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EID is an international, periodical scientific journal publishing original research which is of general significance to the education research community and which comes from a wide range of areas of education research and related disciplines.

This journal operates a blind review process. All contributions are typically sent to a minimum of two independent expert reviewers to assess the scientific quality of the paper. Every peer-reviewed research article appearing in this journal will be published open access. The journal is indexed in ERIH PLUS, DOAJ, CrossRef, WordCat.

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PREFACE

Dear authors and readers,

I am delighted to present the new issue of the scientific e-journal “Education. Innovation. Diversity” (EID). The journal is the result of scientific cooperation between several universities - Rezekne Academy of Technologies (Latvia), RTU Liepaja Academy (Latvia), Palacký University Olomouc (Czech Republic), Riga Stradins University (Latvia), University of Niš (Serbia) and Vytautas Magnus University (Lithuania). EID aims to make major research and new findings of broad importance widely accessible.

The issue No. 9 of the journal deals with such topics as the need for engineers' marketing skills, support for new teachers during the adaptation period and the promotion of teacher leadership, and analyses the potential of the library in promoting independent reading skills among pupils. Social issues such as improving social services and the resilience of social workers are also highlighted. Thanks to the authors from Latvia, Germany, India and South Africa for entrusting us to publish their research in the e-journal “Education. Innovation. Diversity”.

Many thanks to the reviewers as it would not have been possible to publish this issue without their input and evaluation.

We hope that the research published in the journal will be encouraging for readers. We also invite other authors to submit papers for publication in the e-journal EID. We have started working on the creation of the issue No. 10.

Topics:

- **Teaching and Learning** (curriculum development and innovation at all levels, approaches to accommodating national and state standards within the context of effective instruction and assessment, teacher development and mentoring, diversity in the classroom and augmented/virtual reality in education, etc.)
- **Language and Literacy Education** (theoretical perspectives on language or literacy that address teaching and learning; research-validated approaches to instruction and assessment or curriculum development and refinement for general education learners, second language learners, or those with particular needs; learner identity; social justice in literacy and language teaching and learning; accommodating national and state standards within the context of effective instruction and assessment; digitally-mediated learning, etc.)
- **Diversity in Education** (education and multicultural society today, intercultural communication, human rights and anti-racist education, pluralism and diversity in a democratic framework, pluralism in post-communist and in post-colonial countries, migration and indigenous minority issues, refugee issues, language policy issues, etc.)
- **Health and Sport Education** (interventions related to primary prevention of chronic disease from a social ecological perspective that conceptualized the effect of individual, interpersonal, institutional, community and policy factors on lifestyle behaviour, advancement of sport/exercise/health sciences, health promotion, health education, social rehabilitation, physical exercise and health, adapted physical activity).

- **Engineering Education** (engineering education at all levels, innovation in engineering education strategies, course and curriculum design, teaching, and assessment inside and outside of the classroom, etc.)
- **Personality Development in the Educational Environment** (professional school counselling, bullying and bullying prevention, social emotional learning, college or career readiness, multicultural counselling and development, performance psychology, etc.)

We invite authors to submit papers to the journal's website <http://journals.rta.lv/index.php/EID> We hope that together we will be able to create a high-quality e-journal on research in education.

Responsible for the publication
Dr. paed. Svetlana Usca

ENGINEERING INNOVATION AND MARKET SUCCESS: EXPLORING THE NEED FOR ENGINEERS' MARKETING SKILLS

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Abstract. Resulting marketing and engineering product goals require engineering and marketing to be interconnected, as the unity of engineering innovation and its marketing leads to product market success. Sustainability affects product market success. The aim of this study is to explore the need for engineers' marketing skills, both theoretically and empirically. The present work represents exploratory research. Theoretical research is based on the analysis of scientific literature available via Google search. This empirical study was conducted in the year 2024. A total of 209 undergraduate engineering students studying computer science in India participated in an online survey. Data from the online survey were processed via frequency analysis, percentage, and ranking. Theoretical analysis allows us to conclude that sustainability is the cornerstone in modelling engineers' marketing skills, as well as in the creation of engineering innovation (product design). Theoretical research results in modelling engineers' marketing skills, consisting of five sub-skills. The empirical study found that social media marketing skills for engineers who represent the digital economy are the most important. Engineers' marketing skills are an emerging research area. The limitations of this theoretical analysis and empirical study are highlighted. Future research directions are proposed.

Keywords: engineering, marketing skills, market success, product design, ranking, social media marketing, sustainability.

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Introduction

Sustainability is a key factor driving modern engineering product design and market demand. Sustainability aims at creating engineering products that meet the needs of today's consumers (Ivanov, Pavlenko, Evtuhov, & Trojanowska, 2024). Sustainable solutions in product design and its further marketing relate to material selection, energy efficiency, recyclability, and end-of-life disposal (Ivanov, Pavlenko, Evtuhov, & Trojanowska, 2024).

Conventionally, engineers design an innovative product, and marketers sell this product to customers for further use (Bumblauskas, Carberry, & Sly, 2017) as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Inter-connection between product design, product marketing, and product selling results (by authors)

Therefore, engineering and marketing exist in isolation from each other (Michalek, Feinberg, & Papalambros, 2005). This isolation does not result in optimal product offers, as engineers work within the limits of their capabilities, while marketers are bounded by customer preferences (Michalek, Feinberg, & Papalambros, 2005) as illustrated in Figure 2.

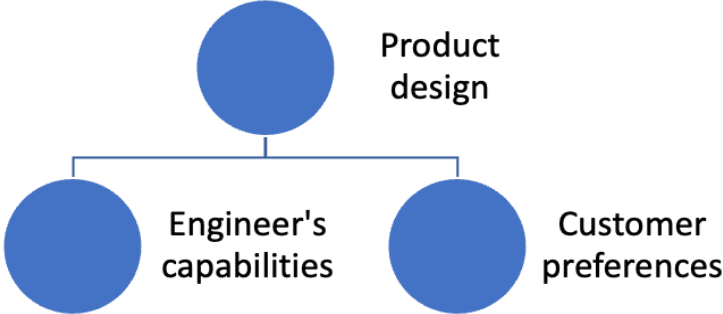


Figure 2 Inter-connection between product design, engineering capabilities, and customer preferences (by authors)

Further, the resulting marketing and engineering product goals require consideration of engineering and marketing as interconnected (Michalek, Feinberg, & Papalambros, 2005). Engineering product design, adapted to users’ needs and preferences (Ivanov, Pavlenko, Evtuhov, & Trojanowska, 2024), increases product demand and sales. Figure 3 illustrates the unity of product design and marketing, leading to product market success.

The aim of this study is to explore the need for engineers’ marketing skills both theoretically and empirically.

The present work represents exploratory research. It includes both theoretical and empirical explorations of the need for engineers’ marketing skills. Theoretical research is based on the analysis of scientific literature available via Google search. This empirical study was conducted in the year 2024. A total of 209 undergraduate engineering students in the field of computer science participated in an online survey. Data from the online survey were processed using frequency analysis and ranking.

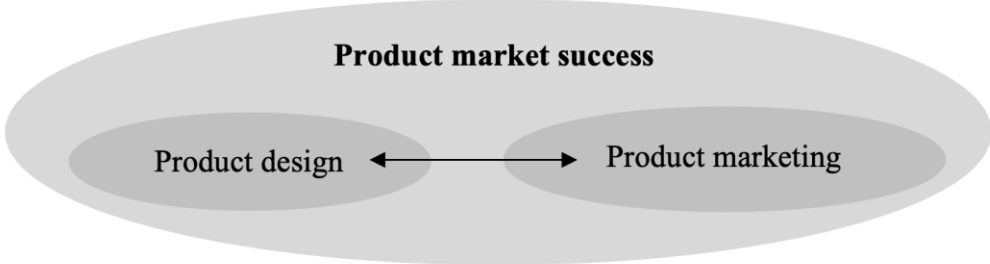


Figure 3 The unity of product design and product marketing leading to product market success (by authors)

Research Methodology

The present study was exploratory in nature. This type of research is chosen when the topic of engineers’ marketing skills is underexplored (Ahrens & Zašcerinska, 2021). Only two scientific publications on engineers’ marketing skills were found via Google searches. Table 1 presents the publications available via Google search for further analysis.

Table 1 Scientific publications on engineers' marketing skills (by authors)

No	Publication title	Reference
1	The role of "Engineering Marketing" study course in raising the prestige of market-minded engineers in the context of digital economy	Lyubanova, Shcherba, Lisitsin, & Oleynikova, 2020
2	Product Design	Ivanov, Pavlenko, Evtuhov, & Trojanowska, 2024

The lacuna in research on engineers' marketing skills requires exploratory efforts in this work. Exploratory research is empowered by researchers' openness to launch the study (Ahrens, Zascerinska, Bhati, Zascerinskis, & Aleksejeva, 2021). Exploratory research also means that research can be performed with high flexibility for building a structure in the analyzed research field (Ahrens, Foerster, Zašcerinska, & Wasser, 2020). Exploratory research may result in the creation of a new theory, formulation of hypotheses, or proposal of new research questions (Phillips, 2006). The newly introduced theories, hypotheses, or research questions, which were elaborated within exploratory research, can be tested for generality in subsequent research work and/or studies (Mayring, 2007).

The present exploratory research was enabled by the research questions:

1. Is there a need for engineers' marketing skills?
2. What are engineers' marketing skills?
3. What is engineering students' self-evaluation of their marketing skills?

The present work, devoted to the exploration of the need for engineers' marketing skills, is implemented in three steps.

1. Theoretical analysis,
2. Empirical study, and
3. Synthesis of theoretical and empirical findings.

Theoretical research comprises the analysis of scientific literature available via Google search. Google search revealed only five scientific publications on the topic of the present research, namely, the inter-connections between engineering innovations (product) and marketing. Table 2 presents the publications selected for further analyses.

Table 2 Scientific publications on the research topic (by authors)

No	Publication title	Reference
1	Linking Marketing and Engineering Product Design Decisions via Analytical Target Cascading	Michalek, Feinberg, & Papalambros, 2005
2	Selling Technical Sales to Engineering Learners	Bumblauskas, Carberry, & Sly, 2017
3	The role of "Engineering Marketing" study course in raising the prestige of market-minded engineers in the context of digital economy	Lyubanova, Shcherba, Lisitsin, & Oleynikova, 2020
4	Marketing capabilities to grant a competitive advantage to engineering	Piedrahita, Zapata, Zapata, & Rosero, 2020
5	Product Design	Ivanov, Pavlenko, Evtuhov, & Trojanowska, 2024

Theoretical analysis started with defining "engineer," "marketing," "marketing process," "indicator of marketing process success," and "skills," afterwards, further moving to the elaboration of the definition of "engineer's marketing skills."

The exploratory empirical study was implemented in 2024.

This empirical study was facilitated by the following research question: What marketing skills are important for student engineers?

The purpose of this empirical study is to analyze student engineers' opinions on the importance of marketing skills.

A total of 209 undergraduate engineering students enrolled in computer science study programs in India participated in the online survey. Therefore, the respondents represented a digital economy. It should be noted that, prior to the commencement of the study, verbal informed consent for participation in the study had been obtained from the online survey participants.

Table 3 describes the respondents' computer program and software skills.

Table 3 Summary of the respondents' computer programmes and software skills (the authors)

Computer programmes and software skills	Frequency	Ranking
Programming languages (HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Python, etc.)	184	1
Cloud computing	52	5
Front-End Development	66	3
Back-End Development	64	4
Cybersecurity	77	2

Source: Online survey.
n=209

Table 3 shows that the respondents obtained computer programs and software skills in programming languages, cybersecurity, and front-end development. Table 4 presents the choices of options per respondent relevant to their computer program and software skills.

Table 4 Respondents' options related to their computer programmes and software skills (by authors)

No	Answer option	Frequency	Percentage
1	One option answer	76	36%
2	Between two and four option answer	116	56%
	All the five options selected	17	8%

Source: Online survey.
n=209

The results in Table 4 emphasize that the majority (56%) of the respondents had multiple skills in computer programs and software.

Table 5 characterizes the respondents' digital skills.

Table 5 Summary of the respondents' digital skills (the authors)

Digital skills	Frequency	Ranking
User Experience (UX)	131	1
Wireframing	34	5
Responsive Design	74	3
Branding	69	4
Visual Design (Color Theory, Typography, etc.)	94	2

Source: Online survey.
n=209

Table 5 highlights that the respondents were most experienced in user experience digital skills, visual design, and responsive design. Table 6 shows the choices of options for each respondent relevant to their digital skills.

Table 6 Respondents' options related to their digital skills (by authors)

No	Answer option	Frequency	Percentage
1	One option answer	70	33%
2	Between two and four option answer	130	62%
	All the five options selected	9	4%

Source: Online survey.

n=209

The results in Table 6 reveal that the majority (62%) of respondents had multiple digital skills.

The online survey was based on the question, "What marketing skills are important for you?" This question in the online survey was a multiple-choice option. Respondents could select one to five options.

- Social Media Marketing,
- Content Management Systems,
- Consumer Analytics
- Email campaigns, and
- Creating Marketing Funnels.

Table 7 illustrates the respondents' responses.

Table 7 Respondents' options in the online survey (by authors)

No	Answer option	Frequency	Percentage
1	One option answer	71	34%
2	Between two and four option answer	132	63%
	All the five options selected	6	3%

Source: Online survey.

n=209

Table 2 shows that 71 respondents or 34% answered the online survey question selecting only one option, while 132 respondents or 63% used between two and four options. Six respondents or 3% answered using all the five options. Therefore, the majority of the respondents or 63% preferred multiple answers.

Therefore, an online survey was used for data collection. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics, frequency analysis, percentages, and rankings (Ahrens & Zascierinska, 2020). Frequency analysis helps to compare marketing skills for the establishment of the most and least important ones. Percentage allows comparison and review of results from surveys and/or studies. Ranking shows the vertical differences between options (Marginson & van der Wende, 2007). Therefore, ranking was found helpful in selecting the appropriate marketing sub-skills to be obtained by student engineers (Ahrens & Zascierinska, 2020).

After the data were collected and processed, data analysis and interpretation were performed. All these data processes were organized by the researchers who implemented the empirical study within the present research (Ahrens, Purvinis, Zašcerinska, Micevičienė, & Tautkus, 2018).

Research Results

1. Theoretical Results

Analysis of scientific literature identified that engineering marketing represents a new paradigm in marketing evolution which determines the corresponding requirements for

engineers (Lyubanova, Shcherba, Lisitsin, & Oleynikova, 2020). Engineering marketing bridges engineering principles with user-centered design to create innovative and appealing products (Ivanov, Pavlenko, Evtuhov, & Trojanowska, 2024). The decomposition of the term engineering marketing shows its structural elements, as depicted in Figure 4.

Engineering is a generator of progress (Lyubanova, Shcherba, Lisitsin, & Oleynikova, 2020). Engineers are key actors in engineering. Engineer has the ability to integrate his/her engineering capabilities and customer preferences through technical solutions (in other words, engineering innovations or products) providing the prospect for stakeholders to participate in development and adaptation of goods and services (Lyubanova, Shcherba, Lisitsin, & Oleynikova, 2020). By stakeholders, designers, engineers, marketers, and others who help ensure that the resulting product aligns with the intended goals and satisfies user requirements (Ivanov, Pavlenko, Evtuhov, & Trojanowska, 2024). Thereby, product design requires a multidisciplinary approach involving all stakeholders' collaboration (Ivanov, Pavlenko, Evtuhov, & Trojanowska, 2024).

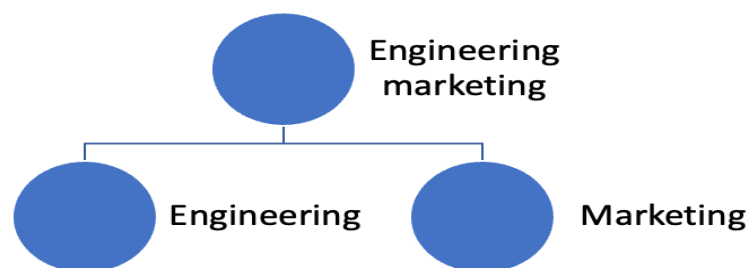


Figure 4 *Structural elements of engineering marketing* (by authors)

Marketing is a customer-focused process aimed at selling and/or promoting products. Marketing is based on plurality, independence and self-sufficiency (Lyubanova, Shcherba, Lisitsin, & Oleynikova, 2020). The marketing process includes (Lyubanova, Shcherba, Lisitsin, & Oleynikova, 2020)

- marketing communications,
- market research,
- marketing methods, and
- models, etc.

Additionally, the increasing role of social media in marketing has to be emphasized (Ahrens, Zasczerinska, Huliaieva, Duranowski, Dąbrowski, Santos, Oliveira, Rodrigues, & Oliinyk, 2024). Social media links engineers with all the relevant stakeholders, thereby strengthening their cooperation and contribution to regional development as well as economy (Ahrens, Zaščerinska, Amanzholova, Aleksejeva, Zaščerinskis, Aleksejeva, Gukovica, & Abjalkiene, 2021).

As any process, marketing process can be measured and evaluated (Ahrens, Zasczerinska, & Aleksejeva, 2021). One of the indicators used to measure developmental dynamics in the marketing process is engineers' skills (Zaščerinska, 2013). By skill, an engineer's ability to act aims to accomplish a task with the required quality and volume (Ahrens & Zasczerinska, 2023).

Table 8 provides an overview of marketing skills and their structural elements found in the scientific literature available for analysis.

