

Content of vocational school student world views from the perspective of educators

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Abstract: The need for sustainability in society, as well as globalisation, impact of information technology, and changes in the economic structure raise an issue on objectives and tasks of vocational training. Socioeconomic transformations demand education, including vocational education, to be viewed as a process in which a person develops spiritually and in which life experience transforms into an individual paradigm – a world view. The goal of this article is to reveal opinions of teachers and experts working in the sphere of vocational education about world views of vocational school students and possibilities of world view formation in vocational education system. Interviews with teachers and experts were conducted after they were introduced to the philosophical and educational aspects of world view, as well as results of a study on the content of students' world views. The interviews were analysed using the Weft QDA content analysis software. Results reveal unrealised opportunities in construction of the core of world view, such as personal experience of values and self-evaluation in the family and at school. Vocational education experts emphasise the importance of teacher's personality, world view and self-evaluation, as well as interaction between teachers and students. Interviews with teachers reveal more sceptical opinions as they identify many disputable and unresolved issues related to organisation of personality formation process in vocational education.

Keywords: vocational education, world view, values, teacher competencies, family

Introduction

Education has an impact on every individual, and thus education paradigm influences individual paradigm which, on turn, determines the way an individual develops his/her relations with the world. This paradigm is world view, which is formed in individual's mind on the grounds of his/her perception and understanding of the world and which structures chaotic impressions (Idol, Jones, 1991). This paradigm develops from the system of ideas in realised practice. Concurrently, this paradigm is also socially constructed and dependent on historical reality (Popkewitz, 1984). Individual's world view as a paradigm considerably influences social life because it shapes individual's thinking, the way he/she deals with problems, the goals he/she sets and the values he/she has. If an individual paradigm – world view – is regarded as an integral element and objective of educational process that can enhance sustainability of society, facilitation of world view formation becomes an essential task and outcome of vocational education.

Growing popularity of vocational education demands paying greater attention to the process of world view formation within this particular type of education. If it is assumed that world view is an individual paradigm analogous to learning outcome, world view is formed during the vocational educational process by consolidating knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired by the young people during the study process into a single system of viewpoints. World view is based on personally significant values and determines individual's attitude towards reality and one's self, and thus influences his/her future life.

World view is a self-created system of concepts which reflects individual's moral experience manifested as attitude to the world and one's self as a system. Thus the fundamental attitude of an individual towards the world and life is formed (Dilthey, 1960). World view has to be viewed in close connection with human value system and individual's notion of an ideal world and people within this world (Celms, 1934; Mauriņa, 1938). World view focuses on tasks which are essential in human life, such as ability to interpret the goal of life, realise personal meaning of life (Heidegers, 1998), and

become aware of the attitude towards one's self, society and nature through reflection. World view envisages personal involvement that can be ensured only through internalisation during which an individual develops (constructs) his/her attitude towards phenomena encountered in nature, society or one's self (Augškalne, 2012). World view as an individual paradigm interacts with society and social paradigms in a complex manner. One way of interaction is realised through education which fills an individual paradigm with a definite content and thus assists in developing individual's attitude towards himself/herself and the world full of causalities, as well as influences individual's actions.

Although world view formation among vocational school graduates is influenced by the entire educational process, which should be viewed in a broader context, teachers who work in vocational education institutions and experts who determine and facilitate further development of vocational education have a particular role in this process. Therefore, this article analyses the opinions of vocational school teachers and experts in vocational education about the content of world view as a fundamental attitude of vocational students to life, as well as possibilities for world view formation in the process of vocational education.

Methodology

Qualitative research has a hermeneutic orientation, and it is based on interviews with vocational school teachers and experts in vocational education conducted in 2011 and 2012. Interviews were conducted after teachers and experts were introduced to the concept of philosophically educational world view (Augškalne, 2012) and the results of the study on the content of world view among vocational students (Augškalne, Garjāne, 2012). Respondents were given time to prepare for interviews. Interviews were conducted with six teachers working at municipal and district vocational schools, as well as three experts in vocational education. Analysis of partially structured interviews was conducted in the following two stages: substantive analysis and content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004) performed with open-source online software Weft QDA (Fenton, 2006). The broadly applicable software is devised for qualitative researches conducted in social sciences and humanities. The first stage of analysis allowed identifying the overall categories which were then incorporated in the matrix and used in coding of interviews (Table 1).

