. The results of former research projects and this study show that among these, there are understanding, information, attitudes and motivations. These factors must be evaluated on an ongoing basis through sociological and policy analysis research.
- Taking into the consideration (1) these requirements for the indicators as given by the experts in the focus groups, (2) the fact that no indicators are set by the policy makers to actually measure the impact of bilingual language reform on integration of non-Latvian youth in society, (3) the fact that the real results are to be seen in the long term and (4) and that the first results of the implementation of the policy are expected no later than in 2007, only the mid-term evaluation of the policy can be performed, the changes in the linguistic competences of non-Latvian youth was chosen as the indicator for measurement of the policy outcome.
For that, secondary data analysis was used, as since 1996 regular monitoring on the language knowledge, use of languages and linguistic environment is done, calculating an indicator of proportion of youth having Latvian language knowledge level as low or no knowledge at all, and intermediate or highest level.
- The Latvian language competence indicator shows a tendency of rapid improvement of Latvian skills in the age group of 15-24 in the time period of 1999-2006. Increase in population with high competence of Latvian contributes to inclusion into society, especially education opportunities and integration in the labour market, where Latvian is often a prerequisite.
- However, there are limitations to the application of the indicator because of the difficulties in isolating other factors influencing the linguistic competences and the

age limits – it is not possible to sample only those just having finished schooling in the appropriate stage of education. So partially the indicator reflects the results also of the language policy in general.

- In choosing the input indicators for the bilingual education policy implementation, it has to be noted that an exhaustive description of the finance allocated to implementation of policy cannot be created.
- As the reform was introduced very rapidly and the preparatory and implementation phases of the reform were going on at the same time, several organisations and institutions were involved in the process either as having it as one of the tasks, either on the basis of projects.
- There two most relevant sources of finance were chosen – the additional payments to the direct policy implementers – minority school teachers – allocated by the government, and National Agency for Latvian Language Training, whose one of the main branches of activity was to provide Latvian language training and training in bilingual methodologies to teachers of minority schools (allocated by firstly donations, and later granted also government finance). It has to be noted, that the finance support on preparation of reform was started even before the implementation was started in 1999. Besides, not in all cases data was available at the necessary detail, therefore estimations and approximations were sometimes used.

Cost - effectiveness

The proportion of cost effectiveness of the policy is thus consisting of the outcome indicator – change in proportion in the group of 15-24 years old population of non-Latvian origin, who have limited competence of Latvian and those who know Latvian on intermediate/high level; and input indicator - the financial investment of government and other countries, country unions and international organisations in implementation of the reform.

The proportion of those stating their knowledge of Latvian as good has raised by 29 percent points. If we sum all the expenditure on the items described above, we get 14 262 882 LVL or 25 230 516 EUR. Thus the increase of the proportion of population with

higher Latvian language competences among non-Latvian youth for one percent point in the time period 1999-2006 cost 491,823.5 LVL or 870,017.8 EUR.

Future prospects and suggestions

Latvian language competences are important for social inclusion of minorities, but, as recognised by the experts, these cannot be the only indicators used. In 2007, when the first students will graduate other indicators for evaluation of the academic achievements and integration in labour market should be elaborated and used for evaluation of the implementation of bilingual language policy.

In 2006, elaboration of the new National programme “Society Integration in Latvia” was started, defining goals and policies for social and ethnic integration of society of Latvia for the next period. The indicators identified during the project can be elaborated further and included in the programme to measure the social inclusion capacities of minority cultural policies.

Appendix I: EVALUATION OF BILINGUAL EDUCATION POLICY IN FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Methodology

Two focus group discussions were held with experts in the field of preparing and implementing bilingual education policies. The discussions were held on May 25 and 26, 2006 in Rīga in Latvian and Russian, depending on the native language and language choices of the respondents. A total of 16 experts took part in all.

The main goals in the discussions among bilingual education policy experts were to evaluate the preparation of bilingual education policies and to analyse the medium-term results of the implementation of bilingual education, identifying also relevant and quantifiable indicators for this evaluation.

There were defined missions in pursuit of the goals of the process, and it was on the basis of these that the issues to be discussed by the groups were structured:

- To define the positive and negative factors in preparing the new bilingual education policies, focusing on the effect of these factors on the further implementation of the policies;
- To evaluate the participation and importance of the main agents involved in the implementation of education policies – teachers, parents, schoolchildren – in the overall implementation of the policies;
- To reveal the views of experts in the area of preparing and implementing bilingual education policies with respect to the medium-term results of the policy and to criteria for determining those results;
- To review the medium-term results of bilingual education policies in the context of minority education reforms and public integration.

Analysis of the way in which bilingual education policies were prepared and implemented, and the assessment of those processes were based largely on the professional experience of the experts who took part.

The experts who were members of the focus group discussions represented a wide variety of institutions and areas related to the implementation of bilingual education policies (representatives of minority schools, teachers, people from public organisations,

Table 6

Participants in the focus group discussions

Expert	Institution
Prof. Irina Maslo	University of Latvia Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology, Department of Education Studies; author of sample minority basic education programmes
Brigita Šiliņa	Representative of the National Agency for Learning the Latvian Language (LVAVA), responsible for pedagogy and publishing
Nadžežda Ērcīte	Deputy principal for education, Rīga No. 95 High School
Vjačeslavs Vasins	Representative of the “Civic Initiative” NGO
Zinaīda Kočergina	Deputy director for education, Rīga No. 74 High School
Sigita Odiņa-Zankovska	Researcher, Latvian Human Rights Centre

Expert	Institution
Olga Isakova	Principal, “Maksima” private school, representative of the Latvian Association to Support Russian Language Schools (LAŠOR)
Evija Papule	Director, General Education Quality Assessment Agency, Ministry of Education and Science, previously director and deputy director of the Integration Division of the ministry’s General Education Department
Liesma Ose	Producer for the www.dialogi.lv portal, representative of the “Open School” project, producer of a bilingual magazine for schoolchildren, <i>Tilts</i> (Bridge)
Māra Bidere	Bilingual education methodologist, Latgale District, Rīga, teacher at the Sergejs Žoltoks High School
Liene Juhņevska	Bilingual education co-ordinator, Zemgale District, Rīga, bilingual education co-ordinator and methodologist, Rīga Zolitūde Gymnasium
Dzintra Siliņa	Rīga Hebrew High School representative
Biruta Mamedova	LAŠOR representative
Irēna Freimane	Director, Education Development Centre, director and co-ordinator, “Open School” project (until 2003)
Jūlija Kuprina	Teacher, Purvciems High School
Ināra Roziņa	National Youth Initiative Centre

and representatives of state and local government structures). This made possible a more in-depth study of the problems at hand.

Analysis of focus group data have also been closely related to other studies of Baltic Institute of Social Sciences about bilingual education and minority education reforms as such in Latvia.

Given that one of the main goals in the project and the focus group discussions has been an evaluation of the medium-term results of the implementation of bilingual education policies, the project authors have used the model of three factors that has been proposed by Alex Hausen as theoretical support for analysing the results of expert focus group discussions.