Table 8 *Marketing skills' definitions (by authors)*

Marketing skills	Market sub-skills	Reference
Marketing method	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Team work - Cooperation 	Lyubanova, Shcherba, Lisitsin, & Oleynikova, 2020
Marketing model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Idea - Implementation - Scope - Competition - Engineering marketing tools - Calculation methods - Engineering marketing evolutionary development - Consumer benefits - Producer benefits 	Lyubanova, Shcherba, Lisitsin, & Oleynikova, 2020
Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consumer preferences - Communication 	Michalek, Feinberg, & Papalambros, 2005
Content marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - White papers - Webinars - Case studies 	Goldstein Group Communication, (2024).
Technical sales skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sales skills (market analysis, customers' needs, financing, etc) - Social skills (meeting new people, cultural issues, etc) 	Bumblauskas, Carberry, & Sly, 2017
Market demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying customer needs; - Analyzing competitor offerings; - Adapting to technological advancements; - Incorporating feedback and iteration; - Consumer-centric design thinking 	Ivanov, Pavlenko, Evtuhov, & Trojanowska, 2024

The analysis of the existing definitions demonstrated in Table 3, as well as the role of social media in marketing and marketing skills, is depicted in Figure 5.

It should be emphasized that Figure 5 shows engineers' marketing skills only. These skills, as demonstrated in Figure 5, do not include any soft skills, as proposed by a few authors referenced in Table 8.

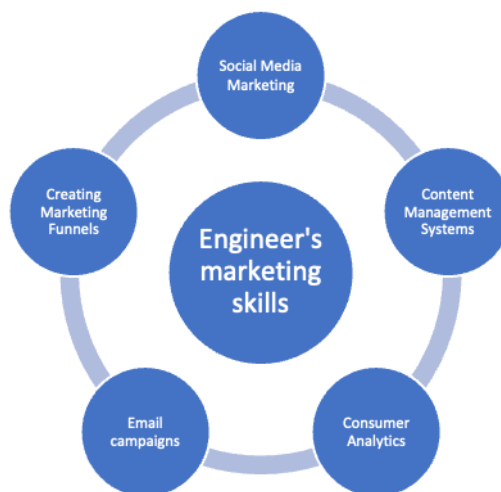


Figure 5 *Engineer's marketing skills (by authors)*

Engineers' marketing skills can be tested before, during, and after implementation of the marketing process to measure marketing success.

2. Empirical Results

The respondents' answers to the online survey are summarized in Table 9. Table 9 presents the frequency and ranking of online survey results.

Table 9 Summary of the respondents' online survey results (the authors)

Survey Question: What marketing skills are important for you?	Frequency	Ranking
Social Media Marketing	159	1
Content Management Systems	95	3
Consumer Analytics	108	2
Email campaigns	40	5
Creating Marketing Funnels	49	4

Source: Online survey.
n=209

Respondents' answers demonstrate that social media marketing is the most important engineer's marketing skill, followed by consumer analytics and content management systems.

Discussion

The increasing role of sustainability in engineering innovations and product design allows the introduction of sustainability as the third element in engineering marketing, as depicted in Figure 6.

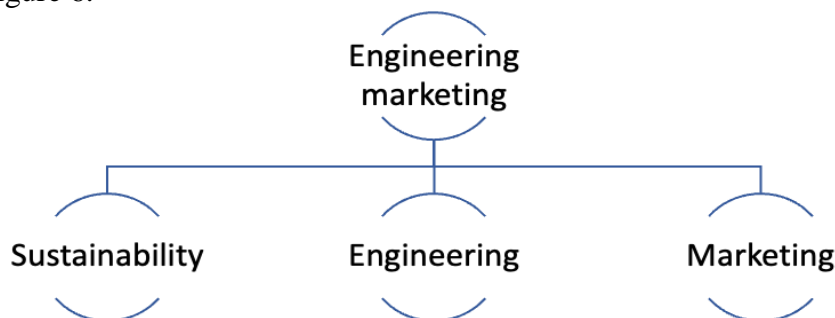


Figure 6 Updated structural elements of engineering marketing (by authors)

Sustainability is an outset for engineering innovation and product design. Sustainability in the process of product creation, manufacturing, repair, and other relevant procedures is characterized by

- material selection for the product to be created,
- energy efficiency in the process of the product manufacturing,
- product recyclability, and
- end-of-life disposal of the product, etc.

Consequently, sustainability affects product market success. Therefore, the focus in engineering innovation and/or product design is no longer on customer preferences. Adding sustainability to the structural elements of engineering marketing also requires the needs of (Ahrens & Zašcerinska, 2012)

- society,
- environment, and
- economy.

Sustainability enhances the importance and relevance of engineers' marketing skills in product design. Owing to the increasing significance of engineers' marketing skills in product

design, more attention should be paid to research in this field, as there is currently a lacuna of scientific efforts to study engineers' marketing skills.

It has to be noted that there is a lack of published research works on engineer's marketing skills. For example, the research published by Lyubanova, Shcherba, Lisitsin, & Oleynikova (2020) emphasized the role of "Engineering Marketing" study course in raising the prestige of market-minded engineers in the context of digital economy.

The existing scientific literature does not provide a clear understanding of engineers' marketing skills. Interesting is that, in a couple of published research contributions, soft skills are part of engineer's marketing skills (Michalek, Feinberg, & Papalambros, 2005; Bumblauskas, Carberry, & Sly, 2017; Lyubanova, Shcherba, Lisitsin, & Oleynikova, 2020).

Moreover, it should be noted that engineers' marketing and technical sales skills differ. Technical sales skills belong to market representatives who sell technical products, while the interest of this research is in engineers and their marketing skills.

The present work elaborates engineers' marketing skills for those who work with computers. Marketing skills for engineers from mechanical, medical, construction, electrical, and other fields may have different sub-skills.

Furthermore, our empirical study points out that social media marketing is the most important skill for engineers who represent the digital economy. Engineers from other engineering fields may arrive at different results. As only a few studies are available via Google searches, comparative analysis cannot be implemented.

Conclusions

Engineers' marketing skills are an emerging research area. More attention should be paid to this topic as engineering enables the sustainable development of the planet and the world. Therefore, collecting experiences and opinions from theorists, practitioners, learners, and stakeholders could help engineers to promote a more sustainable life. Engineers' marketing skills deserve significant attention from the research community.

The results of this empirical study allow us to conclude the importance of social media marketing skills for engineers who represent the digital economy.

The current research was limited by several factors. The theoretical limitations refer to a general lack of scientific literature on this topic. The existing definitions are not clear enough to define engineers' marketing skills. The differences between engineers' marketing and technical sales skills are explained in the available scientific literature. Our empirical study is limited by the number of respondents who participated in the online survey. Another limitation is that the respondents represented only one engineering field in one country. The comparative analysis of our empirical study results was limited by the non-existence of other similar empirical studies on the topic.

Future work will reflect the analysis of literature collected not only via google search. Research will use other sources of literature supported by the concept of open science. Future research should increase the number of respondents and widen the engineering field to which respondents belong. The participation of other countries in future empirical studies is highly appreciated. This would also be beneficial for a comparative analysis of engineers' marketing skills.

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FOSTERING CREATIVE LEADERSHIP ABILITIES IN ZIMBABWEAN TEACHER EDUCATION THROUGH 21ST CENTURY ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

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Abstract. *Within the framework of Zimbabwean teacher education, this research project intends to explore the function of 21st century assessment procedures in nurturing and augmenting creative leadership abilities. Educators must cultivate inventive leadership abilities to effectively navigate the unparalleled obstacles of the technologically advanced 21st- century. Given the speed at which technology is developing and the dynamic needs of the global labour market, educational systems must ensure that aspiring educators possess the knowledge and abilities needed to lead and innovate in the classroom. Pre-service teachers in Zimbabwean teachers' colleges must acquire creative leadership abilities to be prepared for their future roles. to become instructors who are revolutionary and successful. The capacity to introduce a novel approach, service, idea, referred is an innovative leadership quality. Interviews, observations, and document analysis were research instruments used in this interpretive case study to collect data from pre-service teachers and teacher educators at a Zimbabwean Teacher College. The participants were chosen on purpose. The education system in Zimbabwe is results-driven and exam-oriented, according to research findings., Assessments of learning which encourage memorization and concept repetition are emphasised instead of transformative assessment. Recommendations call for a paradigm shift in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment practices in teacher education.*

Key words: *Fostering, Leadership, Innovation, Innovative leadership, Innovative leadership abilities, Teacher education, 21st century assessment practices.*

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Introduction

This paper seeks to further the current conversation about creative leadership abilities and teacher education by emphasising the role that assessment procedures can play as a change agent. Zimbabwean teacher education programmes can better prepare teachers for success in the contemporary educational environment by implementing cutting-edge evaluation techniques. In the end, this will support the development of a new wave of creative leaders capable of spearheading changes in education and improving learning outcomes for students

In this third decade of the twenty-first century, world issues like health crises, technological advancement, and climate change are just a few of the urgent worries. The obstacles call for creative leadership abilities. In contrast to the conventional emphasis on substantive information, teacher education should cultivate 21st -Century competencies, or "the knowledge, skills, and expertise" (Battelle for Kids, 2019, p. 3). With these competencies, teacher education institutions may advance the nation's industrialization and socioeconomic transformation agendas in alignment with Vision 2030, as well as the 2030 Global Sustainable Development Goal (UNESCO, 2022). 21st- century evaluation techniques are necessary for the development of 21st- century competencies.

The 21st century has seen a change in assessment procedures to better reflect the skills required for success in the contemporary world as well as the shifting nature of education. Authentic assessment procedures that emphasise relevant, real-world assignments that mirror the abilities and knowledge students require to succeed outside of the classroom are imperative for teacher education institutions to implement. It incorporates projects, presentations, portfolios, simulations, and performance-based evaluations in addition to standard tests and

quizzes (Koh, 2017). Because it challenges students to do exemplary activities that indicate their deep understanding, higher-order thinking, and sophisticated problem-solving, authentic assessment is "a true test" of intellectual success or aptitude. Real-world difficulties and "standards of performance" that specialists and professionals—such as scientists, writers, surgeons, and educators—generally encounter in their field are replicated in authentic activities (Koh, 2017). Assessment procedures for the twenty-first century should encourage students to absorb material in-depth and to demonstrate their mastery of twenty-first-century skills (Koh, 2017). 21st-century leadership abilities are creative.

Teacher education institutions continue to assess 21st-century skills using 20th-century assessment models, even though 21st-century assessment practices are crucial for developing innovative leadership skills like critical thinking, creativity, communication, and teamwork (Care et al., 2018). The use of standardised, high-stakes testing is overused. Memorization, essay writing, individual mastery of assigned material, and formulaic problem-solving are frequently prioritised in assessment and instructional strategies (Milligan, 2020a).

The assessment of learning remains the prevailing discourse, encompassing matters of measurement, certification, quality assurance, policy formation, and so forth (Care et al., 2018, Lucas, 2021). The focus is on the objective world. There is concern that some teacher educators teach for examination and fail to develop innovative leadership skills (the four Cs) in pre-service teachers because the Zimbabwean education system is preoccupied with measurable, objective reality (hard skills) and the issue of certification (Moyo & Hadebe, 2018, Nziramasanga, 1999, Primrose & Alexander, 2013). The pen-and-paper paradigm of assessment does not lend itself well to the capabilities and dispositions needed in the twenty-first century. This unquestionably demonstrates how our assessment system overlooks the development of creative leadership skills (Lucas, 2021).

To successfully build innovative leadership skills, new, durable assessment methods that emphasise mastery of general competencies must be implemented. Conventional evaluation techniques, including written exams, typically evaluate only the most basic information. They frequently overlook assessing the critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving abilities that are necessary for efficient instruction. Furthermore, they might miss candidates' capacity to use theoretical knowledge in real-world teaching situations. The development of competent and well-rounded instructors is hampered when these approaches are the only ones used. Conventional evaluation techniques fall short of developing creative leadership abilities in teacher candidates.

With this context in mind, the study aimed to:

- Assess how innovative leadership abilities are now taught in Zimbabwean teacher preparation programmes.
- Examine how assessment procedures help Zimbabwean educators develop creative leadership abilities.
- Determine which efficient evaluation techniques to include in teacher preparation courses to foster creative leadership abilities.

This is an interpretive case study of a teacher education institution in Zimbabwe.

Literature review

To truly understand what innovative leadership entails, one must first grasp the concepts of innovation and leadership. Alharbi (2021) defines leadership as the ability of a person to encourage, assist, or convince others to make a positive contribution to the success and effectiveness of the organisation they are a part of. Blagoev & Yordanova (2015) define leadership as the ability of one individual to bring concepts to life. The ability to influence

others is the primary attribute of leadership. Leadership is the ability to motivate people to give their all at work to accomplish a goal.

Teachers are leaders who inspire their students to work hard to accomplish goals. When one thinks creatively, something new and better is produced. Innovation can originate from "invention" (a completely new object) or "iteration" (a modification of an existing item that does not fit the definition of "new and better") (Sen & Eren, 2012). Therefore, the capacity to both think and persuade people to generate "new and better" ideas to advance towards successful outcomes is known as innovative leadership. This is the capacity to produce anything by adopting an alternative perspective. According to Sen & Eren (2012), creative leadership is the process of presenting a novel approach, good, service, strategy, or concept to meet people's demands and address present and potential issues. As leaders, educators need to acquire creative talents so they can address previously unheard-of problems in the technologically advanced 21st century.

For pre-service teachers to:

- facilitate improvements in teaching and student learning;
- develop school organisation through management and administration;
- improve relations and collaboration with various stakeholders; and
- serve as role models and leaders referred,

teacher education institutions should provide them with innovative teacher leadership skills (Abidin et al, 2016). Based on the four points above, a comprehensive approach involving curriculum design, experiential learning, professional development, mentoring, collaboration, reflective practice, and contextual relevance is needed to help pre-service teachers at teachers' colleges in Zimbabwe develop innovative leadership skills. Above all, the key to a successful education is assessment.

Among the top ten innovative leadership skills that are essential in the knowledge economy are the four Cs: critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication (Chandra & Tangen, 2018; Baghetto & Kaufman, 2016; Guo, 2016; Plucker, Kaufman & Baghetto, 2016, UNESCO, 2015, Robles, 2012). Because of their significance in the 21st century, Kivunja (2015) refers to the four Cs as 21st-century super talents. In this sense, to develop creative leadership abilities in students, Zimbabwean teacher education must embrace pertinent 21st-century evaluation techniques. According to Urbani, Roshandel, Michaels, and Truesdell (2017), current educational practices should move away from fact memorising and rote learning and towards developing 21st-century skills including creativity, critical thinking, communication, and teamwork.

According to the P21 framework, creative leadership abilities are essential competencies for the twenty-first century. These abilities foster adaptability and flexibility. These abilities make it possible to acquire essential knowledge abilities. However as was discussed previously, the development of creative leadership abilities is still in its early stages (Greenburg & Nilsen, 2014). Prioritising innovative leadership skills—the essential competencies of the twenty-first century—requires a lot.

Education systems have adapted to the changing goals of education by incorporating a wider range of abilities into their curriculum declarations and policies (Care et al., 2018). This begs the question of what part teacher education plays in developing pre-service teachers' capacity for creative leadership. It is undeniable that teacher educators know far more about teaching mathematics and languages than they do about teaching cooperation, creativity, and innovation. This policy change is necessary, but many nations are not putting it into practice. To teach 21st-century abilities, they continue to use assessments and teaching strategies from the 20th century (Care et al., 2018). It was discovered that the majority of teacher educators still use the traditional teaching approach. As a result, learning becomes extremely limited and

student participation in learning activities is delayed. This indicates that a change in pedagogy is required.

Sustainability in evaluation is necessary for the development of innovative leadership abilities. Sustainable assessment is that which considers not just the "content," but also the learning processes and how students will continue to learn after the assessment. It helps shape a competent individual who can operate professionally and make an educated contribution to society as a citizen (Lucas, 2021). Sustainable evaluation encourages continuous learning. It is imperative for teacher educators to familiarise themselves with different types of assessment and adopt suitable assessment procedures which promote the development of the innovative leadership skills.

Lucas (2021) identified three types of assessment which include assessment for learning, assessment as learning, and assessment of learning. The purpose of assessment for learning is to provide educators with data so they may adapt and differentiate their instruction. It recognises that every learner has unique learning styles. It acknowledges that many pupils follow dependable patterns and pathways. This kind of evaluation values each person's individuality. The one-size-fits-all approach to education harms students because it ignores individual differences and measures their abilities using uniform criteria, rather than promoting sustainable assessment. Because it encourages individual uniqueness, autonomous learning—where people actively participate in their experiences rather than being estranged from them—promotes the development of creative leadership abilities. This is because learners actively and autonomously create new knowledge by assessing fresh data and revising previously acquired knowledge (Golder, 2018).

Assessment for learning is similar to assessment as learning. Assessment for learning is a process of developing and supporting metacognition for students. Metacognition is a process where an individual wants to know how one comes to know what one knows. It is concerned with the source of knowledge and the process by which one comes to know what one knows (epistemology). It focuses on the role of the student as an active and critical connector between assessment and learning (Lucas, 2021). This promotes critical thinking, creativity, collaboration and communication skills (innovative leadership skills). This is necessitated by active engagement of the learner in acquiring information.

Assessment of learning is summative in nature and is used to confirm what students know and can do, to demonstrate whether they have achieved the curriculum outcomes and occasionally how they are placed in relation to others (Carl & Katz, 2006 as cited in Lucas, 2021). Assessment of learning is summative in nature and mostly carried at the end of the programme, course or unit.

Assessment of learning tests students' ability to remember and write about something rather than apply or do the thing they have been learning (Lucas, 2021). The majority of current assessment practices rely on traditional formats. The traditional format does not capture the processes that underlie the complex skills sets which need to be stimulated, elicited, modeled and demonstrated, and applied to novel situations (Mueller, 2005; Whitlock & Nanavati, 2013; Care et al. 2018). This shows that this type of assessment does not augur well with the development of innovative leadership skills.

Because they encourage the development of information, skills, and talents or dispositions important to the twenty-first century, assessment as learning and assessment for learning are pertinent in the modern day. During the teaching and learning process, teacher educators use constructivism, a philosophy that emphasises that students are active participants with the inclination to learn and rejects the idea that they are empty vessels. They do not passively absorb information; instead, they independently produce it when they are placed in an environment that supports them. People construct their representations and add new information to their prior knowledge as they engage with the world and think back on those

interactions (Golder, 2018). In addition to testing, assessments should include student work, observations, and worldviews. According to Golder (2018), the process is more significant than the final output, and the teacher's major duty is to establish and uphold a collaborative atmosphere for problem-solving where students are free to construct their knowledge with the teacher serving as a guide and facilitator.

