

TRADITIONAL VALUES IN THE ERA OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

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Abstract. *Several factors, such as international trends of globalisation, technological innovation, changing learning environments as well as internal developments in socio-cultural contexts and educational policy-making are constantly shaping values of people and causing difficulties with specification of their identity building. Our study is based on comparative research carried out in Estonia and Finland in 2015-2018 (N = 217) with future music teachers, who were asked to write essays where they highlighted and explained meaningful for them cultural landmarks in their countries. The method used was hermeneutical analysis, as this allows to focus on the text produced according to the question asked as an expression of the respondents' personal experiences and accepted values.*

The information presented in texts was analyzed at multiple levels and different viewpoints. Parallel analyses by authors were carried out in order to guarantee the validity of the overall results. Finally, the results were grouped, which allowed to draw preliminary conclusions what the common cultural landmarks were and why they have been accepted and recognised as meaningful and valuable by future music teachers both in Estonia and Finland and what their potential could be developing cultural cohesion in society.

Keywords: *identity building, cultural landmarks, socialisation, cohesion of society, teacher professionalism and education.*

Introduction

The problems of people in the 21st century are often related to their processes of socialization – becoming a member and a citizen of a particular society – which actually means difficulties when aspiring for their identity building. There is too much information and contradictory values make decision making hard. Multiplicity of identities people may find worth sharing have to be organised into some kind of hierarchies, but for that people need knowledge

about their environments, ideas and values. What is more, all the three above mentioned are never static in the modern rapidly changing world, and inability to choose from so many offered as new values may lead to an identity crisis at individual level (Erikson, 1968). Critical thinking skills for informed decision-making has become one of the modern key competences (Key competences, 2018), which in turn, takes us back to acquisition of knowledge, which can be used as tools for adequate specification and acceptance of values. The innovative environments made available by development of different technologies have greatly widened access to diverse sources of information, but we have to be aware of the need for critical analysis, when looking for trustworthy data.

The aim of this study was to specify, how teacher education (focused in particular on music teacher training) could be updated, considering its culture related content, and how to help students become good professionals equipped with wide cultural horizons and modern competences, which would allow them to meaningfully integrate traditional and modern values.

Education, culture, schools and teachers

The most crucial issue for people of the modern times is the ability to distinguish between the old and valuable and the old and outdated. The same goes with innovative ideas and developments. New may be something well forgotten, an idea or achievement from the past, and if we do not know the history and the historic heritage of particular ethnic and social cultures, we are unable to analyse and estimate the potential of new ideas for development. The mentioned heritage means reliable knowledge and comprehension of a specific culture and its landmarks, accepted, acknowledged and shared in a particular society in its uniting function for cohesion of an ethnic group or state. According to Peeter Torop, „culture is a collective intellect, shared by its bearers“ (Torop, 1999, p. 375) and schools (including universities) are institutions established to preserve and develop culture. It makes the role of a teacher especially significant, who, as a professional has to be a trustworthy intellectual himself/herself, who masters all the culturally relevant information and is able to guide students to the values and meanings characterising this culture as a particular way of life in this society.

The same idea was expressed by Hilda Taba (1962) who said:

There is relatively little disagreement also about the idea that schools function on behalf of the culture in which they exist. The school is created by a society for the purpose of reproducing in the learner the knowledge, attitudes, values and techniques (today skills) that have cultural relevancy... There is generally also no quarrel with the idea that of the many educative agencies of

society, the school is the one which specializes in inducting youth the culture and is thus responsible for the continuity of that culture. (17).

She also said: “Curriculum, after all, is a way of preparing young people to participate as productive members of our culture.” (*ibid.*, 10)

Also Lev Vygotsky specified education for the new generation as a process of enculturation, in which parents and teachers act as examples to follow and support the young to understand and accept the culture they will be living in. Schools as institutions for transferring cultural information follow after home education and they have the function to help young people comprehend, why something must or can be considered meaningful for development of a personality and deserves to be accepted and recognized as valuable (Vygotsky, 2014).