Hausen²⁷ proposes three groups of factors:

1) The shifting quantities of the context – the macroeconomic context, in which it is important to think about the typical indicators of people who speak the target language related to the policy. This group of factors also includes the legal status of languages and their related communities, the social, socio-linguistic and numerical status of these communities, as well as the resources that are needed to implement the policies (teachers, educational materials, infrastructure);

2) The *shifting quantities of the final product*, which covers goals and actual results. Goals and results can be of a short-term, medium-term or long-term nature. They can also be divided up among various levels – the linguistic level, which speaks to language skills, the level of academic achievements, attitudes and motivations that are established, and the achieved level of bi-culturalism in society.

3) The *shifting quantities of activities* – here we speak of operating strategies. This refers to specific legal norms, which regulate linguistic and pedagogic procedures related to bilingual education policies.

A full evaluation of these issues requires the study of all three groups of factors. Hausen's model was used to structure and create a theoretical basis for the data that were extracted from the discussions. Only the second group of factors was really used, because analysis of the expert focus group discussion results mostly affected the second

²⁷ Hausens, A. (2002) *Konteksta, galaprodukta un darbības mainīgie lielumi bilingvālajā izglītībā Latvijā*. I. Dedze (red.), *Bilingvālā izglītība Latvijā: starptautiskā ekspertīze*. Rīga: Sorosa Fonds-Latvija, 63.-91.lpp.

group – the shifting quantities of the final product. What is more, this is the group of factors, which are most closely linked to the goals and missions that were related to the group discussions.

The report on the results of expert focus group discussions is based on the aforementioned missions of the discussions – (1) Evaluating the preparations for bilingual education policies, (2) Evaluating the participation in this process of policy participants, and (3) Analysing the medium-term results of the implementation of the policy. The report also includes statements that were made by participants in the discussion (these are presented in italics). This offers a more extensive look into the discussion and makes possible more extensive data analysis and preparation.

Results

The results of the focus group discussion are organised so that they provide evaluation of the

1. Evaluation of the preparations for bilingual education policies

1.1. A chronological review of preparations for bilingual education policies – the views and understandings of experts

Asked to evaluate preparations for bilingual education policies, experts stressed that it is hard to differentiate between the preparatory and the implementation phase, because both processes occurred simultaneously. This idea is based on the views of several experts who took part in the research project and who had also taken part in the process.

“(..) It may be simpler to call it the period of preparations and implementation, because according to the law, all elementary schools had to introduce an educational process based on a minority education programme and on two languages, doing so between 1999 and 2002. (..) The national programme worked, and several schools knew what had to be done. It would at least be nice if we could merge this into what is called the implementation period.”

“(..) There was a shortage specifically of preparations in terms of deciding on what it means to work bilingually, in terms of bilingual education in Latvia.”

The argument by experts that there was a lack of a preparatory phase is supported by the fact that the law on education was approved in 1998, and it took effect only in 1999. According to one expert, “*no one ensured a very long preparatory phase.*” The law stated, “education in state and local government education institutions is received in the state language” (Law on education, 1998). Education in other languages could be made available at state and local government schools in which minority education programmes were being used. It has to be added that four-sample minority education programmes were approved by the Ministry of Education and Science in late May 1999 – three months before they had to be implemented. There is reason to conclude, therefore, that not enough time was given to schools to prepare for the bilingual education policy.

The absence of a preparatory phase in this area is seen by experts as a negative aspect of the policy – one that hindered the successful implementation of the policy in Latvia’s minority schools. Other experts, however, say that if the preparatory and implementation phases coincided, then that was in line with the principles of the bilingual education methods and the interests of minority schoolchildren in Latvia in the long term. A more in-depth analysis of this aspect will be provided in further analysis of the results of the expert group discussions when it comes to the positive and negative aspects of the preparatory phase.

When one correlates the views and ideas expressed by experts, one can define three groups of elements, which refer to the preparatory phase of bilingual education policies:

- (1) Normative documents (the most important ones are the regulations that were issued by the Ministry of Education and Science in 1995, and the law on education of 1998 – particularly its transitional regulations);
- (2) Establishment of structures and organisations related to the preparation and implementation of bilingual education (e.g., the LVAVP (1996), the “Open School” project (1999), the bilingual magazine *Tilts*, etc.);
- (3) The initiative of participants in the policy – administrators and teachers at minority schools.

1.2. Positive evaluations of the initial phase of preparation and implementation

In looking back at the preparatory phase of bilingual education policy, experts expressed their views about positive aspects of this process – those aspects which promoted the implementation of the process. They also talked about negative factors in terms of introducing bilingual education in minority schools.

When one analyses the views stated by experts in the focus group discussions and compares these to conclusions in other BISS studies, one discovers contradictions between the thinking of policy authors (politicians, civil servants, education experts) and that of those who had to implement the policy (teachers, parents, students) in terms of the causes for that thinking. This expanded one's understanding of the fact that there are two dominant and conflicting discourses when it comes to minority education reforms.

One aspect that was assessed positively by the authors of the policy was the fact that bilingual education concepts and minority education programme samples (so-called models) were developed and choice was made possible.

The authors of the policy have praised the fact that four different models were elaborated, thus making it possible for those who implemented the policy to make a choice. The same applies to the target audiences of the policy – school administrators, teachers and students.

“I must refer to the positive fact (..) that these four models were drafted. People could like or dislike them.”

“For the first time in the history of Latvia (..) normative acts and ministerial instructions offered not just one sample programme, but four. (..) The ministry offered choice. (..) The models could be incomplete, empty, bad, etc., but there were four models, not just one.”

The offer of several models and the provision of a choice – these were very important aspects in the preparation of bilingual education policies, because the lack of a choice was one of the main arguments of opponents of bilingual education. This was confirmed by several conclusions offered in BISS research projects about minority education reforms²⁸.

²⁸ Zepa, B., Kļave, E. (2004). *Integration of minority youth in the society of Latvia in the context of the education reform*. Riga: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences

The authors of the policy base their position with respect to choice on the fact that four models were offered, and each school could choose its own sample minority elementary education programme. The job for those who drafted the bilingual education concept was to offer samples so that schools and those who were implementing the policy might adapt these to the abilities, resources and needs of the relevant schools.

“If you were to analyse the documents from 1999, if you were to know how hard it was to force the ministry to write not programme samples, but sample programmes. Those are two words in a different arrangement, but a programme sample first appeared as a non-mandatory document, and that meant choice. (...) Schools perceived it very slowly.”

Those parents, students and teachers, who did not support the policies, as was noted before, felt that they were forced to accept bilingual education, without any choices that the implementers and target audiences of the policy could make. The discussions among experts showed that these beliefs are still very much in place:

A differing understanding of the availability of choice was one of the factors in explaining the contradiction that is referred to here. BISS research makes it possible to reveal two other explanations for the contradiction. These have to do with the context in which those who authored the policy and those who did not support the policy develop their arguments.

First of all, when one looks at the attitudes of parents, teachers and students, one must differentiate between attitudes vis-à-vis bilingual education on the one hand and attitudes vis-à-vis minority education reforms as such on the other hand. Most statements about the bilingual education method (the use of two languages in teaching) were positive or neutrally positive, but when it came to the overall reform process, which spoke to teaching most classes at minority high schools in Latvian, attitudes were distinctly negative²⁹ These negative statements were based on the argument that there was no choice and that policies were implemented “from the top down”, without taking into account the interests, resources and demands of those who would be implementing the policy. This showed that conflicting views about the availability of choice were rooted in the fact that each side had arguments, which were based on different contexts.