Numerous evaluation strategies can be identified from the three categories of assessment that have been presented. Formative evaluation is used. Formative assessment is a continuous procedure that gives students feedback at every stage of their education.

Students can make modifications and advance in their learning by using it to assist discover areas of strength and areas that want work. Instead of depending exclusively on grades or standardised tests, competency-based assessment focuses on evaluating certain skills and competencies. It places a strong emphasis on mastery and the display of unique knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to succeed in a given field or subject (Golder, 2018). Online tests, interactive simulations, virtual laboratories, and multimedia projects are examples of digital evaluations. They offer chances for adaptive and customised examinations based on the requirements of each student. The three categories of assessment are represented by the assessment strategy examples that are provided.

Theoretical framework

The study's context is provided by a set of concepts, theories, and presumptions that make up the theoretical framework. A theoretical framework in a study is a theory (or theories) that represents the core values of the researcher(s) and serves as a clear guide or lens through which the study will interpret fresh data (Nhan, 2020). The Constructivist theory of learning informs this study.

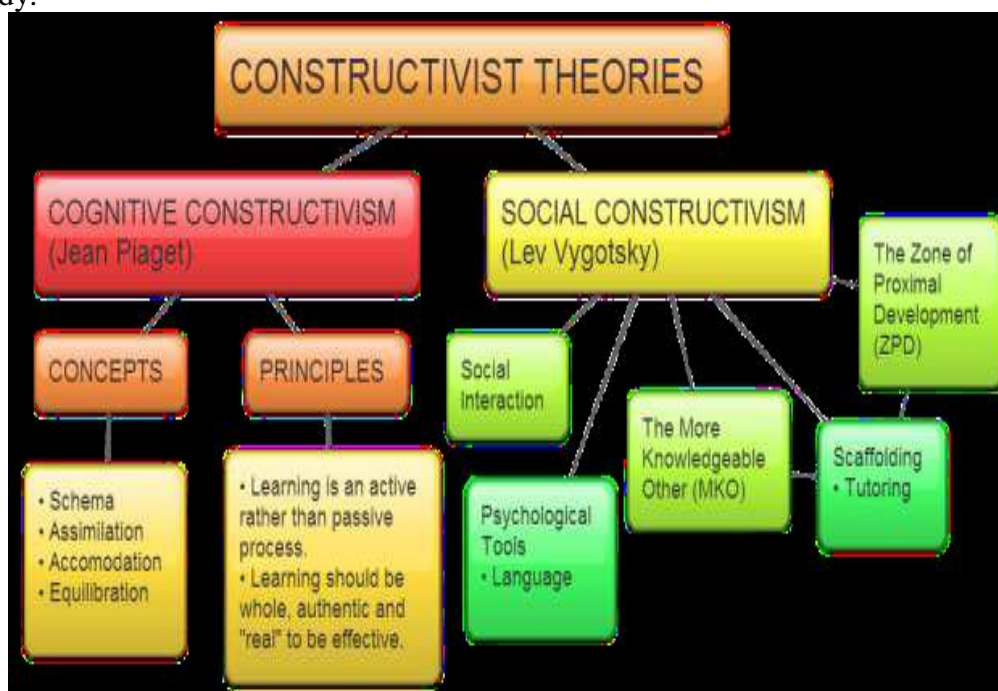


Figure 1 The Constructivist theory (Golder, 2018)

Constructivism is a theory of learning that places a strong emphasis on how actively students construct their own understanding. Learners don't just absorb information; instead, they process it through reflection, build mental images, and add new information to existing schemas. Deeper comprehension and learning are encouraged by this.

The principal proponents of this idea are Lev Vygotsky (1978) and Jean Piaget (1970, 1977) as cited in Golder (2018). Vygotsky calls social constructivism the field in which he works. Vygotsky thought social and cultural influences had an impact on cognitive development. He placed a strong emphasis on the contribution that social interaction makes to children's mental development, including speech and reasoning.

The assumptions of Piaget's Cognitive Constructivism theory about how individuals acquire and produce knowledge are quite similar to those of Vygotsky's theory. According to Vygotsky, the social context of learning is more significant. In Piaget's approach, the instructor has a limited role, whereas in Vygotsky's view, the teacher plays a large part in learning. Active participation, experiential learning, inquiry-based learning, problem-based learning, and teamwork are characteristics of learning activities in constructivist settings. Through the integration of assessment as a learning process, these learning activities foster assessment as learning and assessment for learning (Assessment of/as/for learning, 2017 March)

To help pupils develop their ideas, opinions, and conclusions, the teacher assumes the position of a co-learner throughout the learning process. As a knowledge provider, the teacher's job is to lead, assist, coach, provoke, and co-explore in ways that let students think critically and creatively and analyse and synthesise ideas. To implement constructivist pedagogies, teacher educators must renounce philosophic and later realistic conceptions of epistemology.

The investigation was framed using Constructivist theoretical framework as a lens. Teacher educators should make sure they have established assessment models that are in line with constructivist theory to enable students to actively participate in the learning process.

Methodology

An interpretative exploratory case study research design was used in the investigation. It was a case study of a Teachers' College in Zimbabwe. The investigator employed an exploratory case study that bore similarities to the intrinsic case study that Janson & Christensen (2014) had uncovered. When a researcher looks into a little-known topic using a single case study, it's called exploratory or intrinsic research (Janson & Christensen, 2014). According to Yin (2009), this type of case study is employed when there is a dearth of material or literature on the research topic, or when the topic is still relatively new. Little is known about the assessment procedures that Zimbabwean teachers' colleges can use to develop creative leadership abilities.

The population under investigation consists of 95 teacher educators and 600 pre-service teachers. Forty-five pre-service teachers and ten teacher educators from various disciplines were chosen using stratified purposive sampling. To gather information from the participants, the study instruments included focus group discussions, direct observation, and document analysis. Ethical considerations were adhered to. The researcher provided careful consideration to the welfare and rights of study participants. The four guiding principles that Tom Beauchamp and Jim Childress devised served as a guide for the researcher (Briki and Green, 2007). The four guiding concepts were non-maleficence, which is about doing no harm, autonomy, which deals with respecting each person's right, and justice. Maleficent conduct is a crucial research behaviour that involves refraining from inflicting physical or psychological harm on respondents, as well as from dehumanising, demeaning, and revealing sensitive information about participants that may have an emotional impact on them (Leavy, 2017, Creswell, 2014).

To interpret, evaluate, present, and discuss the study findings, the thematic approach and the constant comparative analysis method were employed. The continual comparative approach, as defined by Bogdan and Biklen (2007), is "a research design for multi-data sources in which the formal analysis begins early in the study and is nearly completed by the end of data collection."

Data presentation and analysis

The current state of innovative leadership skills in Zimbabwean teacher education

The notion of "innovative leadership skills" was not widely understood by pre-service teachers and certain teacher educators, according to the researcher's lecture and lesson observations of teacher educators and pre-service teachers, document analysis, and focus group talks with participants. Even if some of them defined the notion accurately, they found it difficult to define. Both teacher educators and pre-service teachers claimed not to be familiar with these abilities. They were proficient in essay writing, reading, writing, and listening. Pre-service teachers were not aware of innovative leadership skills, particularly the four Cs, as evidenced by their ignorance of the fact that the aforementioned abilities are characteristics of communication skills. The insufficient definition of the notion demonstrated that innovative leadership abilities were not sufficiently prioritised in Zimbabwean teacher education.

The college's basic values, which include professionalism, patriotism, inclusivity, entrepreneurship, communication skills, and Unhu / Ubuntu, were implied to have innovative leadership skills, according to the documents consulted (ATP handbook, 2020, Mutare Teachers' College Strategic Plan Booklet, 2015 - 2021, TP Supervision Critiques, 2021). Pre-service teachers were not introduced to the idea of these qualities as innovative leadership skills.

Teacher educators were able to describe innovative leadership qualities, even while pre-service teachers were unable to do so. They described generic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal skills as the foundation of innovative leadership. Teacher educators noted that because these common abilities were not taught, evaluated, and tested like hard skills, it was difficult to describe them. They were included in routine teaching and learning activities but were not given special attention. It was implied that while hard skills are important for teaching, innovative leadership qualities were not given the same priority in Zimbabwe's secondary teacher education system.

Without critical thinking, creativity, cooperation, and communication, teaching and learning cannot occur. Everything that is learned in college incorporates these talents. The results show that Zimbabwean teacher education has not yet embraced Chu's 2017 model of the 3 Rs x 7Cs, which stands for Critical Thinking and Problem-solving, Creativity and Innovation, Collaboration, Teamwork and Leadership, Cross-cultural Understanding, Communication and Media Fluency, Computing and ICT Fluency, Career and Learning Self-reliance. The formula serves as a guide for educational institutions, assisting them in integrating hard and innovative leadership skills into the process of teaching and learning. The inability to use the formula demonstrates that Zimbabwe's secondary teacher education system does not sufficiently foster the development of innovative leadership qualities.

The four Cs—critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, and communication—were defined by teacher educators and pre-service educators. Pre-service teachers were unaware of the term that is frequently used in Zimbabwe, despite the fact that the four Cs are referred to differently depending on the situation. These were referred to as innovative leadership capabilities, generic skills, or transversal skills by Johani and Bhebe (2016) in the context of Zimbabwe. According to Voogt et al. (2013), the term "21st Century skills" is more common in North America, whereas "21st- Century competencies" is more common in Europe. Some simply refer to them as entrepreneurial abilities (Macquie, 2017). The four Cs are referred to as key competences in Australia, Denmark, process independent qualifications; Finland, framework for evaluating educational achievements; France, transferable competencies; Germany, crucial qualifications; Canada, prosperity plan. The four Cs—Malaysia, soft skills; the Netherlands, core competencies; New Zealand, essential skills; Singapore, critical enabling abilities—are referred to as transversal competencies in Italy. Critical cross-field outcomes in South Africa, transdisciplinary aims in Switzerland, and the United Kingdom Interpersonal

skills, employability abilities, required skills for the United States, and workplace knowledge (Wellington, 2015). The lack of a commonly accepted phrase for innovative leadership skills in Zimbabwe compels one to argue that the importance and advancement of these talents in Zimbabwean teacher education are affected by the lack of a defined label for these competencies.

The lack of a common term for creative leadership abilities in Zimbabwe has a negative impact on the advancement of those abilities in teacher preparation. Aside from that, it suggests that innovative leadership abilities are not given priority in Zimbabwean teacher preparation programmes.

Mutare Teachers' College did not have an inventive leadership skills development policy, according to the researcher's conversations with teacher educators and pre-service teachers, observations of lessons, and analysis of the college's papers. Teacher educators made it very evident that the departmental rules in place may alter because they said nothing about the core competencies and abilities required for the 21st century economy. This demonstrates unequivocally how the lack of the policy fosters the development of creative leadership abilities vicariously.

Assessment practices fostering innovative leadership skills among pre-service teachers in Zimbabwe teacher education

It was found that teacher educators and pre-service teachers could differentiate between formative and summative evaluation. Formative assessments are weighted thirty percent (30%), while summative assessments are weighted seventy percent (70%), per college norms. A continual process, formative assessment provides students with feedback at every level of their study. By employing it to help identify areas of strength and areas that require improvement, students can make adjustments and progress in their learning. Real learning happens at this formative assessment stage. Assessments should comprise student work, observations, and worldviews in addition to testing. The process is more important than the result, according to Golder (2018), and the teacher's main responsibility is to create and maintain a collaborative environment for problem-solving where students are free to construct their knowledge with the teacher acting as a guide and facilitator. Pre-service teachers develop their creative leadership skills in this way.

The fact that formative assessment is given less weight than summative evaluation suggests that Zimbabwean teacher preparation is focused on exams and results. Hard skills that can be measured are prioritised. The development of innovative leadership skills is not a good fit for summative evaluation. It helps with rote learning. Instead of comprehending, remembering, or implementing, the emphasis is on summarising, and identifying flaws rather than making improvements (Lucas, 2021). To teach 21st-century abilities, teacher education institutions continue to use assessments and teaching strategies from the 20th - century (Care et al., 2018).

Efficient assessment techniques that can be integrated into teacher preparation courses to foster innovative leadership skills

Formative assessment is the ideal assessment approach that ought to be used, according to pre-service teachers and teacher educators. They ought to consider factors other than final grades. Formative assessment involves several activities such as building new models, debating, field excursions, and peer teaching. Teacher educators noted that their tasks are practically oriented on formative assessment. Students learn critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and innovative leadership abilities through hands-on experiences.

Through trial and error, creative leadership abilities are built in this authentic learning environment. Instead of asking students to apply or perform the material they have been learning, assessments of learning focus on their memory and writing skills (Lucas, 2021). The development of critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and communication skills—all of which are necessary for innovative leadership—is not supported by this kind of evaluation. Summative assessments are used to evaluate learning, and formative assessments are used to test learning. The concept of assessment for learning recognises that every student learns differently. It acknowledges that many pupils follow dependable patterns and pathways. This kind of evaluation values each person's individuality. Pre-service teachers build and reconstruct meanings in diverse ways in this regard, and they also develop creative leadership abilities in the process. Instead of absorbing knowledge passively, learners create it.

Recommendations

- There is need for 360- degrees review of the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment procedures in order to realign the curriculum with the requisite 21st century skills
- There is need for the 21st Century assessment policy which strengthens the development of creative leadership abilities.
- Formative assessment to be credited more marks because this is where actual learning takes place. Teacher educators and pre-service teachers bridge the gap between theory and practice. Everything is linked to real life situation.
- Engage teacher educators in staff development programmes to familiarize them with 21st Century assessment practices.

Conclusion

According to a study on developing innovative capabilities in pre-service teachers in Zimbabwean teacher education programmes, results showed that these skills are vicariously developed. Teacher education institutions are currently transitioning from a transmission model of instruction to a transformative model. Transformative assessment procedures ought to be given top priority by teacher education institutions to provide pre-service teachers with cutting-edge leadership competencies. It is important to embrace assessment as learning and assessment for learning strategies that support real-world learning. Assessment of learning should not be done conventionally. Evaluation of learning encourages concept memory and recitation. This inhibits critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and communication abilities. The fundamental competencies of innovative leadership are these 21st- century skills. Leadership abilities are crucial for equipping aspiring educators with the knowledge and abilities needed to design and execute innovative curricula and bring about the required adjustments. Hence, there is need for a paradigm shift in terms of content, assessment and teaching methodologies for teacher education institutions to foster innovative leadership skills in pre-service teachers.

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SUPPORT SYSTEM AS A PREREQUISITE FOR THE SUCCESSFUL ADAPTATION OF NOVICE TEACHERS

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Abstract. *The process of adaptation of any person to the new place of work is an important stage that contributes to the further motivation both to stay in a particular place of work and to continue to be a representative of the chosen profession. Encouraging novice teachers to remain in their chosen profession is the actuality of the modern educational space. It is therefore important to evaluate all possible support tools and resources for the adaptation of novice teachers, as well as to identify opportunities for their useful, meaningful and targeted use. Thus, the questions become relevant: "What factors contribute to the adaptation of a novice teacher in a general education school?" and "What support system is needed for the successful adaptation of novice teachers in general education schools?".*

This article, without excluding other possibilities and probabilities, will examine the factors contributing to and hindering the successful adaptation process of novice teachers who started working in general education schools, the offer of support measures from both a historical and contemporary perspective, choosing the situation of the Latvian state as the basis for the study. The importance of the support system for the successful adaptation of novice teachers will also be highlighted. The research is based on the study of theoretical literature and the personal experience of the author of the publication (as a novice teacher).

The aim of the article is to study the offer of existing support systems for novice teachers, based on periodicals, various scientific publications, legislative regulations, OECD and other educational studies, as well as the content analysis of other historical sources, and to identify elements of the model of successful adaptation of novice teachers. This will become the basis for further empirical research, the result of which will be the development of an adaptation model for novice teachers. The research method: theoretical analysis of scientific literature and sources.

As a result of theoretical research, based on the content analysis of various historical sources and international research, the following elements of the support system have been identified as the most important: participation in mentoring introductory programmes, the attraction of a teacher-mentor from an educational institution, introductory training, opportunities for self-expression, the quality of mutual relations in the school team. More on these and other aspects of the adaptation of novice teachers in the main part of the article.

It should be noted that the study was conducted within the framework of the educational situation in Latvia, therefore, further research would be necessary to confirm the results in the international educational context.

Keywords: *adaptation, general education, Latvian case study, novice teacher, support system.*

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Introduction

The process of adaptation of any person to the new place of work is an important stage that contributes to the further motivation both to stay in a particular place of work and to continue to be a representative of the chosen profession. Once in the new work environment, a person gets acquainted not only with the basic responsibilities, but also with the culture of the organization of the workplace. It, in turn, includes values, vision, social relations, accepted phenomena of mutual communication, etc., with which it is necessary to interact on a daily basis. Of course, one of the primary factors of successful adaptation is the coherence of the internal values of the new employee with the values of the chosen workplace, which plays a kind of catalyst role in the inclusion process. However, there is also a set of certain theoretically recognized and justified aspects that contribute to the inclusion of new employees, incl. well-being, in a given workplace. For example, skilful determination of

adaptation needs from the workplace, relationships with management and colleagues, development of professional potential and self-confidence, etc.

One of the most pressing problems at the Latvian state level is the shortage of teachers. Comparing the articles of the last three years on the current affairs of education in the country before the start of the new school year, incl. for available teacher vacancies, it should be concluded that with each school year the shortage of teachers increases and, accordingly, the number of current vacancies increases (Šķietniece, 2021; Brinkmane, 2022; Daniela, 2023). The greatest shortage of teachers is in the large cities – Riga, Daugavpils and Jelgava, but the most demanded specialists are teachers of mathematics and of Latvian language and literature. In Latvian schools, at the beginning of the 2023/2024 school year, there was a shortage of 1013 teachers in total (Laganovskis, 2023). The most worrying thing is that the fast, instantaneous solution to address this problem has not been found yet at the national level (Metuzāls, 2024).