Accordingly, Juri Lotman, an outstanding scholar of semiotics, often discussed issues related to teacher education and he considered training of their professional skills a specific mission of universities most meaningful for sustainability of any culture. Lotman recommended to teach those young people today, who are going to teach young people of tomorrow, so that we could expect this generation to live their lives as personalities based on what they have learnt. Lotman compared the process of teaching to “the air for culture” and teaching itself a precondition for the natural development of human spirituality. School is a place for communication, where generations meet and where sustainability of culture is created. That is why Lotman was respectfully called “teachers’ teacher” (Torop, 1999, 378)

The research problem for this study cropped up considering the media articles criticising the decrease of expected knowledge and skills of student candidates intending to start their studies at universities, in many fields of human culture. In addition, they were often considered to be poor observers of life around us and not very much interested in environments – social, political, natural or cultural.

It goes without saying that future teachers have to be culturally widely and well informed people, if they want to be professionals in the true sense of the word.

The Finnish analyst Pasi Sahlberg has called this competence – and accountability based and – led Global Education Reform Movement abbreviated as GERM, a “virus, killing education” (Sahlberg, 2011). Finnish PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) success of all the 21st century studies has never been explained by focusing on outcomes, control, assessment industry requirements or competence orientation. They have followed a different ideology and the experience of their own school culture. Their success has been based on wisely selected and meaningful content of education and professionally sound organisation of process of studies carried out by professional teachers,

often specified as trustworthy intellectuals, leading students to learning with comprehension (Autio, 2017). Estonia has also been successful in recent PISA studies, which probably can be explained by survival of the traditional achievement-oriented school culture, experienced teachers, and students' good ICT skills. Three PISA competences, demonstrated so well by 15 year-olds tend to diminish by the end of upper secondary schools, so universities are worried about their student candidates, especially about those intending to become teachers.

It has to be admitted that we all interpret and comprehend the world around us differently, nevertheless knowledge and skills have become the currency of modern life, especially when thinking about shaping the modern digital turn. We also have to learn to become critical consumers of information (Schleicher, 2018; Schleicher, 2018a). True, education is no longer about reproducing what we know, but our knowledge has to become an informed understanding of the big picture of the world we live in. The amount of knowledge we possess, always characterises our relationship to multiple environments around us, showing how well we are informed about them (Wild & Hochberg, 2018). Any person, participating in formal, informal or non-formal learning acquires knowledge, skills and values, which establish a basis for human decision-making characterising the competence of how to act in different life situations, or solving problems. Different people use differently structured competences, based on different knowledge and experience for performing their everyday jobs or solving conflicts.

Accordingly, knowledge will always remain the basis for development of skills and further on – competences as meta-level capabilities uniting and integrating different cognitive and non-cognitive aspects. That is why William Pinar has described education as a moral enterprise (Pinar, 2012), individual in its essence. The same can be found in the works of Russian educationists, e.g. Chechlova et al., 2018; Guseva, 2017.

Methods and data collection

The main aim of the study was to find ideas for improvement of school music teacher training curricula at Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre. This study is a comparative research where influences of macro-level phenomena are analysed on the collected research materials created by two target groups of future music teachers (Estonian and Finnish students), representing young people from similar and close cultural contexts but from rather different historical background. (Esser & Hanitzsch, 2012) One way of a qualitative study – hermeneutical analysis – is focused primarily on the meaning of a text for a person in the time, and not that much on the objective meaning of

the expressed. (Kalamees-Ruubel, 2014, 17). It means that the researchers were interested in the manifested content the respondents had provided, their ideas and arguments and the meanings these contained and explained. (Ezzy, 2002; Flick, 2011). When carrying out such an analysis, it is possible according to Lotman (Lotman, 2006, 95) to realise specific cultural functions and convey a particular holistic meaning.