²⁹ (Zepa, B., Kļave, E. (2004). *Integration of minority youth in the society of Latvia in the context of the education reform.* Riga: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences)

Secondly, the authors of the policy speak about opportunities for choice within the policy, arguing that those who had to implement the policy could make use of the bilingual education models so as to choose the languages of instruction and their proportions at the elementary school level:

“As far as the [bilingual education] concept is concerned, I just analysed it. (..) The choice was between teaching all classes in Latvia, obtaining a bilingual education, or obtaining an education in the child’s native language.”

Those who had to implement the policy and representatives of the public sector, for their part, have different things to say about the issue of choice. They say that there was no option of choosing not to implement the policy at all at minority schools. This is the basis for the negative attitudes of policy opponents – attitudes which are largely aimed at the way in which the policy was implemented. Here, too, one sees different contexts for the argumentation – ones that specify the conflicting discourses and the fruitlessness of their confrontation.

“(..) This was done without listening to public opinion, (..) without taking into account the interests of children – their psychological specifics and the like. When the law was approved, it had to be obeyed irrespective of whether pedagogical personnel were prepared for these changes, whether preparations had been made. It happened despite the fact that there was a lack of knowledge about bilingual education. At the end of the day, it happened despite the fact that no one asked whether this kind of education is capable of existing in our society, whether similar educational processes occur anywhere else in the world. No one asked whether we can afford a different educational system, not just the expensive one that has been adopted here. (..) The law had to be obeyed.”

The principle of succession is very important in bilingual education policies – one of the goals of sample minority education programmes was to prepare students for secondary school, where most classes would be taught in Latvian, beginning in the 2004/2005 school year. This meant that in preparing and implementing the bilingual education policy, of great importance was the level of Latvian language skills among those who were implementing the programme – students and teachers. The Latvian language skills of teachers were declared to be one of the main criteria for evaluating the readiness of schools to make the shift in 2004 by bilingual education experts and Education Ministry

representatives³⁰. The main organisation which was responsible for training teachers to work in Latvian was the NLLLP (now NLLLA). As was noted before, the NLLLA launched its operations in 1996. In this context, one can discuss another positive element, which experts discussed when talking about preparations for bilingual education – Latvian language courses for Russian speaking teachers.

“Teachers had many different opportunities to improve their Latvian language skills. We have the NLLLP organisation, it used to be known as the NLLLA. For how many years in a row did that programme offer free Latvian language courses to schools? How many of our colleagues attended those courses regularly?”

There are, however, different views and evaluations about this aspect of preparing the bilingual education policy, too. In group discussions, some experts and teachers said that the Latvian language courses for teachers were insufficiently effective and that they were not really in compliance with the policy requirements.

“(..) I attended the courses myself. Perhaps we did not have good luck with the instructor, but the level of instruction was quite low. The classes were good for people who speak Latvian far worse than I do, but there was nothing that I could do there.”

“I improved [my Latvian language skills [at the NLLLA, which offered Latvian methodology courses. (..) I attended, I improved my skills. Our instructor had 30 years of experience, but I cannot say that the instructors were ideal. There were other groups where methods were more interesting, better, more successfully put to use.”

Here we see conflicting judgments, and they depend on how is doing the judging – those who wrote up the policies or those who had to implement them (teachers). In the former group, people spoke about the positive contributions, which Latvian language courses made during the preparatory phase, but in the latter group, people instead talked about the negative aspects of these courses.

Representatives of the authors of the policy said that a positive fact is that during the period when the bilingual education policies were being prepared and initially implemented, no teacher was sacked, irrespective of Latvian language skills. That was

³⁰ Golubeva, M. (2004) *Valodu lietojuma proporcija mazākumtautību vidusskolās pēc 2004. gada 1. septembra: skolu sagatavotības kritēriji*. Npublicēts pētījums, Rīga: Sabiedriskās politikas centrs PROVIDUS

largely thanks to the diversity of models and the opportunity for schools to adapt the sample programmes to their own resources and to choose the most appropriate model. Several teachers represented this viewpoint from minority schools.

“(..) It is not right, and I would say not honest to say that the school had not right to choose. We have chemistry teachers from the University of Moscow, and we know that they will never speak Latvian perfectly. We teach chemistry in Russian, and we wrote that down in the programme. Students could choose. We also teach physics in Russian.”

Looking back at the preparatory phase for bilingual education, policy authors and experts who worked closely with them had positive things to say about the availability of financial resources for preparing and implementing the policy. They also praised the involvement of public and non-governmental organisations. Policy authors say that these two aspects significantly influenced the introduction of bilingual education, both speeding up its tempo and encouraging public debate and circulation of information in society.

“(..) I think that we gained good experience and benefits because the implementation of the policy was a national policy, complete with financing, including financing from the Latvian national budget, not just money from the United Nations or donor countries.”

“(..) Active involved [in implementing the policy] was the Soros Foundation, NGOs ...that was the tandem. (..) We can admit that right now, and that is why the process developed at such a rapid pace.”

“In talking about positive things, I do want to note that initially there were very different debates, but the fact that this had to do with minorities and education policies – that helped in the democratisation of society.”

These quoted statements were opposed by other bilingual education policy experts and public sector representatives. They argued that the policy was implemented in an authoritarian way.

“These innovations should initially have been presented to society in an even way, thus leading to debates and discussions. (..) Our government did the opposite thing – first there was a political decision, and then it was offered to the public. The concept was presented as a law which must be obeyed.”

Analysis of positive experience with the preparatory phase of the bilingual education policies reveals that no aspect of the process can be judged absolutely positively, because each aspect, depending on the position and role of the person doing the judging, had its negative sides, too.

1.3. Negative evaluations of the preparatory phase and the initial implementation of the policy

The results of the group discussions showed that there were more negative evaluations than positive ones. This is largely because most judgments also applied to the implementation of bilingual education, with people pointing to problems specifically in this area.

The brief period of preparations in terms of bilingual education policies essentially lasted only for three months (!) if we accept the beginning as the approval of sample minority basic education programmes in May of 1999. This is one of the main reasons why there was such haste in the first phase of preparing the policy (from September 1999 to September 2002). This was made clear by group discussion participants, both the authors of the policy and those who had to implement it. There were many statements about the lack of a preparatory phase, with others saying that this phase overlapped with the early period of implementing the policy.

Several BISS studies of the issue of bilingual education³¹ show that the lack of time and the resulting haste in preparing and implementing the policy has been one of those arguments that are regularly presented by opponents of bilingual education and minority education reforms – parents, teachers and students. They all wanted the process to be implemented far more gradually.

“It all came to us very swiftly, too quickly. First they had to train teachers and prepare methodological materials, teachers had to attend courses, and then the policy should perhaps have been implemented only in those schools which wanted to implement it on an

³¹ Analysis of the implementation of Bilingual Education (2002) Riga: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences; Opinions of National Minority Pupils and their Parents on the Latvian Language (2003) Riga, Baltic Institute of Social Sciences; Zepa, B., Kļave, E. (2004). Integration of minority youth in the society of Latvia in the context of the education reform. Riga, Baltic Institute of Social Sciences)

experimental basis. (..) Generally speaking, the shift was made too soon. I think that they should have spent 10 years in preparing for this (..)."