Analysing the data of the official statistics of the Ministry of Education and Science (hereinafter referred to as the IZM) for the last 10 years on the number of teachers in the country at the beginning of school years, it should be said that every year the number of novice teachers starting work in general education schools does not exceed 300 people (IZM, 2023a). That is, the teaching profession is not the primary choice of many young people. It is even more difficult to motivate novice teachers to work in small rural schools, where, in addition to adaptation problems, the lowest salary (compared to urban schools) and the search for a place to live become obstacles, unless the novice teacher has returned to his hometown or village (Metuzāls, 2024).

As well as taking into account the average age of teachers in the country (more than half of teachers are over 50 years old (OECD, 2023) and the number of teachers who have reached retirement age (over the past 10 years, the share is in the range of 20-22 thousand people (IZM, 2023a), which significantly exceeds the number of novice teachers, it can be said that the situation in the country is quite critical. In October 2023, in a discussion organized by the University of Latvia and the Ministry of Education and Science, it was mentioned that many novice teachers make a decision to stop working at the school in the first five years since the start of employment relations (University of Latvia, 2023). Similar statistics appear in the results of the 2018 International Teaching and Learning Survey (TALIS) – in Latvia there are about 13% of teachers with a length of service of 1–5 years, while teachers with a length of service of 6–10 years are twice as many or 6.5% (OECD, 2020). This means that it is novice teachers with little pedagogical experience who choose to end their teaching careers. Therefore, it is now important to identify and classify possible solutions to improve the situation, or to identify and summarize the factors of the support system that will contribute to the successful adaptation of novice teachers in the workplace.

The aim of the research: to analyse the offer of the existing support system for novice teachers and to explore the factors that facilitate the adaptation of novice teachers in educational institutions. Research method: theoretical analysis of scientific literature and sources.

Characteristics and essence of the concepts of “novice teacher” and “adaptation”

In order to achieve a common understanding and interpretation of the concepts used in the work, the most important concepts – **adaptation** and the **novice teacher** – will be defined first. In the glossary of pedagogical terms, the concept of **adaptation** is explained as the ability to adapt to a new situation, constantly changing conditions and requirements, overcoming adverse factors and adapting to the environment (Beļickis et al., 2000). In the

context of the educational environment, adaptation is the professional growth of the teacher, integration into the teaching staff at school.

A **novice teacher** is a teacher who has received higher pedagogical education and started working according to the obtained qualification, or started his/her studies at a higher educational institution and parallelly works at the school, acquiring higher pedagogical education. The teacher is considered to be a novice due to his/her work experience (the view of the authors of the publication), although various sources show a different understanding of the limits of the length of service for a new teacher (see Table 1).

Table 1 Explanation of the concept of “Novice Teacher” in the understanding of various authors

Author	Explanation of the concept of "Novice Teacher"
K. Kim and G. L. Roth; OECD	New teacher or novice teacher is a teacher with a pedagogical length of service from 1 to 5 years (Kim & Roth, 2011; OECD, 2019).
K. Pildiņa and D. Bondareva	Experience of novice teacher is less than 3 years (Bondareva & Pildiņa, 2019).
Ministry of Education and Science (IZM)	According to the statistics of the Ministry of Education and Science, a specialist is considered a novice teacher on the first year of service (IZM, 2023a). Already in the next school year, this teacher will no longer be considered as a novice.
Washoe County School District	A teacher can be called a novice teacher with little or no previous experience in pedagogical work in his/her first year of work (Washoe County School District, n.d.).
Research team – J. Barrett, G. Jones, E. Mooney, C. Thornton, J. Cady, P. Guinee & J. Olson; Arkansas State Mentorship Programme	A novice teacher: work experience in the field of pedagogy (or the total length of service working with pupils) does not exceed 3 years (Barrett et.al., 2002; Arkansas Novice Teacher Mentoring Program Manual, 2023).
Scientists from Louisiana State University – J. R. Curry, A. W. Webb, S. J. Latham	Some scientists deliberately determine the limits of the existence of a novice teacher in this status, which is probably necessary within the framework of a particular study for the reliability and accuracy of the results. In a study conducted by American scientists, a teacher is considered a novice teacher during the first semester of work (Curry et.al., 2016).
Professor E. A. Balezina of the University of Perm.	In some sources, the novice teacher is considered not in the context of existing work experience, but in the context of age. For example, such teachers who have just graduated from a university, having obtained the appropriate qualifications, up to the age of 35 can be considered as novices (Balezina, 2017).
Authors of this publication	It is also possible to consider a novice teacher as a teacher who has returned to his/her profession after a long break, for example, after 10 years; or a teacher who has changed the work place from a small rural school to a large urban school. In this context, the size of the school depends on the number of students in it.

Keeping in mind different interpretations, one cannot gain unequivocal certainty about the needed work experience or pedagogical seniority, which turns a novice teacher into an experienced one. Therefore, it probably depends not only on work experience, but also on personal character traits, variety of job responsibilities, etc.

Peculiarities of the adaptation of novice teachers in general education schools from a historical point of view (example of Latvia)

The period of the first free state of the Republic of Latvia (1918 – 1940) or the time of the creation of the new national state can be considered as a stage of change in education, since the system of an independent state and the foundations of the educational system were established (Jurs & Pelnēna, 2023). One of the tasks of this period was to educate novice teachers corresponding to the spirit of a free state. However, when entering an educational institution, novice teachers faced various problems, such as a relatively low and unsettled social position of the teacher (Pētersons, 1928) or relatively low salary (Ozoliņš, 1920), which was lower if compared to experienced teachers (Pētersons, 1928). Among the possible factors contributing to adaptation and further "stay" in the chosen profession the following were mentioned: raising teachers' salaries and paying them on time; the possibility of receiving renovations to the apartment and workplace; the possibility of getting food with the landless; getting to the railway station at the expense of the parish (at least 4 times a year), and other benefits (Ozoliņš, 1920).

The Latvian educational system, while Latvian state was part of the USSR (1940 – 1990), was the subject to the views, ideology, strict control of the Communist Party of Latvia and other educational development trends of that time (Andersone, 2023). Consequently, the challenges of the adaptation period of the novice teacher were also subject to the peculiarities of the beliefs of the existing historical period.

One of the possible problems of the adaptation of novice teachers in the historical context was the inability to choose their first workplace, because immediately after the graduation, a former student – current novice teacher had to work for the first three years in the school that was assigned by educational institution (Prikaz Minvuza SSSR, 1968), following requests of educational institutions for specific specialists. Namely, the young specialist was "sent" where he/she was needed as a professional in the particular field. Not always there was an opportunity to work in the chosen specialty. This is also due to the fact that some schools had a small number of class groups, so it was not possible to provide a full workload for a teacher in one subject (Ronis, 1956). This problem case was also reinforced by the requirements of the particular educational institution and other peculiarities related to the work. For example, in young specialists, doubts were caused by the high workload, the amount of duties, lack of time for self-education, poor living conditions and other aspects (Zīda, 1984).

The process of adaptation of novice teachers in general education school – hindering and contributing factors

Novice teachers are the developers of innovative ideas and energy in the school environment. Although they may lack experience in various aspects related to classroom management and teaching at the beginning of their careers, it is the new teachers who can have a significant impact on the learning environment. As in any profession, novice teachers need adaptation time, support from experienced colleagues and motivational feedback. In order to enrich the existing theoretical knowledge and competences with practical experience and skilfully perform their job duties, appropriate support is needed at the initial stage of work (OECD, 2019).

The process of adaptation of novice teachers can be influenced by various factors and, unfortunately, some of them are inhibiting or disparaging to the work of teachers. The difficulties that a novice teacher may encounter when starting work may be:

- 1) inadequate and unsupportive work environment, or underestimation of the work done by colleagues or parents of pupils (Halicioglu, 2015; OECD, 2019), incl. feedback with critical remarks and emphasis on shortcomings in the work;
- 2) too high expectations of a teacher in the first year of work (Sözen, 2018), incl. increased workload for the first years (Öztürk & Yildirim, 2013) and lack of time to perform basic duties (Paula & Greenfeld, 2018);
- 3) the absence of mentor (Athanasas & Achinstein 2003; OECD, 2019); on average in OECD countries, only 22% of novice teachers officially receive mentor support (OECD, 2019);
- 4) non-compliance of the subject taught with the specialty (Siliņa, 1983);
- 5) insufficient professional competence in some matters, such as lack of practical experience in classroom management issues or difficulties in implementing the content of the subject according to the plan provided in the training standard (Öztürk & Yildirim, 2013; Amin & Rahimi, 2018; Paula & Grünfelde, 2018), or the skilful implementation of the inclusive education approach (Many et al., 2023). It should be noted that, on average, in OECD countries, novice teachers are less confident in their teaching skills in comparison to experienced colleagues. This is evidenced by the following data – only 78% of novice teachers believe that they are able to connect the upbringing and teaching process skilfully, while the share of experienced teachers is 87% (OECD, 2019);
- 6) challenges of personal and professional life (Halicioglu, 2015; Sözen, 2018);
- 7) peculiarities of building relationships at school – with pupils, with colleagues, with the management of an educational institution (Öztürk & Yildirim, 2013; Amin & Rahimi, 2018; Paula & Greenfeld, 2018);
- 8) low salary that is out of proportion to the effort invested compared to other professions (LIZDA, 2022a; OECD, 2023), and other factors.

Next, let's look at the factors contributing to the adaptation of novice teachers. By analysing various sources, the following elements were identified that contribute to the integration of novice teachers into the working environment:

- 1) taking care of the teacher's well-being, such as the provision of social guarantees (apartment, place for children in a pre-school, etc. bonuses) or additional material support – scholarships (LIZDA, 2022a);
- 2) meaningful development of the plan for testing and analysing their work (Silina, 1983);
- 3) the participation and involvement of the entire school teaching staff in the support of novice teachers (Ngang, 2013; Sözen, 2018), incl. the promotion of professional socialization (Paula & Grünfelde, 2018);
- 4) the involvement of the novice teacher in all areas of school activities and collective work, support for self-expression and self-affirmation at work, the opportunity to generate creative innovative ideas and solutions, express initiative (Ngang, 2013; Garipov, 2019);
- 5) the formation of an emotionally and physically safe environment and a stable psychological microclimate for the teaching staff (Sözen, 2018; LIZDA, 2022a), the level of organizational culture for the teaching staff at school;
- 6) finding an experienced and professional teacher-mentor (in an educational institution) who recommends, directs, answers all ambiguous questions, observes lessons, provides methodological support in the organization and management of the teaching process, and also other types of practical and emotional support (Paula & Greenfeld, 2018; LIZDA, 2022a);

- 7) the organization of an "acquaintance" meeting (Sözen, 2018) to inform the novice teacher about the traditions of the school, internal rules of procedure, agenda, the peculiarities of the classes and the desired emphasis at work, and other current problems in school life (Paula & Grīnfelde, 2018);
- 8) participation in mentoring introductory programmes outside the educational institution (Paula & Grīnfelde, 2018; LIZDA, 2022a; Many et al., 2023), which provides mentor advisory support on work-related issues, participation in professional development programmes, and analysis of lessons observed;
- 9) positive feedback on the work (Paula & Grīnfelde, 2018; LIZDA, 2022a) or emphasis on strengths and development needs and discussions on current teaching and upbringing issues, teacher's work ethics;
- 10) educational (incl. exchange of experience) seminars, conferences, courses, workshops, professional development classes, schools of pedagogical experience, etc. organisation of support activities involving both novice and experienced teachers (Paula & Greenfeld, 2018; LIZDA, 2022a);
- 11) reduced workload during the adaptation period of the first three years of work, for example, no more than 80% of the full-time contact lessons, so that it is possible to perform work duties directly during working hours (LIZDA, 2022a);
- 12) additional support measures, such as the opportunity to participate in supervisions or receive the support of a psychologist and the provision of all the necessary educational materials, etc. (LIZDA, 2022a);
- 13) the involvement of novice teachers in extracurricular organisations (OECD, 2023), for example, in the Council of Novice Educators of the Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees (LIZDA) (Latvia);
- 14) promoting the novice teacher's skills to build relationships with other people – colleagues, students and their parents, incl. willingness and ability to accept support and engage in adaptation activities (LIZDA, 2022a);
- 15) the identification of adaptation needs of novice teachers (Garipov, 2019), for example, by conducting questionnaires in order to find out what is satisfying/dissatisfying at school (lesson layout, working conditions, workload); what issues need help, etc.

It should be noted that the factors discouraging and facilitating the adaptation of novice teachers considered do not exclude the probability and possibilities of the existence of other factors, since the selection of theoretical sources chosen for review is only part of the set of possible sources. As confirmed by the results of the theoretical research results, further empirical study is required.

Characteristics of the current situation in the field of education – possible solutions

The first year of a novice teacher's work at school is of great importance, because the choice of staying in the profession or changing an occupation will depend on it (Sözen, 2018).

The problem of the teacher shortage of and the decision of several novice teachers to stop working at school in the first years or employment was also addressed by the Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees (hereinafter referred to as LIZDA), which, based on a study conducted in November 2021 on current vacancies and shortage of teachers, determined that the crisis caused by the shortage of teachers in the middle of the school year may also lead to a critical situation in the educational sector (LIZDA, 2022b). Therefore, LIZDA has taken consistent steps to solve this problem by implementing various measures to support novice teachers within the framework of the Erasmus+ project "Development of a Support System for Novice Educators" (LIZDA, 2023a). For example, in the seminar "A

Professionally Supported Novice Teacher" organized by the trade union, novice teachers from different cities of Latvia participated together with mentors, experienced educators and other educational sector representatives in order to look for the answers to topical questions – challenges of the teaching profession and search for solutions, support opportunities at different levels, boundaries in working life, updating of good practice examples in teacher practice, etc. (LIZDA, 2023b). As a result of the project, collecting the experience of both local and other European countries to support novice teachers, a special handbook for novice teachers is planned to be developed, which will bring together the experience of each country – common and distinctive features, strategy to support young educators, good practices and innovative solutions (LIZDA, 2024a).

Speaking about the current situation in Latvia, it should be highlighted that until 2023 there was no support programme for novice teachers at the state level after obtaining the teacher's qualification. Only on July 13, 2023, the government made a decision on the induction year project "Introduction of the Year of Induction in Teacher Preparation Study Programmes" (Ministru kabinets, 2023) or a support programme for graduates of pedagogical study programmes, which includes material support (scholarships) and practical support for professional development (improvement group classes), according to the work needs of novice teachers (IZM, 2023b).

In addition to the induction year project, some of the support achieved at the national level for novice educators are increased municipal scholarships and repayment of student loans (LIZDA, 2024b). Also, a significant contribution of the state to the support system for novice teachers are the amendments adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers in February 2024 on the financing of part-time studies for students of study programmes of the thematic group "Education starting with the spring semester of 2024 (LIZDA, 2022a; IZM, 2024). Until now, only full-time face-to-face study programmes were financed from the state budget, the choice of which was not popular among future teachers, since this type of training is difficult to connect with work. Part-time budget places were introduced in the spring semester of 2024. For extramural students, this type of support has not been available for several decades (LIZDA, 2024b).

Another example of good practice for supporting novice educators and immediate involvement outside of teaching work locally is the initiative of entrepreneurs from Mārupe district to present the annual award in education specifically to novice educators. The purpose of the award "New Start in Mārupe County" is to recognize the teachers who choose one of the educational institutions of Mārupe municipality for its place of work, thus strengthening the prestige and recognition of the teaching profession in society (Mārupes novada pašvaldība, 2023). These types of events promote self-expression and self-affirmation of novice teachers, providing an opportunity to express creative, innovative ideas and solutions, to show initiative from the very beginning of their careers.

The importance of the established support system for the successful adaptation of novice teachers

A system is a concept that denotes the interrelation of the elements of a certain set in a certain order. It determines the interaction of different elements with each other as a result of combining. Therefore, in order to achieve really excellent results or mastery in any activity, it is not enough just to have separate, unevenly implemented measures. A system is needed.

In each educational institution (in this case - general educational schools) there are mostly separate measures for the adaptation and support of novice teachers, only rarely a system and requirements have been established that can be used as a basis for providing

support. However, high-quality and effective support for novice teachers requires a unified approach in all municipalities of Latvia (LIZDA, 2022a).

LIZDA highlights the lack of professional, systemic support for new teachers. The study "Evaluation of the professional support system for teacher" (2018, n=1258) found that about 69% of Latvian teachers surveyed fully or partially agree with the statement that a unified and structured support system for novice teachers has not been developed in Latvia. Also, out of the novice teachers surveyed, only 29% are satisfied with professional support in their educational institutions (LIZDA, 2022a). The importance of systematic support is also highlighted in international research (OECD, 2020). OECD study "Supporting and guiding novice teachers" (2019) highlights the need for a mechanism developed at the educational institution level to support novice teachers or a system to support and motivate novice teachers (OECD, 2019). In turn, the lack of a systemic approach is often cited as one of the factors influencing the professional future of novice teachers (Paula & Grīnfelde, 2018). Next, let's look at the most important elements of the support system for novice teachers, which crystallized after studying the theoretical literature.