The research material (sample) was collected in the period of 2015–2018 from students' – future Estonian music teachers and those Finnish class teachers expected to teach music in future (N=217, of those Estonian students 157 and Finnish students 59) including all Estonian students trained in this period at the Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre and the sample from Finland was a convenience sampling, collected in cooperation with Helsinki University Teachers Training Department and University of Lapland. As music teachers for Finnish basic schools are not trained as music specialists, the group was needed for drawing preliminary comparisons. The students were asked to write essays on a given topic (Cultural landmarks in Estonia/Finland all people accept and recognize as shared values characterising something specifically Estonian /Finnish).

The collected essays were analysed by all authors by parallel open or inductive coding, followed by creating categories and finally by grouping the ideas expressed to provide validity. After the mentioned procedures the results were analysed and interpreted and after that some preliminary generalisations could be made. The results presented are specified by the gender of a respondent (M or F) and the year the essay was written.

During the analysis of the material three categories were established: culture, nature and persons (people). Considering the unequal amount of material belonging to the first category, six subcategories had to be established, and namely: cultural events, national cultural heritage, literature, education, cultural objects, technology.

Results and discussion

Results of the analysis will be presented by criteria and sub-criteria as follows. Opinions of students have been marked with F=female or M =male, followed by the year.

Estonian students usually stressed the significance of cultural landmarks, for example: *it is important to understand the meaning of cultural landmarks in the same way, because otherwise they would not be able to fulfil their main function of uniting people* (F 2015). Quite often relations between cultural landmarks and traditions have been highlighted: *it is important to know and understand them, how they cropped up in their time.* (F 2015) Or: *cultural*

landmarks are created by ordinary, common Estonian people, they develop them silently, without much noise and publicity in many nice local places all over Estonia. Not all cultural landmarks are clearly visible, they are more often hidden in the hearts of people, where they are just felt as something one's very own and sacred. I am a cultural landmark of Estonia as well. (F 2017)

There are also some critical remarks that deserve attention: *Media usually characterises cultural landmarks as phenomena that can be exported or sold abroad, and generally known as a "good Estonian product". It has also been assumed that we too often underestimate our real and valuable cultural landmarks and we do not pay enough attention to those phenomena, which make us really unique.* (F 2015) Sometimes a question was asked: *Cultural landmarks, but for whom? When my foreign friend comes to visit me, I will definitely take him /her to those wonderful places, but how often do we visit these places ourselves? That is why I would like to stress the responsibility of teachers. Excursions and study trips are usually organised by teachers only these days.* (F 2017) Unfortunately, the Finnish students did not use the opportunity to widely discuss the meaning of highlighted landmarks, still there were short comments (*it is really Finnish, 19*), or (*it can be seen and experienced only in Finland, 21*).

1. Culture

It can be said that cultural landmarks highlighted by Estonian and Finnish students are different. For Estonians the absolute dominant (102) among landmarks was the Song Festival (celebrated since 1869 and considered the main event of choir music and national culture), followed by the Estonian language (52). *The language preserves our origin and our past and is the litmus paper for our adjustment to the future* (M, 2015), pristine Estonian nature (38), traditional Estonian folk heritage, including runo-songs (the older monophonic folksongs) and one of the biggest collection folk poetry and songs in the world (28).

The Finnish students bring the pristine Finnish nature to the foreground, (48), followed by the Finnish sauna (30). They also highlighted different Finnish national dishes (27), and Father Christmas or Santa Claus as a particular Finnish cultural landmark, who lives in Northern Finland – Rovaniemi (17). The Finnish language has been considered an important cultural landmark by 6 respondents. Estonian as mother tongue has become a more meaningful cultural landmark for Estonian students, considering the different history of the 20th century of the two neighbouring countries.