Along with the idea that the policy was implemented too quickly, there is also the idea that the speed at which the policy was instituted was necessary so as to ensure the success of bilingual education in minority schools and to achieve positive long term results. This view was presented by bilingual education experts who were directly involved in the drafting and implementation of the policy.

"Politicians are forever manipulating with such words as 'prepare' and 'readiness', but in the present-day situation that would not have been possible at all. If we say that we should have waited while teachers spend 10 years in learning the language, that would mean that we would have lost not just the generation that is in 11th grade at this time, which is a lost generation. We would have lost several other generations if we had not begun the process."

These statements by policy authors clearly show that specifically to serve the interests of students, the preparation and implementation of bilingual policy could not take more than one year. Negative consequences would otherwise perhaps have been more far-reaching. The consequences to the shortage of time were manifested during the preparatory phase of bilingual education – there was great haste in choosing the sample minority basic education programmes. The experience of minority school representatives shows that this was not always a carefully considered process, one that would take into account the resources of schools, the interests of students and parents, their needs and abilities.

"The main thing at that time was that there had to be an announcement, so there was an announcement. (..) That was basically accepted. I remember that at our school, on the last day before the holiday, work ended at 2:00 PM. At 1:00 PM there was a meeting, someone quickly babbled something about models, we had no sense of what he was saying, but we had to vote – we would select a model. The education director felt that the fourth model was the best, so we all voted for the fourth model and went home."

Among members of the policy's target audience – students and parents – one often encounters the view that the implementation of bilingual education should have been more gradual, beginning bilingual education at the preschool level. Bilingual education specialists revealed that initially, the authors of the concept wanted to include the

preschool phase in the process, but a lack of material, technical and financial resources made that impossible. At this time is seen as yet another failure in the preparation and implementation of the policy.

“Of course, we should have started at the preschool law by 1997, but we did not receive the financing. Preschool education had been destroyed, and we understand why – there was privatisation. The kindergartens were the first to be privatised and destroyed. They simply did not exist.”

In this context, experts pointed to the politicising of bilingual education – something which had a negative effect on the design and the long-term implementation of the programme.

“(..) If we look at national policy (..), including policy related to education, then we see that when politicians took decisions, they were perhaps a bit utopian, politicians did not really agree to the end. Parties always used the minority education issue for their own political purposes, they always did. It didn’t matter whether they were in government or in opposition. I think that this is something that no country should do – politicise education to this degree, earn money because of this. In this case, this really hindered the process in schools.”

According to minority school representatives and BISS research schools, which started to introduce bilingual education in a timely way (seven to 10 years ago) have achieved certain results and are promoting the dissemination of positive experiences. Schools at which bilingual education began comparatively recently, in 2002, when all minority elementary schools had to introduce one of four bilingual education models, are finding it difficult to do these things. They experience opposition from the target audiences for the policy – students and parents – in implementing bilingual education.

In this context, there is another negative view which implementers of policy and representatives of the public sector presented – that there was weak participation by the civil society.

“(..) I would like to express the views of student leaders about democracy. They basically say that the project was launched in a completely inappropriate way, because everything must take place democratically, with consensus and a discussion with everyone. (..) Young people think that there should have been a discussion with student

leaders from the very beginning, that there should have been questionnaires and surveys (...)."

Representatives of public organisations point to difficulties, which occurred when bilingual policy was prepared and implemented. Researchers repeatedly heard the idea that the authors of the policy did not listen to people's views, did not take into account what had already been done in introducing minority education programmes.

"We bring in teachers, psychologists and instructors who have experience, are specialists, and are members of our organisation. Also involved in this process are school principals who have conducted experiments. (...) We designed a fifth model and (...) tried to get someone to look at our programme, to show the bad aspects of it and to recommend ways in which the programme could be improved, the kinds of people who should be involved. We wanted this model to be equal to the four models that were approved by the state. No one wanted to look at our model, however – a useless model, an unprofessional model, etc."

Experts who were responsible for introducing the policy have two explanations as to why the public and the direct target audiences of the policy (students and parents) were not involved in the design and introduction of the policy. When bilingual education policies were designed for minority schools in 1998 and 1999, first of all, there were few NGOs in Latvia, particularly those that are active in the area of education. Second, student self-government in schools was just starting to develop. The bottom line is that while bilingual education policies were being designed, the public and the target audiences of the policy did not have the agents and channels for involvement in the process.

The low level of involvement in the taking of decisions and the implementation of those decisions, according to experts, occurred in part because of delayed and insufficient information for the public and for those who implemented the policies and were its target audiences.

"(...) If the public had understood the whole issue, had known about what it is and how it is being implemented, etc., then everything would have happened quite differently."

Parents are an enormously important agent of socialisation for schoolchildren, and they help children to establish their political views. BISS research shows that students often reproduce not only the views that are disseminated in the public space, but also, clearly,

the argumentation of their parents – they express the views of their parents as their own. That is exactly why many people, including those who implement the policy, feel that it was very important to provide initial information to parents and the public at large about changes in minority education.

“At the same time, there was one big mistake, and I undertake responsibility for it, too – I work with public information, and we had two priorities – a brochure for parents and the magazine Tilts for students. To be sure, it is more challenging and interesting to produce a publication for students, but it is more important to inform parents. We worked on the booklet for parents for six whole months. In September 1999, when the whole bilingual process was introduced in the lower grades of school, parents were confused; they received the booklet six months later. (..) This was a great delay. We did not inform the public; prepare the public in a timely way. (..) That is a serious minus in this whole thing.”

In talking about this aspect of how the policy was prepared, experts now believe that the delay in information for the public and for parents – something which, in turn, created the low level of understanding about bilingual education and its goals – had a lot to do with the emergence of negative attitudes. They say that it hindered the results of policy implementation.

A whole range of negative judgments relate to the fact that teachers at minority schools were not prepared for the introduction of education policy. In analysing the comments that were made by participants in the discussion, and particularly the teachers who had to implement the policy, spoke of several aspects of the lack of readiness among teachers.

One serious issue is a lack of Latvian language schools. Several teachers from minority schools took part in the group discussions and said that the level of Latvian language skills among teachers was insufficient. This hindered the implementation of the bilingual teaching method.

“(..) As far as the level of Latvian language knowledge among teachers is concerned, it is very important. One more than one occasion I saw a situation in which students had a much better command of the language than the teachers did. If the teacher cannot correct papers or judge the answer that is given, then what? Teachers are surprised at how freely students speak, but they cannot add anything.”

The fact that teachers were not prepared was also made clear through a lack of understanding about bilingual education and no knowledge about bilingual teaching methods. A big problem at minority schools from the start was that many people had little knowledge about what bilingual education is and how it can be implemented in schools and in specific classes. Several school representatives think that the fact that teachers were not prepared to implement bilingual methods was an even more serious minus in terms of preparing the policy and then implementing it than was the problem of Latvian language skills among teachers.