Table 1

Codes used for interviews with teachers

Group of categories	Category	Code
Teacher	Internalisation – teacher	Es
	Impact of the teacher	Skol.
Student	Internalisation – student	Vards
Values	Values in education	Vert.
	Social skills as value	Soc.
	Knowledge as value	Zina.
	Reflection as value	Refl.
Influences	Impact of the family	Gi.
	Impact of the curriculum	Sat.

For coding purposes, interviews with teachers were numbered. The coding allowed determining the following aspects:

- degree of internalisation among interviewees, namely, the extent to what the teacher internalises questions contained in the interview;
- degree of internalisation among students, namely, whether teachers call individual students or groups of students by name;

- significance of values in education and general attitude of students towards values;
- whether teachers regard social skills as one of the values to be taught to students;
- whether teachers are able to characterise attitude of students towards knowledge as value;
- whether reflection is characteristic to teachers, and whether it is observed among students as well;
- whether teachers believe that they can facilitate world view formation among students;
- impact of the family in world view formation;
- impact of the curriculum on world view formation.

Experts in vocational education were chosen in order to ensure representation of vocational education institutions located in Riga and other districts, as well as the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia or its agencies. The matrix of categories was devised (Table 2) on the grounds of substantive textual analysis (Augškalne, 2012) and enabled finding answers to the following questions:

- What is the role of the educational institution in formation of students' world views?
- What is the role of the teacher in formation of students' world views?
- Is the teacher involved in formation of students' world views?
- Does the curriculum influence formation of students' world views?
- What is the role of the family and society (outside the school) in formation of students' world views?

Table 2

Codes used for interviews with experts

Group of categories	Category	Code
Teacher	Role of the teacher	Skolot.
	Reasons for teachers' involvement	Iesaist.
Influences	Role of the educational institution	Skola
	Role of the curriculum	Saturs
	Role of the family and society	Gi/sab

Results and discussion

Content analysis of interviews with teachers allowed determining the incidence of codes in coded interviews (Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 3

Incidence of codes in interviews with teachers

Code Interview	Es	Vards	Vert.	Soc.	Zina.	Refl.	Skol.	Gi	Sat
No.1	9	0	13	2	4	2	4	8	7
No.2	11	0	8	4	6	3	5	6	6
No.3	8	4	6	0	6	2	8	8	7
No.4	16	3	6	12	4	12	14	10	12
No.5	13	0	7	3	5	5	10	9	8
No.6	9	1	6	2	4	3	3	5	6
TOTAL	66	8	46	23	29	27	44	46	46

Content analysis of interviews with teachers (Table 3) reveals that all respondents feel involved in the interview and believe that the interview is truly aimed at determining their opinions. Interviews do not contain sections indicative of an alienated attitude towards the interview or attempts to avoid responding to questions or pondering on questions posed. During the interview, only three respondents (No.3, No.4 and No.6) refer to particular students or groups of students by name; it which means that degrees of internalisation of teachers towards themselves and students differ significantly. This could indicate that teachers still perceive students as objects rather than personalities and full-fledged partners in the educational process.

- “Because with it (subject taught by the respondent) I am trying to teach children to think logically and to make decisions in extraordinary situations.” (No.4)
- “They do not want to take on responsibility; the group I am responsible for is not willing to take on responsibility. They are objecting to that, but I am forcing them to take it.” (No.1)
- “So I believe that it depends on a teacher as well. For example, some teachers say to students that there is no need to study because they know nothing and they will remain stupid.” (No.4)

The number of codes (from 6 to 13) referring to values as an integral part of education process and general attitude of students towards values (Table 3) registered in each interview attests to significance of this issue for teachers.

- “In reality, when they leave the school they see the real life; and those who start working in their 3rd or 4th year can see in practice and the real life that knowledge, the learning process and other values are needed.” (No.4)
- “The group consists of 25 students and it can have even 25 different opinions about values. Often the negative attitude to values prevails because it is voiced louder. And students with greater aesthetic and ethical values are quieter. The good and the bad are two different attitudes, and increasingly often people believe that that it is better not to talk about the good.” (No.1)

Concurrently, differences in the number of codes (twofold) and the content of the coded sections indicate that interviews with teachers do not provide comprehensive information on the development of internalised values among students during vocational education.