Estonian students have characterised their most important cultural landmark – the Song Festival – in several ways: *the song Festival is a multilevel cultural landmark covering both development of folk culture and memory as well as the feeling of all people belonging together, which cannot be compared*

to anything else (F 2015). *The song Festival is a manifestation of being an independent nation with their own culture, a viewpoint expressed for all the world to understand the meaning and value of our language, life philosophy and originality.* (M 2015)

Cultural events have acquired a status of landmarks only in essays of written by Estonian students. They have highlighted the events (music and film festivals) organised in Estonia that already enjoy their international image, such as Opera Days on the island Saaremaa, Birgitta Festival, Tallinn Music Week, Jazz Festival, Tallinn Black Nights film festival. Estonian professional music culture has been most often highlighted as well as internationally well known ensembles, choirs and performers (e.g. Tallinn Chamber Choir, Estonian Symphony Orchestra), choir music and composers – Arvo Pärt (29), Veljo Tormis (15): *Works by Veljo Tormis preserve our history and tell us about it, which is just a collection of memories and knowledge to be remembered and known.* (M 2016) The Finnish students have mentioned Jean Sibelius or his compositions 12 times.

Considering the subcategory of national heritage Estonian students have often mentioned national costumes (there are about 40 of them representing different parish customs), island cultures and the Seto (an indigenous ethnic and linguistic minority) culture from the Estonian border region to Russia, especially their particular way of singing; Estonian farm buildings (e.g. cottage-cum thrashing barns), but also folk skills of using herbs for healing. The Finnish students highlight the customs followed on St John Day (Midsummer), folk tales and songs, dwarfs and fairies.

Literary landmarks as core classical texts have been considered cultural landmarks by both Finnish and Estonian students, starting with national epic "Kalevala" (Finnish) and "Kalevipoeg" (Estonian). Estonian students have highlighted most often the pentalogy "The Right and Justice" by Anton Hansen-Tammsaare, which is followed by a historical school story "Spring" by Oskar Luts. Finnish students consider most important their epic "Kalevala" with illustrations by Akseli Gallen-Gallela and the novel "Seven brothers" by Aleksis Kivi.

When talking about **education** as a cultural landmark, characterising a specific commonly recognised value, 28 of Estonian students mention Tartu University (from 1632) and Estonian Academy of Music and Theatre (from 1919), Estonian music education as a widely spread type of education among the population (12) and profession of a teacher (9), then the Finnish respondents have highlighted their excellent basic education and high results in the PISA study from 2000 onwards (9). It can be explained by the fact that Finnish educational experience has become a widely popular export article in the world.

There are numerous **cultural objects**/buildings/monuments considered as cultural landmarks mentioned by students of both countries. There are several architectural masterpieces mentioned by the Estonian students, such as the medieval Tallinn Old Town (28), Estonia theatre and concert hall (15), also KUMU (Estonian Art Museum), Toompea Castle. The Finnish students have mentioned Helsinki Dome Church and Ateneum art museum.

The subcategory of **technology** as a new/emerging field of culture describing changes in lifestyle also deserves attention. The Estonian students have mentioned e-state, development of ICT in general (20), Skype and start-up enterprises (4), the Finnish students have mentioned Nokia Corporation (2).

2. Nature

The Finnish students seem to have been especially influenced by their nature (48). They have highlighted their clean natural environments of different kind – lakes, Nordic lights, white nights, but also summer cottages somewhere near the water and the tranquillity people can enjoy when away from everyday hectic activities. Lapland, midnight sun, spending time in the woods and countryside is considered really Finnish way of life: *Winter in northern Finland, which you cannot escape, has formed the character of Finnish people* (M 2018) However, a sad fact has been mentioned: *our connection with our real roots has been broken – Lutheran religion has destroyed almost all the ancient beliefs and folk culture* (M 2016). Such a manifestation can be explained by increasing popularity of folk mythology and the lack of wider comprehension of the role of Lutheranism on education at large and music education in particular. The Estonian students have highlighted sea as a cultural landmark (38), they have also mentioned swamps, woods and sacred groves *carrying the wisdom of our predecessors* (M 2017).