“In addition to training teachers to learn the state language, I think that at that time, insofar as bilingual education and methodology in specific (..) – teachers did not know much about such issues.”

“(..) They did not interview teachers, there were insufficient courses on the methods of bilingual education, and not all teachers were able to do so. The main thing is not only perfect language skills, but also a command of the new methods to allow children to speak, to create a different situation.”

The shortage or absence of an understanding of bilingual education policies in Latvia and of bilingual education methods had a deleterious effect on the motivation of teachers to introduce changes in their work and to motivate their students.

From today’s perspective, those who implemented the policy also complain about the “methodological chaos” which they claim has emerged in schools – each teacher is implementing bilingual education in accordance with his or her own ideas.

“(..) Teachers were literally thrown into the arena of bilingual education without any knowledge or understanding whatsoever as to what this meant. Teachers did what they could. That is apparently why so many evil things were done. Teachers were not educated in this area, they did not know how to do the work properly, they often exaggerated their demands, because they did not know the methodology.”

Based on their specific experience in schools, teachers and school representatives mentioned other negative aspects with respect to the lack of readiness among teachers in implementing bilingual education – a lack of materials and technologies such as textbooks, methodologies, etc. The existing materials were insufficient or inappropriate.

There were also negative psychological factors – fears, a lack of security, a lack of knowledge.

When respondents discussed the preparation and initial implementation of bilingual education policies, it was found that there were polarised views about this issue, and this largely determines the role of policy participants in the area of bilingual education policy. The authors of the policy tend to speak of positive elements in the process, while those who had to implement it – school representatives, teachers, as well as representatives of public and non-governmental issues who refer to the views of students, teachers and the public – talked about the negative aspects, shortcomings and failures of the process.

Data from the discussions about the results that were achieved in bilingual education policy show that some of the shortcomings and failures that have been reviewed here in terms of preparing and introducing the policy have been reversed or limited, while others still hinder the implementation of the policy.

2. The involvement of policy participants in implementing bilingual education

The implementation of bilingual education policies is characterised by the involvement in this process of those who took part in the policy – school administrators, teachers, parents and students. Group discussions among experts and teachers indicate that an important role in the success of the bilingual education policy is performed by minority schoolteachers in particular. They are the ones who are the direct implementers of the policy, and they are also one of the target groups.

2.1. The investment of policy implementers in involving parents

According to group discussion results, one of the main ways of involving school administrators and teachers in the implementation of bilingual education was the involvement of parents in the process.

It has to be said that the investment of policy authors in the involvement of parents was criticised by many participants in the group discussions: delay in informing parents and bringing them into the work of preparing and implementing bilingual education policies was one of the most serious mistakes in the preparatory phase of the process. That meant that even greater responsibility had to be undertaken by the schools, which were the direct implementers of the policy.

Analysis of data from the discussions shows that participation of parents was also facilitated by employees of the non-governmental and public sector. Public sector representatives promoted the involvement of parents first of all by studying their attitudes and knowledge about the bilingual education programme, and second by providing information to parents so as to involve them more broadly in the taking of decisions.

“(..) I have been involved in bilingual education insofar as various research projects have been organised. (..) Parents themselves admit that we could not tell them which model was better or worse, precisely because we have so little information.”

Representatives of schools argued that the involvement of parents in the implementation of bilingual education policy was largely the job of the school – administrators and teachers, because schools have direct access to this group of policy participants. Work with parents is also important because parents are important agents of socialisation among students – people who shape and influence children’s attitudes, motivations and resulting behaviours. These ideas were confirmed quite clearly in the BISS study³² and the views of focus group participants in this project confirmed them.

“(..) One of the missions for teachers is to work with parents. What is bilingualism? Is it dangerous or not? Why is it dangerous? When is it dangerous? We had to work with these issues, of course, and even now not all parents have accepted this.”

Respondents say that the involvement of parents can be ensured as follows:

- By informing parents;
- By shaping parental attitudes vis-à-vis bilingual education;
- By promoting parental understanding of a bilingual education;
- By telling parents about the results which their children have posted in their studies;
- By promoting the involvement of parents in the taking of decisions at school.

Essentially, all of the aforementioned processes depend on the first one – providing information to parents. The BISS studies about bilingual education and minority education reforms show that the level of information, knowledge and understanding is of key importance in the shaping of attitudes, motivations and participation, irrespective of the target audience of the policy.

³² Zepa, B., Kļave, E. (2004). *Integration of minority youth in the society of Latvia in the context of the education reform*. Riga, Baltic Institute of Social Sciences

Group discussion participants and representatives of school and the public sector also talked about the results of information processes which have an effect on the implementation of policy – facilitating participation and shaping understanding.

“I think that here it is important to talk about the extent to which schools involved parents. For instance, parents could at least formally take part in deciding on the model which the school will choose, because such involvement often creates the impression among parents that they have taken part in the process to some degree, at least.”

In addition to all of this, it also has to be said that a result of providing information to parents is a reduction in the effect of negative psychological factors when it comes to the thinking of parents about bilingual education. It promotes not just understanding, but also the emergence of more positive attitudes.

“What is the main fear of parents? They are afraid that the situation in schools is worse than is really the case. Where do they see the risk? They think that they won’t be able to help their children with their homework. We must definitely determine the help of parents when children do their homework.”

Besides, school serves as a source of information, and is the most direct way of learning about the implementation of bilingual education at a specific school, particularly if one remembers that the situation is different in each school.

“Co-operation with parents is important, because they mostly read the Russian language press, and alas, we can just imagine what kind of information they receive that way! We, for instance, invite parents to visit our school so that we can present the dynamics of success, the things that have changed, the evaluation that we can offer.”

Different school administrators and teachers have had different experiences in involving parents in school activities. There are times when teachers and administrators have actively informed parents and involved them in the taking of decisions on matters such as the most appropriate sample minority basic education programme.

“I talked to the parents of first -grade students myself, there were some 100 people there. Here you are talking about a national research project, a conference with some 800 people. I had 100 first grade students in a single school, and all of the parents took part. No one knew what would be happening – this was in 1999 and 2000.”

At the same time, group discussion participants – public sector representatives and those who work at minority schools – also had negative experiences with school administrators taking decisions without involving the other policy participants, teachers and parents.

“(..) When I have talked to parents under the auspices of another project, I have most often heard that schools chose a specific model, but parents didn’t even really know what the model meant. No one had told them what each model means. The simple position was that the school had selected the model, and the parents had to accept it. There were not many schools at which parents said that their views were solicited and considered.”

Several school representatives said things to suggest that school administrators often acted in an authoritarian way. Statements by respondents suggest that this authoritarianism, without involving teachers and parents, was one of the main causes for negative attitudes vis-à-vis bilingual education – something which hinders the successful implementation of the policy as such.

“The second biggest mistake in terms of administrators was indecision on the one hand and excessive authoritarianism on the other – authoritarianism which had nothing to do with the situation in which you want to tell the boss that everything is fine. The school was not prepared for this. This was the second problem.”