It is important for novice teachers to provide **mentoring introduction programmes** (outside the educational institution) that will help them adapt to work (Paula & Grīnfelde 2018; OECD, 2019; Many et al., 2023). Mentoring is a set of measures aimed at analysing the daily work and teaching situations of teachers with the aim of preventively identifying possible obstacles, eliminating the isolation of teachers among them and supporting professional development (Paula & Grīnfelde, 2018). The appropriate components of the mentoring programme could be: (1) additional training of novice teachers tailored to the job needs; (2) watching and analysing lessons with a professional mentor; it is important that the mentor who is attached to the novice teacher is from the same field of study as the novice teacher; (3) joint meetings of novice teachers to share experiences, discuss current events, etc.; (4) joint cohesion activities that encourage the participation of novice teachers in interscholastic projects and other activities; (5) a meeting between the novice teacher and his or her mentor with the aim of reflecting on their experience and studying the practice of experienced teachers, etc. The elements of the mentoring programme are summarized according to the personal experience of the author of the publication when participating in the project "Introduction of the Year of Induction into Teacher Preparation Study Programmes". The duration of the programme would depend on the individual adaptation period of specific teachers and state resources (Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). In Latvia, the duration of the induction year project, which has been implemented since the 2023/2024 school year, is 10 months.

It is also important to attract an **experienced teacher-mentor** from the educational institution where the novice teacher starts working. The mentor should be not only a support person, but also a provider of monitoring and professional socialization of the work of the novice teacher (Paula & Grīnfelde, 2018). The promotion of professional socialization is a versatile and complex process during which novice teachers adopt the values and behavioural patterns of a certain profession (Vaisburg, 2015) from experienced colleagues and the organizational culture of the educational institution. Also, a mentor is the "best friend" of a novice teacher, to whom he can always come not only with practical work issues, but also simply to talk or for advice.

The results of international studies show that sometimes the theoretical knowledge base acquired at the university is not enough to fit immediately successfully into the provision of the learning process (OECD, 2019). Often, novice teachers find out only "on the spot" what exactly needs to be known, linking theory with practice. Therefore, an important element in supporting novice teachers is **introductory training**, which can be both as the part of a mentoring programme and as separate professional development courses/activities that provide "missing" knowledge. For example, introductory classes before the beginning of the

school year about the order of organization of the work of the educational institution, culture and general current events.

The opportunity to realize one's potential or **the possibility of self-expression** is considered one of the elements of a supportive environment. Novice teachers tend to have the strongest desire to try new teaching approaches and to be open to innovation compared to their experienced colleagues (OECD, 2019).

The quality of mutual relations with colleagues and the management of the educational institution are important aspects of support, which are also catalysts for the formation of a stable psychological microclimate in a teaching staff (Ngang, 2013; Sözen, 2018). For novice teachers, positive feedback on their work is important (Paula & Gr̃nfelde, 2018; LIZDA, 2022a) or emphasis on strengths and development needs. It increases the motivation of work, inspires to overcome challenges and discover and realize your inner potential.

All of the above elements affect greatly the professional well-being of the novice teacher. It also increases work motivation and self-confidence, and reinforces the desire to improve constantly in the chosen field of work. It must be said that the mentioned elements of the support system, do not exclude the possibility of the existence and effectiveness of other elements.

Conclusions

1. In scientific sources, there is a different understanding of the limits of the length of service of a novice teacher varying from a teacher from the beginning of the employment up to 5 years of service. Therefore, with different interpretations, one cannot gain unequivocal certainty with what work experience or pedagogical seniority the novice teacher will turn into an experienced one. Therefore, it probably depends not only on such a factor as work experience, but also on personal character traits, variety of job responsibilities, and others.
2. The first year of novice teacher's work at school is of great importance, because the future choice of staying in the profession or changing profession will depend on it. However, often the novice teachers (with up to 5 years of service) choose to end their teaching careers, as evidenced by the statistics of the 2018 International Teaching and Learning Survey (TALIS).
3. In each educational institution, individual measures are implemented to adapt and support novice teachers, but rarely there is a single system and requirements that has been established and used as a basis for providing support.
4. As a result of the theoretical research study, the following were identified as **hindering factors** for the adaptation process of young teachers: (1) inappropriate and unsupportive work environment; (2) excessive expectations of the teacher in the first year of work; (3) absence of a mentor; insufficient professional competence in some matters; (4) personal and professional life challenges; (5) the peculiarities of relationship-building between teaching staff; (6) low pay that is out of proportion to the effort invested if compared to other professions.
5. As a result of the theoretical study, based on the content analysis of various historical sources and international studies, the following **elements of the support system** have been identified: (1) concern for the well-being of the teacher; (2) a supportive relationship with the management of the educational institution; (3) the participation of the entire school teaching staff in the support of novice teachers; (4) attracting an experienced teacher-mentor; (5) the organisation of a "familiarisation" meeting; (6) positive feedback at work; (7) the organisation of educational events (incl. exchange of experience); (8) taking into account the opinion of the novice teacher on various issues. As most effective

tools mentioned in the research are the following: participation in introductory mentoring programmes, the attraction of a teacher-mentor from educational institutions, introductory training, opportunities for self-expression, the quality of interpersonal relationships in the school team.

6. Despite the fact that in the European education space the issue of the support system for novice teachers became topical already around 2018, in Latvia the issue has received a proper attention only after 2022. The Latvian Trade Union of Education and Science Employees (LIZDA) is seriously engaged in the development of the novice teacher support system, implementing various measures to support them, for example, the Erasmus+ project "Development of a support system for novice educators", a series of seminars "Professionally supported novice teacher", or the creation of a special handbook for novice teachers. On the state level there are scholarships for novice educators, assistance with the study loans, participation in the annual project of induction, the financing of part-time study places, and distribution of special awards to novice educators.

The purpose of this article was to explore the offer of an existing support system for novice teachers and to identify the most appropriate elements that could be included in the model of successful adaptation of novice teachers. However, with different interpretations, one cannot be certain which factors contributing to the adaptation of novice teachers would be the most effective and appropriate, therefore, perhaps, the choice of appropriate factors depends on the particular educational institution, its values and organizational culture.

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BUILDING AN ECOSYSTEM FOR PROMOTING STUDENTS' INDEPENDENT READING SKILLS: THE POTENTIAL OF THE SCHOOL LIBRARY

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Abstract: Nowadays, reading skills have become one of the key factors to promote students' media literacy. Motivating students to read is becoming increasingly important, because reading outcomes in our complex world include not only reader's interest and entertainment, but opportunity to develop critical thinking, tolerance, leadership skills, etc. Scholars emphasize the importance of instructional support to motivate students to read and at the same time the necessity of independent reading skills and a unique and thoughtful readers' identity of each student. The development of students' reading habits and stimulating students' individual interest becomes important prerequisites for literacy. Nowadays school becomes a complex learning organisation, where independent reading moments should be promoted, providing students time to read and opportunity to choose self-selected texts or giving them the opportunity to read about topical issues that are important to them. Thus, school library has become not only a part of the school, but a part of an ecosystem for promoting students' independent reading skills, where the process of shaping young people's attitudes and behaviour occurs.

The aim of this publication is to summarise theoretical findings, updating research on aspects of promoting students' independent reading skills as well as to conduct empirical research on the choice of a reading-enhancing approach during the campaign "Reading against bullying at school".

Keywords: authentic reading experience, book extract about bullying and emotional abuse, independent reading, a student, readers' identity, reading, reading promoting campaign, school library.

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Introduction

Nowadays, it is becoming increasingly important to motivate students to read. One reason for this is the necessity of media literacy - the acquisition, comprehension, analysis and evaluation of information (Klētņieks, 2021). Krieķis (2023) points to the different facets of literacy, which is not only the ability to connect letters into words, but also reader's ability to communicate, to work with a variety of texts, and broadening the reader's experience. Thus, reading outcomes in our complex world include more than just reader's interest and ability to ask. Finding answers to questions becomes essential as the world needs leaders who are able to raise questions, create multiple ideas and find multiple perspectives (Beers, & Probst, 2017, 21). Therefore, questions of how to promote students' reading literacy and what kind of support students need, become important. There are discussions about the importance of instructional support, while, on the one hand, independent reading promotes students' choice, which leads to authentic reading experiences (Miller, 2002). Keene, Duke, Miller, & Moss (2013) highlight that "students learn to read while reading, but not without instructional support" (Keene, Duke, Miller, & Moss, 2013, 1). "To develop identity of thoughtful reader they need tools, which can be provided through instruction. Reading habits should be developed every day" (Keene et al., 2013, 1) as well as encouraging students' individual interest becomes a prerequisite for literacy. Nowadays school becomes a complex learning organisation, constantly adapting to new circumstances, in which all stakeholders work together towards a common goal of students' development (Skola2030, n. d.).

Keene et.al. (2013) emphasize that “independent reading moments should be promoted at school” (Keene et al., 2013, 2) and there is a lot what teacher can do to promote students` independent reading skills, e.g. providing students time to read and opportunity to choose self-selected texts. However, reading volume becomes important as well, as it is one of key contributors to achievement in reading (Allington, McGill-Franzen, Cimilli, Williams, Graff, Zeig, Zmach, & Nowak, 2010).

The aim of this publication is to summarise theoretical findings, updating research on aspects of promoting students' independent reading skills as well as to conduct empirical research on the choice of a reading-enhancing approach during the campaign “*Reading against bullying at school*”.

Methods used in the study are:

- analysis of pedagogical and psychological literature to summarise theoretical findings;
- empirical research methods: student survey, quantitative data processing and analysis methods (graphical representation of data, data analysis, data processing and analysis methods (data analysis using IBM SPSS v.22. predictive analytics and statistical analysis software package, Pearson chi-square test and The Mann-Whitney U Test).

Theoretical aspects of strategies to improve students` independent reading skills and reading comprehension

Reading is a part of the learning process, so it is important to encourage young people to be motivated to read and to foster their interest in reading. However, in Latvia average reading achievement has been falling every year since 2012 (OECD, 2023). In their article, the authors highlight the theoretical and empirical aspects of pupils' interest in reading in grades 5-9, because at this age, interest in reading declines (Geske, Grünfelds, Kangro, Kiseļova, & Stūre, 2020). At the age of 12-16 years, students` motivation to learn is driven by both: the desire to explore personal abilities and by competition (Šteinberga, 2013). Therefore, it is important to involve students in setting own reading goals. Čehlova (2002) emphasises the need for pedagogically well-organised goal-setting. While Rune (2003) stresses the need to respect the self-expressive and creative aspects of the choice of texts, as it is essential to "develop students' ability to express themselves intellectually and emotionally - thoughts, experiences, imaginings. In this way, students acquire the skill of forming their own value system” (Rune, 2003, 198). Reading involves person's affective, cognitive and behavioural attitudes towards an object, event or task related to reading (Hidi, Renninger, & Krapp, 2004). Getting students interested in reading in general is an important prerequisite for promoting reading literacy. Interest in reading is multidimensional. It can be characterised by: feelings (different emotional reactions); cognitive possibilities in reading (values, autonomy, competence, confidence, sense of belonging, etc.); behavioural factors (attention) (Putro & Lee, 2017). Individual`s interest in reading is different, e.g., it expresses itself differently for each person - in joy, excitement, passion and self-regulation of emotions in reading (McKenna, Conradi, Lawrence, Jang, & Meyer, 2012).

Schools have an important role in creating an ecosystem for encouraging reading using the potential of school library. The school library is not only a part of the school, where the process of shaping young people's attitudes and behaviour occurs, it is an important part of the education system, contributing to better educational outcomes (Wojciechowska, 2022). Positive attitudes and good relationships with different school communities have a great impact in school successful school library work. They become “the cornerstone of school libraries today” (Trudeau, 2023, 35).

Azhari & Ramadan (2022) believes that libraries are an undervalued resource for promoting students' independent reading skills, interest in reading as well as strategies to improve students' independent reading skills and reading comprehension. Asking questions, providing background information about the problem, making predictions about events described in the book, having deepened understanding, making connections to personal experiences, can promote independent reading skills and at the same time an instructional support would be provided. It can be done through various activities, including those organised by the school library, for example, the campaign "Reading is cool". This campaign is organised in schools across Latvia. Pupils are also highly motivated by the challenge factor, when they are encouraged to read as much as possible in a given time frame (Mujib & Setyawan, 2022). Creating a "reading corner" in the classroom can also help to boost pupils' interest in reading (Wijaya, Zulela, & Edwita, 2022). Trudeau (2023) defines five areas to create a human-centered library. They are: space, collection, instruction, programming, and self-care (Trudeau, 2023, 37).

An important challenge for schools is to be aware of the prerequisites for promoting reading as a daily habit. Habits are reinforced by systematic repetition. Reinforcement of habits can be carried out in habit-building exercises (Špona, 2001).

The authors of the publication carried out an authentic reading-enhancing approach during the reading promoting campaign "*Reading against bullying at school*" in one of comprehensive schools of Latvia. Within the campaign, it was important:

- to create an environment in which reading is a free choice rather than a forced activity (Pieper, 2017);
- to offer students the books (particular book about problems caused by bullying school);
- that adults set an example for students, thus, fostering respect for other readers (Pieper, 2017);
- that school librarian prepared age-appropriate reading material for students (Rune, 2003).

Analysis of the impact of a reading-enhancing approach to promoting students' independent reading skills

To clarify the impact of carried out authentic reading-enhancing approach during the campaign "*Reading against bullying at school*" on students' independent reading skills the survey was carried out. 292 students (grades 5 to 9 one of comprehensive schools of Latvia) participated in the survey. Survey was carried out from 09/09/2024 till 20/09/2024. All ethical guidelines were followed during the research. As a part of the campaign "*Reading against bullying at school*", students were asked to read a book ("The Battle at Knipska" (1897) by J.Poruks) extract on bullying and emotional abuse at school and could choose to continue reading it at home. The survey was designed to find out what factors contributed to students' willingness to continue reading the book after school. The open-ended and closed-ended questions were included in the questionnaire. They were:

- Did you know what a bullying is before the lesson?
- Did reading and discussion help you to understand more about the signs of bullying?
- After reading the extract, did you feel interested in reading the whole story?
- Did you like the fact that the whole school read the same work about the bullying?

A Pearson chi-square test revealed a statistically significant association between female gender and the statement that after reading a part of the book the student was

interested in reading the whole story ($p=0.007$). Gender differences were not researched in depth in the study (see Figure 1).

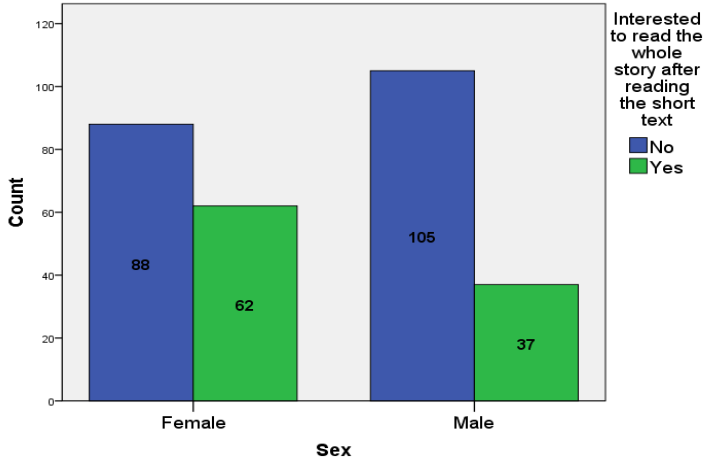


Figure 1 The correlation between female gender and the claim that after reading the book extract, student was interested in reading the whole book ($N=292$)

A Pearson chi-square test revealed a statistically significant correlation between the statement that reading the book extract helped to become aware of bullying and the statement that after reading a part of the book student was interested in reading the whole book ($p<0.001$) (see Figure 2).

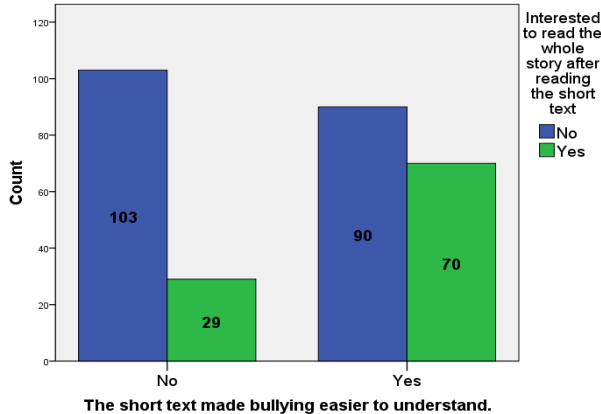


Figure 2 The correlation between the statement that the book extract helped to become aware of bullying and emotional abuse and the statement that after reading it student was interested in reading the whole book ($N=292$)

A Pearson chi-square test revealed a statistically significant correlation between the statement that the respondent liked the fact that the whole school read the same book extract about the bullying and the statement that after reading it the respondent was interested in reading the whole book ($p<0.001$) (see Figure 3).

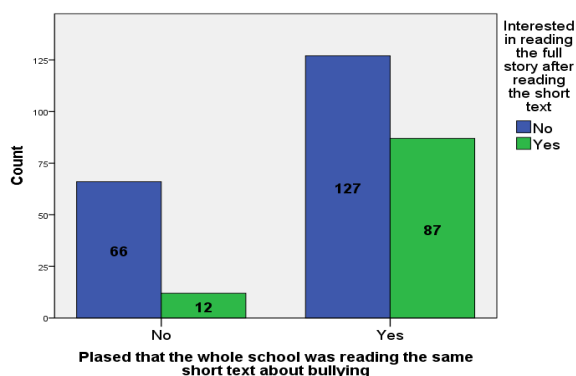


Figure 3 The correlation between the statement that the respondent liked the fact that the whole school was reading the same book extract about bullying and emotional abuse and the statement that after reading it, the respondent was interested in reading the whole story (N=292)

The Mann-Whitney test showed that respondents who agree with the statement that they wanted to read the whole book after reading the book extract have a higher median library use (Median 2, IQR 2) than respondents who disagree with the statement that they wanted to read the whole story after reading the excerpt (Median 1, IQR 2.5, $Z=-2.994$, $p=0.003$) (see Figure 4).