- “I am asking them about values; I am not asking what is relevant to each of them individually. No response. Then I am asking what is essential for them personally? And then I am trying to differentiate... They do not understand the concept of value as such; to them value is something that can be bought for money.” (Nr 4)
- “Children understand what they can and what they must not do; they have some kind of understanding of values. But... they do not know how to apply this understanding, and they do not understand why something is bad or good.” (No. 1)

Social skills, as well as the ability and desire of students to take on responsibility, solve conflicts or sympathise with others are rarely mentioned in the interviews with teachers (Table 3). The interview No. 4 refers to these qualities, and the relevant codes were registered in 12 coded sections; while interview No. 3 does not contain these codes at all. Similar attitude (from 4 to 6 codes) can be observed in responses related with knowledge as value.

- “Undoubtedly, knowledge is a value. Nowadays, it is even the greatest value of all. There are many students studying in higher education institutions because without any education they will not be able to work. So education is essential.”
- “In principle, children, including the little ones and our students, know that knowledge is needed.”
- “In general, knowledge is needed; it is needed as a tool to climb the career ladder. I think that from this perspective knowledge is value.”

Significant difference can be observed in the attitude of teachers towards self-reflection and facilitation of self-reflection among students during the educational process (from 2 to 12 codes). Only one respondent indicated (in different ways and with different terms) that reflection is significant.

- “Now they begin thinking about each other” (No. 4)
- “Now I have to think about it.” (No. 4)

- “The way I facilitate expression of their opinions it is essential in the educational process.” (No. 4)

Probably this reveals general attitude of teachers towards values as a core of world view; it might also mean that formation of values in the process of vocational education is rather superficial and it is not among the main objectives of education despite being regarded as significant.

Codes which indicate that teachers have impact on formation of students' world views were registered in 44 coded sections; it means that, in general, teachers regard this task as significant enough (Table 3). Concurrently, the great difference in the incidence of codes registered among interviews (14 and 10 codes in interviews No. 4 and No. 5, respectively; and only 3 and 4 codes in interviews No. 6 and No. 1, respectively) reveals the significant divergence in teachers' opinions. That can also be concluded from the content of the coded sections.

- “It depends only on the teacher.” (No. 4)
- “Advisory class – it depends on whether the teacher explains something or not. But in general, we have a different approach to advisory classes...” (No. 4)
- “If the teacher explains all these issues to students, students change.” (No. 5)
- “... so I think that it depends on the teacher.” (No. 5)
- “If the class master or any other teacher is a role model to the student, the student is listening to him/her and is doing what he/she says, but otherwise...” (No. 6)
- “Unfortunately, there are teachers who belittle the existing values. That is sad...” (No. 1)
- “We could wish for a better competence of teachers in application of diverse methods. They should attract students to learning, because it is not appropriate to say that one only has to study and write everything down from books without any possibility to ask additional questions.” (No. 4)
- “None of our teachers pays particular attention to that.” (No. 3)

Some of the facts referred to in the interviews are alarming for educational sector, namely, content of advisory classes is said to depend only on pedagogical values (or anti-values) of the teacher and the attitude of teachers is superficial because they consider advisory classes as irrelevant.

From teachers' perspective, the family has a significant role in forming students' world views (Table 3). The total number of codes (46) emphasising the role of the family is greater than that indicating the role of the teacher (44). Also individual interviews (except interviews No.4 and No.5) more frequently refer to the role of the family than the role of the teacher, namely, phrases indicative of the role of the family prevail in the coded sections.

- “I think, yes; of course, it depends on the family.” (No.4)
- “It does not stem from families either because the parents are busy; sometimes grannies explain something.” (No.4)
- “From the very small age the child knows and feels what he/she may and may not do; the family is already the second phase. However, the family cannot provide a theoretical background for reasons why the good or the bad is happening.” (No.4)
- “I wouldn't say that it stems from the family. I guess it is the result of the efforts taken over the period of one and a half years. Only now they begin thinking about each other.” (No.3)
- “Families differ – there are the ones which teach children, and then there are the ones in which children are left to develop on their own. In the latter case, that can be taught at school, provided that it is possible.” (No.3)
- “It is not discussed within the family to the necessary extent; children learn something completely different on the streets.” (No.3)
- “There should be some foundation which, probably, should be laid by the family.” (No.5)
- “As far as I know, all family members are so busy and so tired now that they are not talking, still less discussing anything.” (No.1)
- “In our discussions students say: “What else can I say? That's what I hear at home!” It is hard to form their world views when they are calling each other names or even fighting. Students already are introverted.” (No.1)