It has to be concluded that the main investment in involving parents was made by schools, and particularly by teachers who brought parents into the process of selecting an appropriate bilingual education model and by providing parents with information about the test results of their kids. In this way, schools indirectly facilitate the emergence of positive attitudes, motivations and understandings. Involvement of parents in a dialogue with a school is the most typical way in which parents take part in the policy process. The work of schools in promoting parental involvement, however, was not exclusively positive, as can be seen in the aforementioned negative statements. A second group to affect the involvement of parents in the process is the public sector, with people conducting research about parental attitudes and information, as well as organising informational events for parents.

2.2. Factors influencing the participation of teachers

BISS research in the past³³ shows that teachers have a very great role to perform in motivating students and in shaping positive attitudes. This is another way in which school administrators and teachers take part in the implementation of bilingual education processes.

The influence of teachers on student attitudes and participation is illustrated by some of the statements, which were made by group discussion participants.

“I have been told about examples of how teachers influence the situation, and I think that the homeroom teacher and other teachers can shape the thinking of the class. (..) The teachers who are doing things successfully, they are keeping quiet, they are working. Why is it that demonstrations always include those who just want to scream, who did not want to change, did not want to think about what would be better for the students?”

This context reveals two interrelated factors in encouraging teacher participation – motivations and attitudes vis-à-vis bilingual education. Statements made by school representatives indicate that these two factors have much to do with the level of involvement of each teacher, as reflected in the teacher’s work with students.

“If the teacher does poor work or doesn’t want to work, then that is a great problem. On the basis of this, it is very hard to force that teacher to teach bilingually on top of everything else.”

“I have attended so many classes at schools, I haven’t even counted up how many. I am very sorry to say that the lessons have been so very different. (..) I have seen very nice lessons where the latest methods are used, where children look for their own materials and information – everything is in order. There have also been lessons, however, which I have attended, and the teacher makes a bit of an effort, but I did not fall off of the turnip truck. I can decode the teacher right away, and I can see whether it is systematic work, or whether the teacher is putting on a performance.”

According to participants in the group discussion, participation by teachers also influences their attitudes toward changes and innovations in educational processes as

³³ Zepa, B., Kļave, E. (2004). *Integration of minority youth in the society of Latvia in the context of the education reform*. Riga, Baltic Institute of Social Sciences

such. Teachers who are open to change and are motivated to change their working methods found it easier to introduce the principles of bilingual education in their work.

“It all started with teachers who were enthusiasts. They started the work, and that encouraged others to do the same.”

“(..) Teachers are the most difficult group, they don’t want to learn. They think that they’ve completed their education; they were graduated from university in Soviet times – why should I keep studying? Why? I am a specialist in my profession! The point is that they are specialists in their subject area, not in their profession.”

The things that were said by school representatives indicate that the level of participation among teachers is negatively affected by psychological factors – fear and confusion which is the result of insufficient information and understanding of bilingual education as a policy and about the relevant teaching methods.

“(..) We were scared at first, but then we got used to the situation, and it turned out that the work was not all that terrible. Still, some of the early fears and confusions have remained.”

Another group of factors which significantly affect the participation of teachers in the implementation of bilingual education has been the pace and methods of policy implementation. Here we can speak of several aspects.

First of all, there was the haste with which the policy was implemented. Teachers had to begin implementation of bilingual education when they were not prepared to do so – without appropriate Latvian language skills, without the necessary materials and technologies, without any understanding or knowledge about bilingual teaching methods. These elements facilitated the emergence of the aforementioned negative psychological factors, thus reducing the motivation of teachers.

“I would like to say that there is a new trend now. We have worked together, we have discussed these things, we understand the situation, we can talk. But what if all of a sudden new bilingual methodologists show up and tell us that no, we have been working all wrong?”

Teachers also spoke of the authoritarian nature of the way in which the policy was prepared and introduced – something which made it clear that the policy was being

implemented from the top down - this encouraged the emergence of negative attitudes in a certain segment of the target audience for the policies – teachers included.

“(..) I think that we need to find ways of avoiding this authoritarianism, of saying once again that this is wrong and this is right. Please accept my experience. Let’s talk. Let’s see what is the better option.”

Third, there is another factor which affects involvement in the preparation and implementation of the policy – the absence of clearly defined policy implementation criteria and control mechanisms, which led several schools to postpone any decisions on the introduction of bilingual education policies. That, in turn, seriously hindered the participation of schools and teachers.

“I suppose that they were looking to see what people were doing and were not doing. Parents got the idea that if the law was not obeyed in another school, then why should it be obeyed at their school? Why should anything be done? Later, teachers began to feel the same.”

“Human beings are used to controlling things. (..) Not all teachers work conscientiously, the subject motivates them, they know that there will be an inspection of their bilingual subjects. They are afraid, perhaps not from the administration, it cannot refuse to pay them 15 lats for bilingual education, and perhaps they are more worried about the parents.”

The aforementioned factors in determining the level of teacher participation are very closely linked, and they have an influence on one another. Teacher attitudes influence their motivations, and their attitudes and motivations are determined, in large part, by their understanding of the goals, missions and results of policy. Attitudes, motivation and understanding are equally affected by the way in which policies are prepared and implemented. The interrelation between these factors can be very diverse, and it can depend on each specific instance.

3. Evaluating the results of implementation of bilingual education policies

3.1. Criteria to determine the results of the bilingual education policy

The three-step model of Alex Hausen, which is used in the analysis of focus group results, refers to the factor of “final products” – the desired goals and actual results of the policy.

As already mentioned in previously in the report, the reform was started in 1999, and for the time being only mid-term evaluation of the policy results is possible, as the academic and linguistic achievements of the first pupils studying in the minority education programmes after the reform will be available for evaluation not earlier than in 2007. Also the lack of clearly defined indicators and criteria related to the results of bilingual education policy implementation makes evaluation difficult and these have to be derived from the overall policy goals.

The issue of the results of bilingual policy implementation remains open, and each policy participant can add his or her own content on the basis of personal experience. Group discussion participants defined and evaluated the medium term results of policy implementation on the basis of their own role and functions in preparing and implementing the policy – as policy authors or policy implementers.

3.2. Expert views of the results of bilingual education policy

Focus group participants made comments about the results of bilingual education policy implementation, which confirmed the aforementioned conclusions about how hard it is to provide a structured and objective medium term evaluation of the policy. The results can be evaluated at this time only in local contexts (at each school separately), because there have been no universal studies or statistical data to reflect the situation at the national level. Several participants in the focus group discussions recognised this.

“As far as individual schools are concerned, the only data are collected by local governments, because the ministry does not have data about each individual school.”

“I don’t know, because I don’t have access to those kinds of results, but I do want to say one thing – it seems to me that the results of this pedagogical experiment will not appear all at once. It is too early to talk about the consequences, to evaluate them today.”

The absence of all-encompassing and comparative information is one reason why the evaluation of results is unclear and often contradictory in the field of policy implementation. The fact is that the situation can be very different among the various schools. There are also many different factors in determining the scope of these differences.

The experience of school representatives shows that the most active schools are collecting their own internal results. They are looking at the dynamics of student success,

and they are studying the attitudes of students and teachers vis-à-vis the implementation of bilingual education. It has to be said that this must be seen as an example of school self-initiative, as opposed to any systematic strategy for determining the results of bilingual education at all minority schools taken together.

“Last year we surveyed our school, and the results for the time being don’t show any decline.”