3. Persons (people)

The greatest differences appeared when Estonian and Finnish students presented people, whose role in local cultures has been considered of greatest importance. The Finnish students have highlighted the essence of a Finnish character as something special (N = 33): *Finnish stubbornness and ambition belong together* (F 2016); *Finnish people communicate with people they really care about; they never enter a meaningless discussion, they never ask polite questions* (F 2016). *It is acceptable to keep silent, even in a company; it is especially common not to talk in public transport, in lifts, etc.* (F 2016). *When in sauna, people talk only, when necessary* (F 2016). *Finns often offer help to people, even when not asked, but they are usually shy to ask for help* (F 2018). *Finnish people still try to follow the old peasants' common sense approach – think simple and take your time for deciding* (F 2016). *Finns often compare*

themselves with other cultures and people and tend to accept their inferiority (F 2017). The essence of a Finnish character can be summarised with a phrase: *hard cover, soft core*. The Finnish students have also mentioned coffee, "Koskenkorva" spirits and liquorice.

The Estonian students have characterised themselves by cohesive social approach, diligence (19), atheism (6), and their habit to read books. There are no special features mentioned characterising an Estonian person. They say: *Estonians as people, or as a mixture of different ancestors, who at a particular time started to understand their belonging to a territory as a nation, is a cultural landmark as such* (F 2015). What is more, they highlight *being an Estonian as a membership to a secret society, which is guaranteed, if you have the skills of a secret language* used for communication in this organisation (F 2015). A strong manifestation about the national flag was also there: *Estonian tri-color symbolises a strong will and aspirations to be free and independent – these two ideals are the main aims of education* (F 2015).

Conclusion and recommendations

When interpreting the results, we observed that the cultural landmarks students had highlighted, were rather diverse. It can be concluded that the basis for specifying cultural landmarks by students of two countries is different: the Estonian students highlight them at the level of national culture and ethnicity whereas the Finnish students do it at the level of individuals and (natural) environments. "Finnish" means for Finnish students first of all living in Finland and be ethnically Finnish, whereas Estonian students understood their cultural landmarks as something uniting the people, preserving traditions and feel themselves as cultural agents of the national culture responsible for its sustainability. In addition, some fields of culture remained uncovered. There were practically no landmarks representing fine or applied arts, some architectural landmarks were probably mentioned due to public national events organised there and often televised. Understandably, the participating students, aspiring for becoming future music teachers, were more informed about music culture at large. However, the highlighted cultural landmarks clearly reflect the cultural information and observation skills, the students have taken along from their studies at upper secondary schools or gymnasia. They also demonstrated, what kind of knowledge, skills and values had become meaningful for them and how systematic or wide their cultural horizons were. These data deserve attention for future curriculum development both for teacher training, and for institutions of general education as well.

Practice has proved that all competences people develop, regardless of their age, are individual in character and consist of different components, obtained by

highly diverse personal experience, and always contain knowledge accompanied by some moral judgement. As development of these competences in the processes of learning cannot be precisely prescribed, or assessed, or measured in detail, so it is probably time to start thinking again more professionally about the content of learning and the knowledge it can provide for learning in different societies.

The message “Back to real learning!” manifested in 2016 at the annual conference of IGIP (International Society for Engineering Pedagogy) sounds adequate to present times, bringing back to the focus and foreground the content of learning, primarily different types of knowledge, according to which adequate methodologies and supportive learning environments can be designed and established, all together contributing to the desired aims for the 21st century education at all levels.

The data collected by this study show that students’, observation skills, perception of cultural landmarks as shared values and critical thinking skills are greatly diverse in both countries and reflect the environments they have acquired their comprehension of the world around them. It needs to be ascertained, what they have acquired at upper secondary schools already and what should be added at university level for teacher training. However, the results obtained allow to offer preliminary recommendations for developing teacher education at large by adding an integrated and systematised course(s) of culture, providing knowledge, skills and values for better comprehension of the social, political natural and cultural environments around us. This is badly needed, if we want future teachers to be trusted intellectuals capable of working at schools as good professionals.

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