- “If there is no communication within family, a child cannot learn to communicate with his/her peers. I already said – there is an overall alienation.” (No.1)

Similar conclusions can be drawn from teachers' responses to the questions regarding the role of the curriculum. The total number of codes (46) referring to role of the curriculum is equal to the number of codes referring to the role of the family (46) and slightly larger than the number of codes referring to the role of the teacher (44). In three out of six interviews (No.1, No.2 and No.6) the number of codes in this category is larger than the number of codes referring to the role of the teacher; on one occasion (interview No.6) the number of codes is even twice as large. Probably, it is indicative of teachers' reluctance to take on responsibility.

Table 4

Incidence of codes in interviews with experts

Code Interview	Skola	Skolot.	Iesaist.	Saturs	Gi/sab
No.1 E	23	24	4	2	13
No.2 E	21	20	0	4	14
No.3 E	28	25	3	0	9
TOTAL	72	69	7	6	36

Incidence of codes referring to the role of schools and the role of teachers in facilitation of world view formation among students in process of the vocational education (72 and 69, respectively) is nearly equal in all interviews with experts in vocational education (Table 4). The unanimity of experts is also noteworthy, namely, there is insignificant difference in the number of codes (21 – 28) in responses to questions regarding the role of the educational institution and in the number of codes (20 – 25) in responses to questions regarding the role of the teacher. Concurrently, the small number of codes referring to teachers' involvement in formation of students' world views (a total of 7 codes) indicates that teachers' involvement in this process is sporadic.

Experts think that probably teachers are not motivated or competent enough (Augškalne, 2012) to assist students in formation of their world views. In responses to the questions regarding the role of the curriculum the number of codes is small – a total of 6 codes (Table 4). Experts believe that the curriculum is not the determinant in formation of students' world views. The number of these codes is 11.5 times smaller than the number of codes referring to the teacher's role which means that experts believe that the teacher is significantly more relevant in the process of world view formation among students than the curriculum.

- “The curriculum is not irrelevant; however, it is not the most essential. If we put all elements in a triangle then two angles are the teacher and the student, while the third angle is the family or the people who support the young person. The triangle is the core, and the curriculum is merely an additional element.” (No.E3)
- “If the teacher is not emphasising that he/she is more superior and knowledgeable, if the teacher proves that he/she is able to walk in the student's shoes and to tackle the problem jointly with the student, and if the teacher feels responsible before the student, then the student begins feeling responsible for being equal.”(No.E3)
- “The teacher has to be professional in order to form world views in the class he/she teaches; unfortunately, a regular teacher is not capable of that. Another aspect, of course, is the student's eagerness and motivation to learn. Undoubtedly, it also depends on the student's character, ability and things that have been taught to him/her in childhood.” (No.E1)
- “Teacher's hands are tied in a way, and these ties are financial. In order to from world view, the child or the student has to be taken and educated outside the school, because, in my opinion, many young people, particularly those in rural areas, simply have no possibility to get outside their environment.” (No. E1)

- “Another aspect is the environment at school. Whether the school is supportive, interesting and attractive to the student; whether there are any discussions held with teachers; whether there is student self-government, or any extracurricular activities and traditions?” (No.E2)

The number of codes that refer to the role of society and the family in formation of students' world views is comparatively large (a total of 36 codes); it means that experts consider students' extracurricular activities as significant in this process. However, comparison of this indicator with the number of codes referring to the role of the educational institution and the teacher (72 and 69, respectively) allows concluding that experts attach greater significance to the role of the school in the formation of an individual paradigm – world view – of the student.

Conclusions

- World view as an individual paradigm is formed during the vocational educational process by consolidation of knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired by the young people during the study process into a single system of viewpoints based on personally significant values.
- Vocational school teachers regard the formation of world view as significant and even essential; however, they underestimate the role of interaction among the teacher, the student and the family.
- Vocational school teachers and experts believe that development of personal attitudes is significant; however, they do not highlight the relevance of either advisory elements in the classes or special advisory classes in formation of students' world views.
- Experts in vocational education think that although teachers have a significant role in formation of students' world views they are not motivated or competent enough to facilitate formation of students' world views.

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