It has to be said at the same time that most of these results must be seen as processes that have not yet been completed, ones that are still occurring, and they are still having an effect on the way in which the policy is being implemented.

Increased understanding of bilingual education

Analysis of the preparatory phase of bilingual education policy and an evaluation of the involvement of policy participants laid bare the extent to which an adequate understanding of bilingual education affects the attitudes of motivations of policy implementers and the target groups. A lack of understanding was one of the indicators of teachers not being prepared at the beginning of policy implementation. School representatives say that the situation has improved now – there has been an increase in information and understanding. What’s more, this applies to all of the groups that are involved in the political process – policy authors, direct implementers and target audiences.

“(..) When we started with the bilingual method, the big problem had to do with how to start the process – no one knew, not the big scientists, the little scientists, the ministry, the parents, the teachers, the schools, the children. It was only through seeking out mistakes and making mistakes that we eventually arrived at something.”

According to policy implementers, the result of greater understanding is a change in policy participant attitudes vis-à-vis bilingual education – teachers are increasingly accepting the methodologies, and parents and students are sometimes expressing greater support for the introduction of those methodologies at school.

“I’m also thinking about parents, and that will lead us to the students. When I have talked to parents, the parents said that they no longer are asking whether the child should or should not be studying bilingually, it is clear that this has to happen. The children, too, are recognising that this has to be done.”

Teachers are still studying new methodologies and looking for the most successful solutions in implementing it. On the other hand, policy authors and teachers alike feel that such methodological and pedagogical debates are a positive change in the process of implementing the policy.

“(..) As the principal of the school and someone who is involved in education, I think that bilingual education is just one way of teaching students. (..) Methodology is a different issue – where, how, why, how much? (..) Not enough time has passed, we don’t have enough experience to ensure that bilingualism is a normal phenomenon. Not all that much has been written about this. We don’t have the experience to conclude or determine these things.”

Even though there has been greater understanding of bilingual education, it is important to say that basically we are referring to analysis and acceptance of bilingual education as a teaching method, as opposed to any true understanding of the goals and missions of minority education policies. Previous BISS research about minority education policy indicated these developments in the process, because an analysis of student and teacher attitudes showed that the target audiences were objecting not to bilingual education as a method, but rather to the way in which it was introduced in Latvian schools – in great haste, with elements of authoritarianism, and without adequate preparations³⁴.

Professional growth of minority schoolteachers

Along with greater understanding, school representatives feel that there has been significant professional growth among teachers at minority schools during the implementation of bilingual education. Teachers are learning bilingual methodologies, and that helps them to learn new pedagogical methods as such. Experts think very highly of these changes.

“(..) The teacher stood up and could offer a very theoretical explanation of how he organises this whole process. (..) We can be proud of such teachers – people who have lots of knowledge, who are well prepared. (..) It is truly

Along with enhanced professional qualifications, which were also facilitated by an increased understanding of bilingual education among teachers, it can also be said that

³⁴ Zepa, B., Kļave, E. (2004). *Integration of minority youth in the society of Latvia in the context of the education reform*: Riga, Baltic Institute of Social Sciences, p.64).

negative psychological factors such as fear, confusion and insecurity have receded. These were typical during the period when the policy was being prepared and initially implemented, and they hindered both the introduction of bilingual education at schools and the participation of teachers in the policy process. The gradual disappearance of pedagogical insecurity, according to policy implementers, is one of the medium term bilingual education results.

“We look at results in terms of the positions that are taken by teachers. We work together; we are no longer as afraid. We want to work, we analyse our mistakes, and that is a result in and of itself. (..) New qualifications for our teachers – that is also a result.”

Latvian language skills

The Latvian language skills of students are among the most important indicators in terms of the results of bilingual education policy implementation, both now and in the long term. This has to do with policy goals, too. Policy implementers feel that Latvian language skills are really on the rise, and here one can speak of a gradual and stable movement in pursuit of the goal.

“(..) If I speak about the level of Latvian language knowledge, non-Latvian children have better Latvian language skills, all in all. If the goal is to teach them to speak, then the kids are gradually approaching the goal – they have better and better skills.”

Teachers who took part in the group discussions based their thinking about the Latvian language skills of students and the positive trends therein not only on the basis of their own observations, but also on the basis of specific tests that have been taken by students. These indicate that young people are having less and less of a problem with the Latvian language.

“They took a Latvian language test, and they were laughing on their way to the examination room. They said that it was the easiest exam. The person who judged oral skills showed me the results, even though he didn’t have to – half of the kids got 30 points of 30, others got 29 or 28.”

The experience of discussion participants also indicates that there have been positive changes in student attitudes vis-à-vis the Latvian language. Students increasingly

understand that it is necessary to speak the state language, and that is one of the leading sources of motivation for them to participate in the bilingual education process.

“You see in the faces of the children that they are in a revolutionary phase, they leave school with different Latvian language skills than they had at first, they accept the process to a greater degree.”

However, it was representatives of schools who talked about positive changes in attitudes toward the Latvian language, not the students themselves. BISS research about the positions of students and trends therein when it comes to education reforms³⁵ indicate that young people are progressing in their attitudes toward the need to speak the Latvian language, and that is determined by the instrumental motivation for Latvian language learning. At the same time, however, students have negative positions about the way in which the Latvian language is taught and language policies are being implemented – they felt that these are forced on them from above. Negative attitudes toward policy authors are often expressed by young people through the criticism of the Latvian language itself.

Openness to foreign language studies

The experience of teachers at minority schools indicates that bilingual education has led to serious changes in student attitudes toward language learning as such. This may be due to developments in the modern-day world, as well as to requirements in the labour market, but at the end of the day, bilingual education has promoted the openness of students to the learning of other languages.

“It is absolutely a good thing that students have a command of languages. That was not true before, it was harder. The native language, a bit of Latvian and English language skills – it was very bad. Now most students leave school with three languages in their account, they speak three languages. (...) That, too, is a result.”

Effects on student knowledge

Opponents of minority education reforms often argue that a deterioration in the overall level of knowledge among minority students as the result of bilingual education policy is a serious problem. This is true in all of the target groups of the policy – teachers,

³⁵ *Analysis of the implementation of Bilingual Education* (2002) Riga: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences; *Opinions of National Minority Pupils and their Parents on the Latvian Language* (2003) Riga, Baltic Institute of Social Science; Zepa, B., Kļave, E. (2004) *Integration of minority youth in the society of Latvia in the context of the education reform*: Riga, Baltic Institute of Social Sciences

students and parents alike. In a study of student attitudes vis-à-vis changes in minority schools³⁶ it was found that students and parents feel that despite improved Latvian language skills, the overall knowledge of students was significantly deteriorating. This idea also is at the basis of the view among students and parents to the effect that the authors of education policies are seeking to reduce the competitiveness of non-Latvian young people in comparison to their Latvian peers.

At the time when the aforementioned study was conducted, there were no objective foundations for the view that knowledge is deteriorating – there were no test results back then, at the beginning of 2004. The attitudes of target group members vis-à-vis the successful implementation of the policy are a very important factor, one which cannot be ignored. In these group discussions, too, the policy implementers expressed views with a similar content – minority schoolchildren might become *“a lost generation as the result of a bad experiment.”*

According to participants in this project’s focus groups, there are still no data about the way in which bilingual education has facilitated the knowledge of minority students. Changes in student knowledge and the influence of bilingual education thereupon are evaluated by each school individually, if it has the initiative to do so. The situation is made more complicated by the aforementioned lack of indicators of results and criteria for defining them.