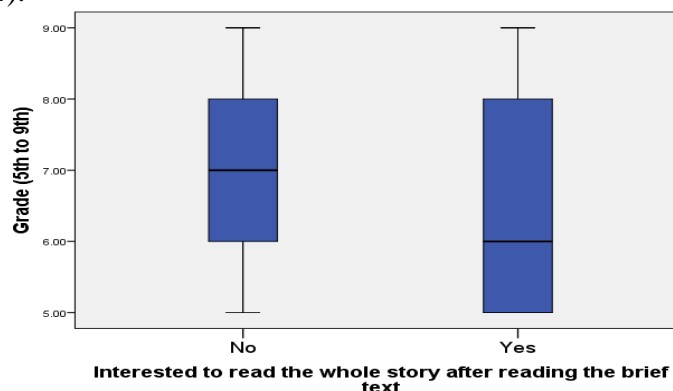


Figure 4 Relationship between frequency of library use and the statement that after reading the book extract student was interested in reading the whole story. (Frequency of library use: 0 - Never; 1 - Once a year; 2 - Once a term; 3 - Once a month; 4 - Once a week; 5 - Three times a week) (N=292)

The Mann-Whitney test revealed that respondents who agree with the statement that after reading the book extract they wanted to read the whole story are in a smaller class (Median 6, IQR 3) than respondents who disagree with the statement that after reading the book extract they wanted to read the whole story (Median 7, IQR 2, $Z=-3.881$, $p<0.001$).

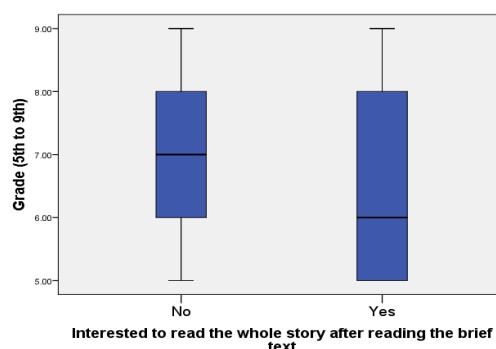


Figure 5 The link between the respondent's class and the statement that after reading the excerpt, they were interested in reading the whole story (N=292)

It can be concluded that after carrying out authentic reading-enhancing approach during the campaign “*Reading against bullying at school*” on students' independent reading skills, where students were offered to read a book extract on emotional abuse at school and could choose to continue reading it at home, the factors which contributed to students' willingness to continue reading the book after school are:

- awareness and understanding of the topic;
- a sense of togetherness in reading (whole school read the same book extract about the bullying);
- school library visits.

Another factor was the age of student: the younger the age of a student is, the more interested in reading he is.

Conclusions

Reading is a part of the learning process, it involves person's affective, cognitive and behavioural attitudes towards an object. The interest in reading is multidimensional. Each person's individual interest in reading expresses differently: through joy, excitement, passion, self-regulation of emotions, etc. Nowadays school becomes a complex learning organisation, constantly adapting to new circumstances and schools have an important role in creating an ecosystem for encouraging reading through using the potential of school library. The school library is not only a part of the school; it can become a part of an ecosystem for promoting students' independent reading skills, where the process of shaping young people's attitudes and behaviour occurs. Students' independent reading skills and reading comprehension can be developed through asking questions, providing background information about the problem, making predictions about events described in the book, having deepened understanding, making connections to personal experiences. But not only promoting independent reading skills becomes important, at the same time an instructional support should be provided. It can be done through various campaigns, e.g. campaign “*Reading against bullying at school*”, which was organised in one of the comprehensive schools of Latvia. The preparation part of the campaign included creating free choice- reading environment and preparing age-appropriate reading material for students. After carrying out authentic reading-enhancing approach during the campaign “*Reading against bullying at school*” on students' independent reading skills, where students were offered to read a book extract on bullying and emotional abuse at school. They could choose to continue reading it at home if they would like to. The empirical research highlighted that factors which contributed to students' willingness to continue reading the book after school were awareness and understanding of the topic; a sense of togetherness in reading (whole school read the same book extract about the bullying) and regular school library visits.

The study also highlights the need to organise reading campaigns for younger students, as respondents who agree with the statement that after reading a passage in a book they wanted to read the whole story, are in a younger age group.

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OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVING SOCIAL SERVICES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD RIGHTS PROTECTION PROGRAMME IN LIEPAJA

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Abstract. *Since Latvia ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989), children's rights have been recognised as a priority and all decisions taken by the state and local authorities must be in the best interests of the child. In order to meet the requirements of Article 66 (1) of the Act on Protection of Children's Rights (1998), i.e. that the municipality shall analyse the situation in the field of respect for children's rights, develop and implement a programme for the protection of children's rights in the administrative territory of the district or republican city, it is necessary to carefully design the programme for the protection of children's rights in order to best meet the needs of children in the city of Liepaja. The study analyses the normative framework at the international and national levels, as well as conducts practical research to identify the most relevant social services for improving the protection of children's rights in Liepaja. The research methods used were document and literature analysis, focus group, expert interview and best practice case study.*

Keywords: *children's rights, children's rights protection programme, state municipality, inter-institutional cooperation, social services.*

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Introduction

Child protection is part of national policy and the State and local authorities organise and monitor the protection of children's rights throughout the country. The best interests of the child, as set out in Article 3 of the United Nations Convention (hereinafter referred to as UN) on the Rights of the Child (1989), are considered to be the primary consideration in all actions relating to children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts, administrative authorities or legislative bodies. States Parties to the Convention must therefore undertake to provide the child with the protection and care necessary for his or her well-being, including by ensuring that institutions, services and bodies responsible for the care or protection of children meet the standards set by the competent authorities (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2015).

Developing a child rights programme enables the municipality to identify gaps, identify key issues and understand the processes involved in ensuring children's rights. In turn, identifying ineffective services enables the municipality to provide social services that meet the needs of children. In order to ensure a system of protection of children's rights focused on the individual needs of the child and the family, to improve the professional functioning of the responsible institutions, to facilitate institutional cooperation, to increase the professional competence and responsibility of the professionals involved and to provide support measures for families with children before psychosocial problems are identified, it is necessary to develop a programme and a model of action focused on the priority needs of the child and defining the duties and responsibilities of each partner in ensuring children's rights (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2015). Such a programme requires regular research-based improvements according to the current risks and possibilities of their prevention, therefore the aim of the study is to investigate the social services available in

Liepāja State Municipality to ensure the best interests of children, for the improvement of the child rights protection programme.

Children's rights international and national legal frameworks

The rights of the child are a set of fundamental rights and freedoms, while human rights are the inherent and self-sufficient fundamental rights and freedoms of every human being, individual, natural person, personality, expressing the needs and interests of self-respect, liberty, justice and well-being in their relations with the State. These rights are inherent in human beings from birth. At the international level, child protection legislation was introduced much earlier than in Latvia, which is why today there are 3 main models or categories of child protection applied in different countries:

1. Child Protection (United States, Canada, England);
2. Family Service—Mandatory Reporting (Denmark, Sweden, Finland);
3. Family Service—Non-Mandatory Reporting (Belgium, Netherlands, Germany) (Parton, 2022).

In Latvia, the protection of children's rights was addressed after Latvia regained its independence in the early 1990s, and the system for the protection of children's rights was based on the experience of Northern European countries, choosing the model of Family Service (Dubure, Fogels & Fridrihsons, 1998). But the main international instruments on children's rights have been developed within the framework of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. They recognise that children cannot protect themselves and that special attention must be given to their protection. Since the beginning of the 20th century, the development of international law on children's rights has largely taken place within the framework of international human rights law. The development of the protection of children's rights can be divided into several stages: in the first stage, the international community recognised that all individuals, including children, are subject to international law; in the second stage, individuals, including children, can be granted rights in their own right; and in the third stage, it was recognised that for individuals to enjoy fundamental rights, they must have the necessary knowledge to exercise and claim these rights and freedoms (Ziemele, 2021).

It is significant that the European Social Charter (1961), adopted by the Council of Europe, contains specific provisions on children's rights, e.g. Section 1, paragraph 17 states that children have the right to adequate social and economic protection. On the other hand, Article 7 of the European Social Charter (1961) requires that children be protected from physical and moral harm in order to ensure effective protection of their rights. In order to ensure respect for human rights, the rights of the individual must be a fundamental task of every democratic state, which is why, notwithstanding international human rights guarantees, human rights must be further enshrined in the national constitution. Each of the individual rights enshrined in international instruments must be found in national legislation (Pleps, Pastars, & Plakane, 2014). It follows that it is necessary to look at what is enshrined in national laws and regulations regarding children's rights and interests.

Latvia acceded to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on 14 May 1992, shortly after regaining independence (1989). In view of this period, it is important to look at the national laws and regulations that protect the rights and interests of children in Latvia. The Constitution of the Republic of Latvia (1922) establishes the powers and institutions of the State and protects fundamental human rights by ensuring that every individual, including children, is able to defend his or her rights and legitimate interests. According to article 2, paragraphs 1 and 3 of the Act on the Protection of the Rights of the Child (1998), the task of the law is to determine the rights, freedoms and protection of the child, taking into account the

fact that the child, as a physically and intellectually immature person, requires special protection and care. Section 4(2) of the Orphans' Courts Law (2006) also states that the Orphans' Court shall, as a matter of priority, ensure the protection of the rights and legal interests of the child or the person under guardianship, and section 17(5) provides that the duties of the Orphans' Court shall include informing the municipal social service or other competent institution about families in which the development and upbringing of the child is not sufficiently ensured and which are in need of assistance. Article 10 of the Law on Social Security (1995) provides for assistance to children and adolescents, stating that children and adolescents have the right to State assistance in receiving services provided for them, and that these services must contribute to the development of children and adolescents and support their upbringing within the family. It should also be mentioned that Article 12 of the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance (2002) provides for the provision of information to a person, including a child, on the right to receive social services and social assistance and the procedure for their provision.

Furthermore, in order to implement the protection of children's rights at the national level in Latvia, cooperation between different institutions is regulated by laws and regulations. For example, in accordance with Article 6(3) of the Act on the Protection of the Rights of the Child (1998), on 12 September 2017 the Cabinet of Ministers issued Regulation No. 545 "Regulation on Cooperation between Institutions in the Protection of the Rights of the Child" (2017), which regulates the organisation and procedure of cooperation between responsible institutions (orphan courts, social services, educational institutions, childcare institutions, local authorities and other institutions) in the protection of the rights and interests of the child.

Currently available social services for families with children in Liepaja

The study analysed and summarised the social services currently available in the City of Liepaja for the target group of children, youth and families. Table 1 shows that in 2023 a total of 20 different social services will be available in Liepaja Municipality to help families with children to socialise and integrate into society, to solve or reduce social problems by developing family or individual resources and involving support systems. The "basket" of social services for families with children in Liepaja consists of social care services, social rehabilitation services and social work.

Table 1 Social services for families with children in Liepaja City Municipality in 2023 (the authors)

Support for families with children with special needs - disabilities and various functional impairments	Children and young people can receive social and medical rehabilitation services. Children up to the age of 18 who have been diagnosed with a disability for the first time and live in a family, as well as their legal representative, have access to a psychologist.
Support service as defined in the Disability Law (2010)	It is provided to children between the ages of 5 and 18 who have been diagnosed with a disability by a decision of the State Commission for Health and Disability Examination of Doctors (hereinafter referred to as SCHDE) and who have received an opinion on the need for special care to ensure socialisation outside the home.
Companion service as defined in the Disability Act (2010)	It is provided to children between the ages of 5 and 18 who have been diagnosed with a disability by the SCHDE and who have received an opinion on the need for a companion to ensure socialisation outside the home.
Social rehabilitation of children	Psychosocial support is provided to children who have been victims of unlawful acts.

Portidge Learning Service	An early learning and education service provided in the home of a disabled child and their parents or legal representatives. A child with Down's syndrome, autism or severe mental retardation from birth to the age of 8 is eligible for the service.
Home care service	It is provided for children with disabilities when family members are unable to provide the necessary care due to objective circumstances (work, health, etc.).
Early intervention service.	Socially vulnerable families with children can learn parenting, budgeting and other skills.
Family Support Service	Provides families with support and training in social skills, child care and education, and household management to restore or improve the family's ability to function socially. It is provided to families who are actively involved in resolving their problems and who have been assessed by a social worker from the social services department as needing a family assistant.
Family-oriented service at the "Dzintari" Child Support Centre	It is provided for orphans and children who have been deprived of parental care for a period of time until they are taken care of by a guardian or foster family.
Material and emotional support for foster families and the children placed in them	Foster families providing care and education for children deprived of parental care (social support programmes for foster families, respite services).
Youth Mentoring Service	For vulnerable young people aged 13-25. Young people in need of mentoring support are referred by schools, social workers, but some young people contact the Social Service themselves after hearing about an existing service from someone else and are willing to benefit from this support.

Source: Liepaja Central Administration, 2023.

The Liepaja City Social Service also provides state-funded social services for families, such as psychosocial rehabilitation services for children in palliative care and their family members, long-term social care and social rehabilitation services in an institution for children with severe and very severe mental retardation or children with severe and very severe physical retardation, children with severe and very severe combined mental and physical disabilities up to the age of 4, and children with severe and very severe mental disabilities between the ages of 4 and 18 who cannot be cared for by a family, guardian or foster family due to the severity of their functional disabilities. Social rehabilitation services are provided for children who have developed addiction to narcotic, toxic or other intoxicating substances, children who have been victims of violence, as well as long-term social care and social rehabilitation services in institutions for orphans and children under two years of age without parental care (Liepaja Central Administration, n.d.). It is important to recognise that communities also play a key role in protecting the rights of the child. Child protection may not refer to state-imposed measures, but to civil society routines of socialisation, norm-setting, monitoring and informal sanctioning - routines that channel individuals in positive parenting directions, build peaceful social relations and create safe public places (Parton, 2022).

Methodology

The aim of the empirical research was to study the services available in Liepaja Municipality to ensure the best interests of children and to improve the child rights protection programme. The research methods were document and literature analysis, focus group, expert

interview and best practice case study, therefore the empirical research was conducted from 20 April 2023 to 30 December 2023 and had 3 phases as shown in Figure 1.



Figure 1 Stages of research from the 20th of April 2023 to the 30th of December 2023 (the authors)

The first stage included data collection from the Liepaja City Council Cooperation Group for the Protection of Children's Rights (focus group) on the current situation in Liepaja City Council, as the Cooperation Group includes representatives of institutions directly responsible for the protection of children's rights and interests in the city (Liepaja City Council, 2020). The second stage of the research was the analysis of the basket of services provided by the City of Liepaja (analysis of documents and literature, interviews with experts) and the comparison of the results with the Law on Protection of Children's Rights, highlighting the rights of children in Latvia as a whole. In the third stage, a visit to the Riga Social Support Centre for Children, Youth and Families was carried out in order to analyse examples of good practice and develop proposals for improving the Liepaja State Municipality's programme for the protection of children's rights in the field of social services.

Research Results

Focus Group Interview Summary

In order to gain a deeper understanding of the problem under study, a focus group interview was conducted as part of the field study. The interview was conducted with the participation of representatives of the Liepaja State Police, the Social Service, the Municipal Police and the Orphan's Court (four experts in total). The experts' opinions were summarised and it was concluded that if social services are generally not available in the municipality, the work with young people with behavioural or mental health problems is ineffective and formal. In order to change children's undesirable behaviour and substance use habits in the best interests of each child, it is necessary to provide free activities for children, including voluntary activities, which encourage participation, develop self-esteem and create a sense of belonging. Improved inter-institutional cooperation is necessary for more successful cooperation between professionals and a comprehensive approach, as there is a risk that effective cooperation in Liepaja is hampered by changes in professionals, including their professional attitude towards the problem to be addressed. There is also a need to develop social services in the form of programmes, including for longer periods (e.g., 18 months), involving a range of professionals, to ensure a long-term impact on the child, young person or family, as short-term services essentially address the immediate effects rather than the root causes. The focus group highlighted the need to improve social work with families and children at high social risk and, in cases of separation, to ensure access to social services for the parents of children to facilitate their return to the family. The issue of families in crisis has been on the agenda of Liepaja Municipality for several years, as there is a need to establish a family support centre with accommodation facilities, which will improve the possibilities for such families to receive support, as children and parents would also receive support services (specialist counselling, state social rehabilitation programmes, etc.) at the same time. The

strengths and weaknesses of the Child Rights Protection Programme in the Liepaja identified in the focus group interview prove that the child rights protection system in Latvia is based on the Northern European model of child rights protection (Family Services), which is why the importance of social work with families with children is highlighted, as well as the lack of a crisis centre for families with children in crisis situations (Parton, 2022).

Compliance of the Liepaja State Municipal Service Basket with legal regulations

As part of the research, the existing situation in Liepaja City Municipality was examined in order to see the overall picture of the general basket of services for children, youth and families in the City of Liepaja, therefore Table 2 analyses how various basic rights of children are ensured in Liepaja, as stipulated in the Law on Protection of Children's Rights (1998). Table 1 above summarises specific social services, while Table 2 below shows other types of services provided by the City of Liepaja, highlighting both achievements and identified gaps. The basic rights of children, as included in the Law on Protection of Children's Rights (1998), were chosen as the criteria for evaluating the basket of services available in Liepaja, thus highlighting the implementation of the programme for the protection of children's rights in the municipality. Table 2 also shows how theoretical analysis relates to practical action to protect children's rights.