“From the perspective of students, it is hard to speak of results. The thing is that the times are changing, education is changing, and reforms are changing. Education is intensive, and we do not have real criteria on the basis of which we can determine changes in knowledge, etc. Children are different now, they change, the world changes. There are no criteria as to whether education has become better or worse.”

School representatives said on the basis of their experience that the knowledge of students has not deteriorated. On the contrary – examinations in those subject areas, which are offered bilingually, show that there has been progressive growth.

“The situation shows that the situation is quite different. (..) Each year, 9th grade students take exams; they choose three subjects, which are taught in Latvian at the high

³⁶ Zepa, B., Kļave, E. (2004). *Integration of minority youth in the society of Latvia in the context of the education reform*: Riga, Baltic Institute of Social Sciences

school level. Each year, there are examinations in Latvian to see how students understand the questions in Latvia, how they can do the work, whether they are prepared to study in Latvian at the high school level. Three years ago, when we first offered the exam, the average learning coefficient in various subjects was 0.1 and 0.2. This year the coefficient in geography was 0.7. (...) The optimal coefficient is between 0.6 and 0.8, so that is a good result.”

It has to be remembered here that in this case, respondents were talking about results at their own schools.

“The children have to be evaluated over a certain period of time, and then we can talk about effectiveness, as opposed to making far-sighted judgments about positive consequences.”

This fragment from the discussion shows very clearly that judgments about the results of bilingual education policies are still unclear and even contradictory. This is largely because of the uneven nature of policy implementation. Each school has achieved its own level in implementing the policy, and that has everything to do with its views of medium term policy results, including trends in student success.

Competitiveness at university and the labour market

It was in 1992 that it was declared that the Latvian language would be the only language of instruction in state-financed institutions of higher education. The ability of minority students to continue with their education – that is one of the goals that has been defined by the authors of bilingual education policy. The aim is to create equal opportunities for all members of society in the field of higher education and, subsequently, in the labour market. Policy implementers understand and support this, as can be seen in statements, which they made in focus group discussions.

“(..) If we do not give the children any idea about these chemistry and physics terms in Latvia, then that is a crime in one sense, because we are banning them from entering Latvia’s universities, we are putting up obstacles.”

BISS studies in the past have found that the attitudes of target group members vis-à-vis this particular argument in favour of bilingual education have been quite diverse. On the one hand, most parents and teachers argue that bilingual education will increase the

ability of students to enter Latvian universities³⁷. This view was held by 63% of parents and 59% of teachers. The same was true with respect to the labour market (61% of parents, 54% of teachers). On the other hand, qualitative research data show that there are also other attitudes among students and parents. Some students and parents point to specific cases in saying that minority young people are competitive anyway, they are doing well at university and are finding jobs, too.

Policy authors who took part in the focus group discussions of this project admit that ensuring competitiveness at university and in the labour market is one source of motivation for students in the implementation of bilingual education, adding that this shows that they are having a greater understanding of the goals and possible results of this educational process.

“The student thinks – I’ll be able to go to Rīga, I’ll do well there, and then I’ll do this or that. This is a personal calculation; the student knows why he or she is studying the language. It’s not integration, high-flying words like that are unimportant to kids. (..) They know all about their practical goals.”

In evaluating the competitiveness of young people at university and in the labour market as one of the results of the implementation of bilingual education policy, it has to be said that it cannot be denied that this goal has been achieved. No less important, however, is taking into account the ideas of the target audience in this regard – ideas which point to the unidirectional nature of bilingual policy implementation. The policy is aimed at minorities, and the result is that negative consequences to the process are becoming clear (some will be analysed in the next section of this report).

3.3. Problems discovered in the process of implementing bilingual education policy

Bilingual education was introduced as a process of reforms at minority schools. If we assume that the broader goal of this policy is to promote ethnic integration in society, then there is good reason for us to point to the unidirectional nature of the implementation of bilingual education policy – something that contradicts the basic principle of integration. It is supposed to be bi-directional, involving both Latvians and

³⁷ *Analysis of the implementation of Bilingual Education* (2002) Riga: Baltic Institute of Social Sciences; *Opinions of National Minority Pupils and their Parents on the Latvian Language* (2003) Riga: Baltic Institute of Social Science

non-Latvians. In group discussions, policy authors admitted that *“national policy has been implemented, but the programme was aimed at just one target audience.”*

This presents another argument, which helps us to define the policy’s target audience and better to understand the negative attitudes of the public at large vis-à-vis bilingual education policy as such. It may be that views about the unacceptable way in which the policy was implemented, arguments to say that minority education reforms were forced upon the community, and thoughts about the threat of assimilation in the Russian speaking community – these emanate largely from the fact that educational changes in the name of integration are being conducted only in some of Latvia’s general education schools.

“For that reason, there are other ways of living in Latvia, speaking the language and being educated. We and other people who arrived at this country accidentally – we’re being called occupants. Our political rights have been denied, and pressure has been placed upon us.”

These statements were made by representatives of the public sector and they characterise views which prevail in society. This indicates that there is a conflict between two dominant discourses. Such attitudes have been discovered in all BISS studies in the area of ethnic policy and related issues. Analysis of the results of bilingual education policy forces one to conclude that the way in which the policy was introduced was the cause of a whole series of negative attitudes toward bilingual education. These have not only hindered the successful implementation of the policy, but also have promoted ethno-political tensions in Latvia.

A second important issue in debates about the unidirectional nature of the implementation of bilingual education policies is a gap between minority and Latvian schools – a gap that is becoming more and more visible.

“Most people in Latvia think that the level of education in Latvian schools is lower than that in Russian schools (..) with a few exceptions. (..) Life forced teachers at Russian schools to change, they are more stable and knowledgeable.”

Policy authors admit that administrators at Latvian schools are increasingly interested in bilingual education – a level of interest, which was quite negligible at first. Principals understand the benefits of a bilingual education methodology, and they want to

implement that methodology at Latvian schools, too. This, in turn, facilitates co-operation between minority and Latvian schools.

“(..) Initially, when there was talk of bilingual education, we Latvians asked why we would need something like that. (..) [Now] Latvian schools (..) have seen the results and concluded that this is necessary at Latvian schools, too. (..) This offers greater possibilities. (..) Latvian schools need bilingual education, too, this is something of an advertising clip at this point.”

Even though the gap between minority and Latvian schools has led to true co-operation among the schools, it also reveals a serious shortcoming in the implementation of bilingual education policy. One slogan for the policy referred to a unified education system, but it is evident that the process has developed in the opposite direction. Minority and Latvian schools have not drawn more closely together. On the contrary, the gap has expanded in terms of education quality, in the ongoing education and professional growth of students, and in the qualifications of schoolteachers. Newly emerging school collaboration is usually the result of self-initiative by schools, the aim being to preserve the school's competitiveness in the field of general education. This is not a result of the strategy for implementing bilingual education policies.

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