Table 2 Social services for families with children in Liepaja City Municipality in 2023 (the authors)

Criteria	Current situation	References
Section 10 of the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights (1998) "The right of the child to the full enjoyment of life"	The right of children in Liepaja to a full environment is ensured by the Municipal Social Service, the Orphans' Court and educational institutions. Since 2020, the Liepaja Municipality Cooperation Group for the Protection of Children's Rights has been in operation, with the aim of facilitating effective cooperation of institutions in the field of protection of children's rights, ensuring targeted and coordinated actions of the institutions involved to ensure the protection of children's rights and interests in the Liepaja Municipality administrative area of the Republic of Liepaja, and submitting proposals to the Ministry of Welfare for the improvement of the protection of children's rights.	Liepaja City Council, 2020
Section 11 of the Protection of the Rights of Children Act (1998) "The child's right to education and creativity"	Educational institutions in Liepaja implement various projects to reduce social risks, carry out educational work with parents of children, and provide the necessary support to ensure education. It has been observed that parents of children lack relevant social skills in raising and educating their children. The municipality needs to intensify its work with parents to ensure that all children of compulsory school age attend educational institutions, and there is a lack of instruments to promote useful leisure time for children with deviant behaviour, other behavioural disorders and addictions.	Inga Ekuze, Deputy Director of Liepaja City Education Board (Expert interview, 15.11.2023.)
Section 12(2) of the Protection of the Rights of the Child Act (1998) "A child has the right to free health care..."	There are 48 general practitioners in Liepaja providing free health care through a state programme. There are two on-call doctors in Liepaja in case a family does not have access to its own general practice, but the health condition does not allow waiting. In Liepaja, educational, interactive sessions are offered on healthy nutrition, reproductive health, psycho-emotional health and addiction prevention. Educational institutions regularly carry out preventive work with children	Liepaja City Council, 2020

	on safety and health issues, educating children on water and ice safety, summer safety and first aid.	
Section 26(1) of the Protection of the Rights of the Child Act (1998) "The family is the natural environment for the development and growth of the child and every child has the inalienable right to be brought up in a family"	Comparing the data for 2021 and 2022, the number of children in foster care in an institution has increased significantly. It is concluded that the municipality needs to further intensify its work with families at risk in order to prevent children from being removed from their families and to preserve their families of origin as much as possible. There is also a need to support families who have cared for children without parental care and to provide more support for guardians and foster families. The lack of a crisis centre for families with children in Liepaja is also a problem (clients have to be taken to crisis centres in neighbouring municipalities).	Liepaja City Orphanage Court, 2023
Section 16 of the Children Act (1998) "A child's right to rest and recreation"	From 1 July 2022, the municipality has set up a mentoring service for young people to promote their social functioning, behaviour change and social integration. By 30 December 2022, 68 young people aged between 13 and 25 will have received a mentoring service. There is a need to continue working at the level of prevention, risk identification and prevention, as there is still a high proportion of children with deviant behaviour and the mentoring service could be one of the tools to integrate these children into society.	Liepaja Central Administration, 2023
Section 55 of the Children Act (1998) "Special care for a child with special needs"	In Liepaja, children's learning abilities are diagnosed and recommendations are made for further education in educational institutions and family support. The Liepaja State Pedagogical and Medical Commission assesses children's learning abilities and health status, and determines special education programmes for preschool and primary education in grades 1-4. In order to ensure equal rights and opportunities for all children to receive education according to their abilities, some educational institutions in Liepaja provide environmental access for children with mobility disabilities. Children with both learning and behavioural disabilities are supported in all municipal institutions by support staff from each educational institution within the scope of their competence.	Inga Ekuze, Deputy Director of Liepaja City Education Board (Expert interview, 15.11.2023.)

Expert interviews and good practice analysis

The State Audit Office, in its audit report "Problem Children - a Mirror of Adult Failures" (2022), recognised that the Social Support Centre for Children, Youth and Families in Riga provides effective services to change children's behaviour, so a visit to the centre was carried out as part of the third phase of the study. The meeting provided an insight into the activities of the support centre, which also provides the services of a long-term social care and social rehabilitation institution for children and young people. Information was provided on support for young people leaving out-of-home care, long-term care homes, including the work of the Riga City Council's Cooperation Group for the Protection of Children's Rights, and services for children and young people.

According to Kaspars Jasinkevičs, Director of the Social Support Centre for Children, Youth and Families in Riga (personal communication, 27.04.2023.), the Centre is an institution of the Riga City Council, established on 1 December 2009, and currently provides

- long-term social care and social rehabilitation services for orphans and children deprived of parental care;
- Short-term social care and social rehabilitation services for children and adolescents;
- Crisis intervention service and social work with families with children, pregnant women;

social rehabilitation service with accommodation for young people aged 18-24 after leaving the care of a family in a long-term social care and social rehabilitation institution;

- preventive and psychosocial work with children and young people before and after leaving out-of-family care up to the age of 24;
- Short-term social care and social rehabilitation services for families with children and pregnant women.

The Riga Children, Youth and Family Social Support Centre consists of 8 units, 5 of which provide long-term social care and social rehabilitation services to 157 orphans and children without parental care. The Centre for Children and Youth has 250 employees. 26 of them are specialists in social work and 165 are specialists in social care. The Centre's mission is to provide professional, honest and responsible care and education based on the needs of children and young people. The vision is that the Riga Social Support Centre for Children, Youth and Families is an organisation that provides a safe, stable, child-friendly family environment for eight children in one apartment (Riga City Municipality Welfare Department, n.d.). Since 2016, the Riga City Municipality has also provided substantial support to children (4-9 years) and young people (13-18 years) with communication and behavioural difficulties and their families by offering social rehabilitation programmes. "Jump" - implemented by the Latvian Samaritans Association (since 2016); "Do" - implemented by the Resilience Centre (since 2016); "Friend" - implemented by the Latvian SOS Children's Villages Association (since 2017); "The path to self" - implemented by the Latvian Child Support Foundation (since 2019) (Riga City Municipality Welfare Department, n.d.).

After evaluating the information received, it can be concluded that the City of Riga offers a wide range of social services for children and young people. It is to be welcomed that work with children is planned on a long-term basis and that various social rehabilitation programmes are developed for children with communication difficulties or behavioural disorders, which shows a complex approach to changing the situation. In order to provide individual emotional and practical support to young people in Riga, it is planned to develop a mentoring service for young people and children, which is already being implemented in the social services of the municipality of Liepaja.

Conclusion

At the end of the study, several conclusions and proposals were made to ensure the best interests of children and the quality of social services in Liepaja Municipality. From the normative acts and reports of the supervisory institutions, it can be concluded that the Municipal Social Services are the main institutions that carry out research on the social environment and identify the social problems of the population in order to create social services and social assistance system based on them, which meet the needs of the population of the municipality, including families and children. This makes social services an important resource and tool for municipalities in ensuring and monitoring children's fundamental rights. It is also clear from the expert interviews that if social services are not available in a municipality, work with children and young people with behavioural or mental health problems is perceived as ineffective and formal.

In order to avoid fragmented access to support and services, it is necessary to strengthen inter-institutional cooperation, as the timely involvement of the relevant

institutions in addressing children's behavioural problems will ensure a timely support mechanism for families with children. Also, in order to change children's habits of undesirable behaviour and substance abuse, based on children's needs and respecting the interests of each child, it is important to offer free leisure activities for children in Liepaja Municipality, as well as to involve children in voluntary activities. In this regard, it is important to mention that in order to ensure the best interests of children, it is necessary to examine the possibilities of providing meaningful leisure activities for children and young people with deviant, violent behaviour as well as substance abuse episodes, as providing meaningful leisure activities will reduce the number of children who are administratively sanctioned for substance abuse.

The Municipality of Liepaja must find a way to adopt good practices from the Riga Social Support Centre for Children, Youth and Families, which is recognised as the most effective service for changing children's behaviour, and develop innovative social rehabilitation programmes for children and young people, as well as directing financial resources to children and young people at high social risk.

In general, after analysing the available data of the competent institutions of Liepaja State Municipality, listening to the opinions of experts, evaluating the information presented in the description of the existing situation, it is concluded that in order to ensure the best interests of children, to meet the needs of families and children, it is necessary to create a new social service for families with children, The establishment of a Family Support Crisis Centre with accommodation facilities, which will improve the possibilities for families in crisis to receive support, ensure a holistic approach to the family as a whole in solving problems, and create an opportunity for children and their parents to receive support services in one place in order to restore family functioning. It is important to emphasise that this research proposal has been taken into consideration by Liepaja City Council and is already included in the development programme of Liepaja City Council and South Kurzeme Region for 2022-2027, with the aim of establishing a Family Support Centre in the future (National Digital Development Agency, 2024).

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THE IMPORTANCE OF RESILIENCE IN PROMOTING THE PROFESSIONAL EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL WORKERS

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Abstract. *The publication is developed in the context of reflection on the problems of social work, which highlights the importance of the phenomenon of resilience in the professional everyday life of social workers in solving diverse problems. The purpose of this article is to reassess the importance of resilience in the professional activity of social workers, describing with what kind of methods and in what kind of way the development and strengthening of psychological resilience can reduce the risk of burnout of social workers at work, promoting their professional self-efficacy both in their daily work life and when dealing with client problems. The authors, based on the findings of the analysis of theoretical sources, describe the dominant qualities of the pillar of resilience in the professional activity in promoting the psychological resilience and self-efficacy of social workers. The survey data of social workers confirm that the difficulties in developing resilience are related to the lack of information about resilience, the risk of burnout and the resulting insufficient psycho-emotional resources of social workers. The publication highlights the potential of resilience methods in increasing the psychological resilience and self-efficacy of social workers in their professional activities.*

Keywords: *developing resilience, psychological resilience, resilience methods, risk of burnout, social workers.*

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Introduction

The social work, which is carried out by local government social workers in cooperation with other social work specialists and representatives of helping professions, is a multifunctional profession that solves the existential issues of people's lives, promoting changes and new opportunities. Social work is considered as “high level of emotional work” (Howe, 2008). Data from a study conducted in Great Britain shows the burnout of social workers. Social workers were assessed for their tendency toward burnout by completing the Maslach Burnout Inventory. The results of the study indicate that 73% of respondents have an increased level of emotional exhaustion. 26% of respondents report high levels of depersonalization (Ratcliff, 2024). Heavy caseloads, large numbers of clients, negative media influence, the prestige of the profession in society, and low pay are well-known causes of social worker burnout. On the other hand, the study carried out in the USA reveals that right after the start of Covid-19, 26.21% of social workers meet the diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD), 16.22% of respondents indicate severe depression, 63.71% report burnout and 49.59 % for secondary trauma (Holmes, Rentrop, Korsch-Williams, King, 2021).

The research conducted in Latvia in 2021 with the survey of social service managers, made by the Latvian Ministry of Welfare in the regions clearly showed the situation of social work in the country, indicating that there is a tendency towards a lack of employees and burnout of those employees who are in work relationships. The results of the study show that the shortage of social workers in the municipal social services are high - 65%. It is known that social workers work in overload conditions, the number of active client cases per month for social workers is most often 20-30, but the survey also mentioned 59 cases, more than half of

the respondents admitted that they are overloaded daily and often the existing resources of social workers are only sufficient for crisis interventions. Findings were made that social workers who do not have the appropriate education to work in the social field work are in the workplaces of the respondents. The proportion of social service managers who believe that the vacancy problem will become even worse in a few years has increased to 93%. The fact that 86% of social service managers believe that the acquisition of new professional skills for their employees is very relevant or rather relevant, shows the lack of skills necessary for current social work situations (Krīgere, 2022). Tools and techniques that can help develop the psychological resilience of social workers can keep professionals in the workforce and prevent burnout. Social workers, especially those who work directly with traumatized clients, are more susceptible to developing secondary traumatic stress. They may experience symptoms of secondary traumatic stress from reading or hearing about what people have experienced, such as abuse or child abuse (Social Work degree center, 2024).

Resilience is one factor that protects employees from compassion fatigue. Resilience is a personality quality that is related to an individual's ability to think positively and understand that a person has the ability to at least some extent influence individual's environment and the things around him or her. Accepting that it is not possible to influence all things, it is important to learn to see those that can be impacted (Kettunen, 2015). Also with social work clients, constructive positive thinking tactics can be useful in improving the life situation, increasing the efficiency of one's professional activity. Calhoun and Tedeschi (2004) offer the term "posttraumatic growth" to describe the expansion of a person's worldview after a traumatic event (Calhoun, Tedeschi, 2004). The type of resilience that can occur in social workers who experience secondary trauma when dealing with the effects of clients' trauma is called local posttraumatic growth.

Social work is inherently stressful because workers work with oppressed and vulnerable individuals in society, they defend the interests of their clients when the rest of society mostly chooses to turn away from them (Social Work Degree Center, 2023). Due to the specific nature of their work, social workers need to know about resilience, as well as purposefully develop it in their professional activities in their everyday life. Developing persistence of resilience or increasing the impact of resilience can help social workers cope with complex social situations and the high daily stress they experience in their professional work responsibilities. Developing resilience can help to avoid burnout (Rose & Palattiyil, 2020).

The aim of the publication is to reassess the importance of resilience in the professional activity of social workers, describing with what methods and in what way the development and strengthening of psychological resilience can reduce the risk of burnout of social workers at work, promoting their professional self-efficacy both in their daily work life and when dealing with solving client problems. The theoretical methods used for research data collection include the analysis of scientific literature in social psychology, social work, social and educational sciences. Empirical data collection methods: surveying social workers, content analysis of documents relevant to the content of the study.

Literature Review

The term "resilience" was first used in construction science, where it described the flexibility of materials: it was considered that a material is resilient if it returns to its original state after bending, pressing, squeezing, etc. Rubber can be used as an example. This definition of resilience in construction science vividly reflects the origin of the term: "resilire" from Latin and means "return" or "rebound". Later, the term "resilience" was adopted by social psychology (Sparrks, 2024).

Resilience is a central concept that describes well-being at work, used to understand the ability to be flexible and bounce back from adversity (Kettunen, 2015). In today's changing world, it is necessary to be able to develop the ability to adapt and be resilient against stress. Resilience and its development play an important role in a person's everyday life and in improving his quality of life. According to the Cambridge dictionary, resilience is the ability to be happy, successful, etc. after something difficult or bad has happened (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Resilience, according to the APA Dictionary of Psychology, is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, particularly through mental, emotional, and behavioural flexibility and adaptation to external and internal demands. The adaptation of people to the diverse situations of life is influenced by various conditions, among which the dominant factors are following:

- the ways in which individuals view and engage with the world;
- availability and quality of social resources;
- specific coping strategies (APA Dictionary of Psychology, 2019).

Resilience is acquired over a lifetime, and the social environment plays a central role in this process. If an individual has established a strong relationship with at least one person, then the development of resilience is positive as the child grows. However, genetic or biological factors are not insignificant when it comes to resilience. It is impossible to talk about a "resilience gene" that a person has or does not have in his genetic structure. However, genetic predispositions determine the individual framework in which resilience can develop (Sparks, 2024). It is important to note that being resilient requires skills that can be trained and developed over time. Building resilience takes time, strength and help from the people around you. It depends on personal behaviours and skills (such as self-esteem and communication skills) as well as external influences (such as social support and resources available to the individual) (Hurley, 2024). Resilience does not mean that an individual no longer experiences stress, emotional upheaval and suffering, but indicates that a person has the capacity and ability to cope with difficulties on his own and is able to ask for help from others when it is necessary.

The Seven Pillars of Resilience offers a resilience-building model that highlights four basic attitudes (acceptance, attachment, solution-oriented thinking, healthy optimism) and three practices (self-awareness, self-reflection, self-efficacy) to help individuals build and develop resilience in a healthy way (Vordermeier, 2022). It is important for every person to maintain a healthy life balance and successfully cope with difficulties. Finding the resources necessary for success depends on the quality of our social, self-created, and natural environments quality (Ungar, 2019).

A study published in May 2022 in the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health shows that people with greater resilience, ability to cope with challenges and developed emotional intelligence are likely to have better overall well-being than those with lower resilience (Lacomba-Trejo, Mateu- Mollá, Belgarde-Nunes, & Delhom, 2022).

Social work is focused on people's welfare and well-being, so it is important into work to look more into methods and different ways to develop your own and clients' resilience in everyday life. Several factors that help develop individual resilience can be emphasized and characterized. They are as follows:

1. A healthy focus on the positive.

Realistic optimism is an important characteristic of resilient people. They realize that almost any situation can be changed for the positive without losing sight of reality. This basic attitude can help to deal with challenges and not to lose courage. An individual's ability to be more grateful can increase levels of well-being (Emmons & Crumpler, 2000). One way to develop the focus on the positive is to practice gratitude. This can be done, for example, by

creating a gratitude journal in which all the things an individual is grateful for can be regularly recorded.

2. Self-efficacy.

Self-efficacy is the belief that one can achieve something with one's abilities and qualities. To reinforce this awareness, it is possible to describe the experiences of success that have been achieved so far, as well as to review positive feedback about the work done or personal milestones and achievements. To promote self-efficacy, it is also possible to use methods that help set personal and professional goals. Understanding that the employee, and also his client, can change himself, others and the environment around him through his actions, helps a person regain control over his life and make changes when they are necessary (Lütke-Laxen, 2022).

3. Future orientated.

Future orientation means that the individual places great emphasis on planning, preparing for, and imagining the future. It involves a mindset that focuses on long-term goals, aspirations, and outcomes rather than just the concerns of the present moment (ArkBuilders, 2024). It is impossible to change the past, only the present and the future can offer the individual some room for manoeuvre. Thus, the focus of each person (applicable to both employees and customers) should be directed primarily to the future, which can be created and shaped itself. Techniques that help to develop it are visualization of goals and setting visions. Conscious preparation and clear focusing of individual desires and future visions help to realize future goals. The study *Future Orientation: A Construct Affecting Adolescent Health and Well-Being* (2013) describes that youth who develop a future orientation indicates that they have clearer goals, more successful planning abilities, and a stronger ability to overcome obstacles in the future (Johnson, Blum, & Cheng, 2013).

4. Acceptance.

Resilient people can accept situations they cannot change. It is the ability to let go of your expectations, illusions and ingrained ideas. It reduces stress and gives more satisfaction with the decisions making. If it is not possible to accept situation what have happened in the past, a conversation can help, so that certain emotions can be identified first. If the situation is in the present, the focus should be on what the individual can change so that it is possible to move from passivity to activity (Lütke-Laxen, 2022). It is important to pay attention to inner feelings, to give up thinking about what others should or should not do, not to pay much attention to how and what things should be fairer (Alford, 2021).

5. Taking responsibility.

Taking responsibility for one's actions means accepting the positive and negative consequences of choices and behaviour that's been taken rather than attributing them to external factors or the actions of others. Acknowledging the consequences of certain behaviours is often more difficult than blaming circumstances or other people for negative situations. In the long run, taking responsibility for itself actions show strength of character and willingness to grow (MasterClass, 2022). It is important for an individual, when facing problems and difficulties, not to fall into the role of a victim, but to take responsibility for the situation. It is necessary to deal with the situation constructively. Firstly, it means admitting mistakes. At the same time, taking responsibility also means standing by the decisions made and being able to defend it even in cases where the plan did not succeed (Lütke-Laxen, 2022). Above all that, the individual must understand why he does the things he does. What is the purpose of these actions, words and what does he want to achieve. Knowing the answers to these questions makes it easier to take responsibility for the actions that are taken - regardless of whether they are positive or negative.

6. Solution orientation.

Everything changes and nothing is clear and fixed (People Change, 2021). Often, when problems arise, the individual has a desire to immediately express his dissatisfaction with what just happened. As individual releases emotions, he can feel the negativity quickly pass through the body, affecting the thoughts, what the individual hears, says, and interacts with those around them. This negativity shows the inability to deal with the problem, the weakness that the client or the social worker themselves have when facing problems. When addressing a problem, one focuses on how unfair the situation may be. In those moments, problems can lead to more problems (Dula, 2021). As opposed to problem orientation, solution orientation is focusing on the solution rather than the problem. With a solution-oriented attitude, attention is not lost, and goals can be achieved more successfully. It involves a proactive and positive attitude and action to overcome obstacles rather than dwelling on the problems themselves. Focusing on solutions often leads to more productive and constructive outcomes in various aspects of life (Stankiewicz, 2023). The differences between problem-oriented and solution-oriented thinking are seen in the Figure 1.

<u>Solution Focused</u>	<u>Problem Focused</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's wanted • What's working • Progress • Influence • "Counter" in the past • Collaboration • Resources and Strengths • Simplicity • Actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's wrong • What needs fixing • Blame • Control • Causes in the past • The expert knows best • Deficits and Weaknesses • Complications • Definitions

• Jackson, P. & McKergow, M. "The Solutions Focus: Making Coaching and Change SIMPLE" 2nd Ed."

Figure 1 *The difference between solution orientation and problem orientation*
(Jackson, McKergow, 2007)

7. Creating your own network (Orientation towards creating a network).

Strong social connections and a supportive network of family, friends and community play an important role in developing resilience. Resilient people consciously reach out to others for support when needed, and a strong social network also satisfies a person's need for belonging and contact. It is important for the individual to be aware of his network in the beginning. What is the individual's relationship with which person? Who could be helpful to him, in what kind of situation? The first review helps to connect with the right person at the right moment (Lütke-Laxen, 2022). A reliable support system provides emotional, practical and sometimes financial help during difficult times. A good way to identify your social circle is by creating your resource map. On the resource map, it is possible to mark friends, acquaintances, colleagues, social professionals, institutions, family, etc., and in which areas they are able to help. By creating such a map of social resources, it is easier to navigate where to turn for help in moments when it seems that no one will be able to provide it to an individual.

It is important to note that being resilient requires skills that can be worked on and developed over time. Building resilience requires certain individual resources: motivation, will change, ability to adapt, and the ability to ask for and receive help from the people around you, as it is likely that individuals will experience several failures as they develop. It depends on personal behaviours and skills (such as self-esteem and communication skills) as well as external factors and influences, such as social support and available resources (Hurley, 2024). A study of 1,032 college students analysed in the February 2022 issue of Psychology, Health & Medicine found that emotional resilience was associated with reduced stress and

more positive overall life satisfaction in the early stages of the Covid-19 pandemic. (Hu, Ye, Yildirim, & Yang, 2022).

Looking at the findings of the theory of resilience, it is necessary to take also look at the importance of the human security factor in resilience. Human security is “freedom from fear and deprivation” (Bello, 2005). It is necessary to mention that there are people who feel so threatened that they do not believe that they can influence the processes in their lives and often see only new threats instead of new opportunities. The consequences of such a sense of danger may include, for example, increased levels of anxiety, depression and other illnesses, including alcohol and/or drug addiction, in extreme cases, suicide (Bello, 2005). In such cases, it is not possible to talk about using resilience methods to improve the condition/living standard of a person or a client. The use of resilience methods depends on the individual's situation. In cases where an individual's safety is at risk and his basic needs are not met (also in cases of mental illness), such a model cannot be used, and it is necessary to use other techniques.

Methodology

The choice of methodology is related to the applied research conducted in the context of the development of the publication on the understanding and importance of the nature of resilience in social work in Latvia. The focus of the study is the study of current data on social workers' professional workload, awareness and practical use of resilience potential and methods in the work environment.

The data collection of the empirical study was carried out in a quantitative research approach based on the research method - questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent electronically to the e-mail addresses of Latvian social services. Methods used in the research: theoretical research - analysis of scientific literature, data collection methods: quantitative method - structured survey (instrument - questionnaire); data analysis methods: statistical analysis (Microsoft Excel) and descriptive statistics method (Excel charts). Submission of respondents' answers was anonymous, and participation was voluntary. In the introduction to the questionnaire, the research participants had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the information about the objectives of the research, the usability of the data and the fact that the survey is anonymous. The protection and confidentiality of personal data in the processing of questionnaire data is fully respected, guaranteeing it in the questionnaire address. In the introductory part of the questionnaire, the nature of the survey was explained to the respondents and the anonymity of the information provided was guaranteed. The contact information of the researcher will also be indicated. The quantitative survey was organized using the Internet survey method - Google sheets. The unique form code was sent to several Social Services where social workers work. In total, the following participated in the quantitative survey: 67 respondents who work in Latvian regional social services as social workers who work with families and children, adults, as well as in service departments.

In the survey process, the opinions of Latvian social services employees about professional challenges in the work environment were ascertained on whether there is currently a sufficient number of social workers in their institution where they work; what is the respondents opinion about why there is a shortage of employees and what level of awareness of employees about the nature, meaning and necessity of resilience to include it in social work as one of the resources for promoting the professional self-efficacy of social workers.

Research results

In the survey, to the question about the current situation in the social service with employment, 30 of the respondents answer that there is a noticeable shortage of employees, 20 that there is a slight shortage of employees, 13 respondents mention that there is a large shortage of social workers, and only 4 of respondents are confident to answer that there is a sufficient number of employees. The results confirm the relevance of the 2021 study by the Ministry of Welfare, when in 65% of cases the social services of Latvian municipalities lack social work professionals, also in 2024. In response to the second question - why, according to the professionals themselves, there is a shortage of social workers, the majority notes that representatives of this profession do not receive sufficient remuneration, and the work is associated with a high risk of burnout. More than half of the respondents (40) emphasize that the profession is not valued in society. 31 respondents highlights that there is too much work at the workplace, 27 respondents emphasize that there is not enough motivation in the work environment, 12 of survey participants note that they do not receive enough support in the work environment. In possibility to name additional reasons for the lack of employees, the respondents have added the following reasons: insufficient pay, high risk of burnout and other important aspects of professional activity that affect the motivation of social workers and their choice to work in the field of social work. In Figure 2 is showed a summary of the causes of the shortage of social workers.

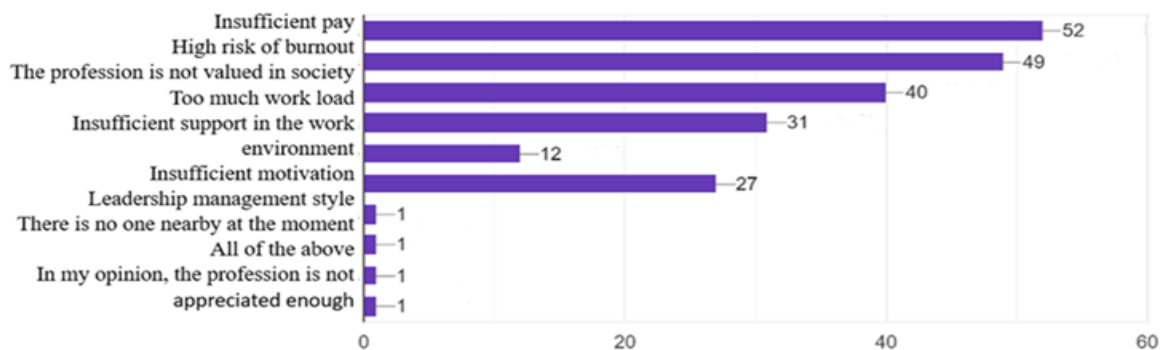


Figure2 Respondents opinion on the causes of the shortage of social workers (created by the author)

To the third open question - what methods do you use at work or after work to maintain a positive sense of self, the majority of respondents answer that they do sports, dance, improve their strength by doing gardening or going outdoors to relax and visit a sauna. Various hobbies are also mentioned: reading books, visualization methods, positive thinking, traveling, relaxing with friends and family, using humour which points to different methods that involve building resilience that help maintain an individual's well-being. It is noted that several respondents are helped by professional attitudes such as setting boundaries, "not taking work to home". Other individual resources for self-preservation and renewal are also mentioned: faith in God, meditations, supervisions. The answers also mention that alcohol and cigarettes are used to maintain a positive sense of self. One of the respondents gives the following answer: *"It must be said honestly that various methods have been tried, but still I have come to the point of burnout."* It is important to mention that each person is looking for how to maintain a healthy life balance and successfully deal with difficulties. Finding the resources necessary for success depends on the quality of the individual's own social, self-created and natural environment (Ungar, 2019). All the answers given by the respondents clearly highlight the need to find new opportunities in practice to improve the professional activities of social workers, focusing on the potential of strengthening resilience.

When asked about how the respondents could use or have been already using resilience in social work, 13 respondents choose not to answer this question or answer with the words that they do not know or have no answer because they do not use it. *"I don't use it. First of all, I don't like this word very much - I don't know why. And in practice I very rarely use these definitions."* The answers confirm one of the major existing contradictions in social work - the lack of information for social workers, as well as the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experience. Another response was received: *"Stress in social work should not be adaptive. Such situations should be avoided as much as possible. One should try to understand the essence of the situation in order to be able to find an adequate solution. Thinking this way, there is no place for stress. Service dept. soc. employees are exposed to stress that comes directly from the customer with his dissatisfaction. You should try to put the client in a calm atmosphere or ask them to clear their heads so that they can calmly look for a solution."* The specific experience confirms that in the professional reality, the practice of a competent social worker is dominated by action strategies that are related to the awareness of resilience factors and contribute to ensuring their self-efficacy in stressful situations.

Several respondents confirm that supervision, covisions, meetings and joint events at work are used to strengthen resilience, it was also answered that self-development, training and seminars, doing educational courses, specialist consultations: psychologist, supervisor, psychotherapist consultations are successful in professional activity, indicating the significant impact of support and human contact in maintaining and improving the well-being of individuals. Several responses mention different methods and also opportunities to do with clients – visiting museums, providing support to them and other opportunities to restore internal resources, , thus a healthy focus on the positive, the promotion of self-efficacy is already successfully included in work practice with clients.

One of the respondents gives the following answer: *"Yes, I have successfully adapted to difficulties, threats or significant sources of stress by taking responsibility for what is happening - but only with long-term work experience; there have been injuries and tragedies in social work, for example the death of a colleague, but this motivated and I did change the workplace. Basically, I accept situations and focus on the solution, I have created my own network with people who focus on the positive. Self-efficacy and orientation to the future happen more in private life."* Over time, the respondent has developed his resilience in his professional and personal life by using certain individual resources: motivation, will, ability to adapt and the ability to ask for and receive help from the people around him. Another response that describes the essential challenges of social work: *"I just took and left the social field on with a long vacation so I wouldn't be a psychopath and could keep my sanity. Because as I observed, colleagues who have been working in the social field for 10 or more years are not really healthy people, neither mentally nor physically."* And *"Adapting to conditions in the work environment, workload. But they believe that adaptation is not enough. Sooner or later, the employee will also encounter burnout if unfavourable conditions at work + overload are combined."* In the answers, it is repeatedly mentioned that employees develop resilience when faced with threats in the work environment.

The received answers emphasize how important it is to develop resilience and include it in social work: *"To be aware that it is essential for social workers to learn the skills of resilience theory, because resilience skills are especially necessary for this professional group. So, it would be necessary not only to act out various stressful situations, but also to actively check in social work how much the employee is stress-resistant and able to make the necessary decisions. If the employee has not proven that he is able to make decisions in stressful situations, then a resilience program should be developed, after which the employee would have the opportunity to develop this essential ability."*

The next, fifth question was asked about the development of resilience, considering seven ways, respondents were asked to rate how useful they think each of the ways is. Figure 3 shows the results, according to the respondents, the most useful method for developing resilience is acceptance, followed immediately by a healthy focus on the positive, which are two of the four basic attitudes. According to the results of the survey, it can be seen that there are respondents who believe that several methods are rather unnecessary, for example, orientation to the future, taking responsibility, orientation to the solution and also building one's own network.

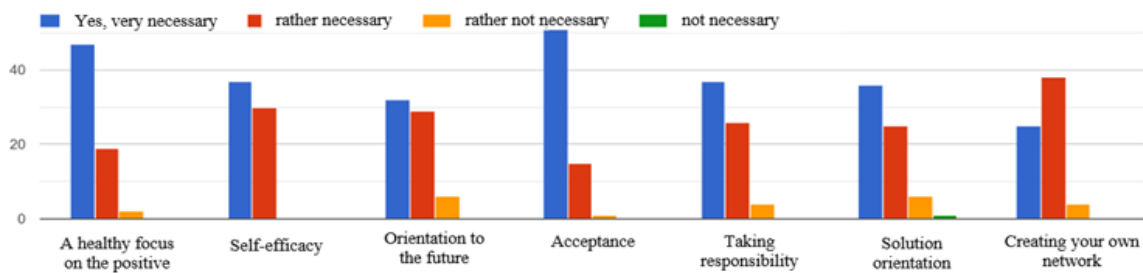


Figure3 Assessing the utility of respondents' resilience (created by the author)

The last question of the survey (seen in Figure 4) is it possible to strengthen existing social workers, as well as new ones, against the risk of burnout using resilience methods, 38 of the respondents believe that it would probably possible, 16 - answer that "Yes, it would be", but 8 of respondents answered that it would probably not be possible. Several additional comments were also received, making known about the lack of awareness and misunderstanding about resilience in social workers, such as "I don't understand the point if resilience wants soc. the employee adapts to stressful situations and everything bad. A lot of stress is one of the reasons for burnout." Findings were made that foresee specific solutions: "The risk of social worker burnout will exist if we do not work on it ourselves. Releasing tension - by swimming or meditating. So that thoughts about the case do not follow everywhere, because each person has his own choice, whatever it may be, and social worker can only suggest options, how the client could improve the current situation, but the solution must be accepted by himself, so worker does not have to carry it on his back. It is not easy to keep up but not to stress too much, it is need to work on it." The need for resilience methods in social work and their integration in the field of social work is also mentioned, and it is also recognized that there must be a sufficient level of understanding at the management level about how much time different social work processes and procedures take.

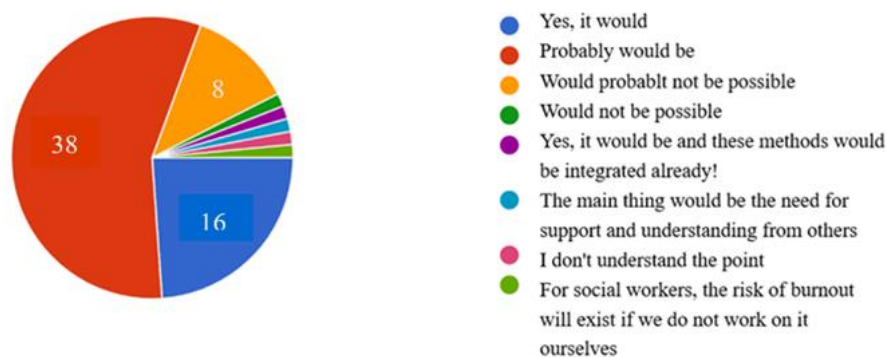


Figure4 Respondents' opinion on the possibility of resilience to reduce the risk of burnout (created by the author)

According to the obtained data, it can be seen that several social work professionals already use several methods in their professional and private daily life that help maintain emotional well-being, which can be linked to developing resilience. By dividing the methods according to the theory of 7 pillars of resilience, social workers currently use the most - acceptance, healthy focus on the positive, promotion of self-efficacy. Although the results of the survey in the question about the effectiveness of the methods indicated that the method of building one's own network is rather unnecessary, the answers to other questions often indicated how important professional and human support is in the daily life of social workers, reducing the risk of burnout.

Conclusion

1. Resilience in social work is the quality of the professionalism of social workers, which manifests itself in the practical ability and skill to manage and solve problems and complex situations in a healthy way, so that they do not negatively affect the well-being of social workers and reduce the risk of their professional burnout.

2. In the current work situation in Latvia, there is a shortage of employees and an overload to the existing employees in the work environment, which can often cause disturbances in emotional balance and well-being, a high level of stress and the need for psychological support in the work environment for social workers.

3. In increasing professional self-efficacy and restoring personal resources, the methods offered at work are successfully used as resilience methods - supervision, covisions, gathering events, as well as outside work activities, professionals strengthen themselves with physical activities, spiritual practices, contact with family and friends or developing their hobbies.

4. Resilience as an actual, necessary and consciously promoting factor of professional self-efficacy is confirmed in several answers of social workers by the mentioned challenges: "threats and risks" or other traumatic events related to professional activity.

5. Some of the current social work professionals lacks an understanding of the concept of resilience and the necessity to integrate it into their practice. When looking at 7 methods that develop resilience, some respondents consider several practices rather unnecessary.

6. The majority of the surveyed respondents, after familiarizing themselves with the theory of resilience, believe that there is a need for the inclusion of resilience in social work practice and that it is needed to create a new educational program.

7. Collecting empirical research data, it is clear that its needed greater awareness to the social workers about resilience and its essence in promoting the effectiveness of social work.

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