Moral Values of Generation Z Students in General Education Schools of Lithuania and Latvia

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Abstract. In the beginning of the 21st century there has been an increased interest in the generation theory created by W. Strauss and N. Howe, which has served as an impetus for new research on contemporary children and learners. Teachers have also understood that usual methods cannot be used teaching today's children and that they have to look for new ones. The answers to the most urgent problems of concern to teachers have been found in the generation theory by the abovementioned authors. The bigger interest in the analysed problem in Lithuania is evidenced by the extent and volume of research. The research on the issue in question has been scarce in Latvia, therefore the authors of the article have come up with the idea to carry out a pilot study in that country. The main goal of the study was to identify the moral values characteristic of generation Z learners in Lithuania and Latvia. The research on moral values in Lithuania was conducted in the period from 2014 to 2015 and the situation was investigated in Latvia in 2016. The sample of the research in Lithuania embraced 374 students and 39 teachers, whereas that in Latvia equalled 114 school learners. The interviews with social pedagogues, a special education teacher and a psychologist were also carried out. The data acquired during the research revealed the moral values, which are considered to be significant and the extent to which school students are able to justify the significance of the indicated values.

Key words: general education school, generation Z, manifestations of values, moral values.

Introduction

Intensive scientific and technological development, the accelerating growth of economic and social welfare do not address the essential problems of human existence and fail to satisfy spiritual needs. Therefore, lately the discussions regarding the spiritual crisis of contemporary society and ways of coping with it educating the new generation Z have become more comprehensive. The young people, who were born after 1995, are ascribed to the cohort of the generation Z. This generation is associated with the emergence of the Internet and is frequently referred to as Digital Generation or Children of Virtual Environment (McCrindle, Wolfinger, 2010; Pečiuliauskienė, Valantinaitė, 2013; Targamadzė, 2014).

The Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania (Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo įstatymas, 2011) provides for the necessity "to develop a person's values enabling him to become an honest, knowledge-seeking, independent, responsible and patriotically-minded human being ". The General Educational Curricular (Pradinio ir pagrindinio..., 2008) outline that "the purpose of moral education is to enable learners to build up foundations of moral culture revealing the common human values, developing learners' ability to make responsible and clever decisions and to act correspondingly, to mature moral consciousness". "Upbringing (moral education) in Lithuania has not received sufficient attention. In classical Lithuanian pedagogy the upbringing is considered to be the main function of education but after the restoration of independence the tendency to follow the pragmatic approach in education was observed, when upbringing is replaced by various teaching and learning technologies, which frequently have nothing to do with fundamental values" (Aramavičiūtė, 2005).

At present strengthening integration of public processes leads to a decrease in the division among separate sciences and life areas and to an increasing number of interdisciplinary interactions and interests. This concerns cultural anthropology, cognitive psychology, cultural science and culture management. On the other hand, the interaction between an individual and his/her environment, employing knowledge and experience accumulated by various sciences such as philosophy, psychology, anthropology, neuro-medicine and others has been addressed in a more comprehensive way. The interest in the mutual dependence of the individual's morality and his/her cultural environment has been gradually growing (Bitinas, 2000; Dewey, 2013; Jackūnas, 2004; Johnson, 2007, Katalynas, 2009). Such interaction is most precisely expressed by the concept of *moral culture*. The essence of moral culture may be characterised as the unity of moral consciousness and a behavioural mode preconditioned by it,

when corresponding behaviour based on internalisation of moral norms characteristic of a certain culture ensures acceptable personal expression in the same cultural environment.

Undoubtedly, changing public value-based attitudes result in changes to personal culture and its understanding. Growing significance of moral relativism ideas in the society promote a diverse attitude towards the role of morality in human life and the place of moral values in the hierarchical structure. Contemporary research studies on morality evidence a shift from a duty morality to an aspirational morality based on utilitarian values and identity. The data of psychological and pedagogical research show that school learners' relations with spiritual culture have also become problematic. This particularly applies to adolescents. Therefore, it is particularly relevant to analyse school learners' moral culture and possibilities for its education (Girdzijauskas, 2012).

The analysed problem. Lithuania and Latvia are living under a volatile period, which is complicated in terms of not only politics but also economy. The changes that have penetrated into various aspects of public life, have also had a strong impact on the moral culture of society. The society has adopted an idea of radical change of everything without any thinking or consideration. The children have fallen victims to such a situation as they have been derived of moral culture milestones.
The aim of the paper is to evaluate the peculiarities of moral values of the generation Z learners.

Methodology

The research was conducted in Lithuanian general education schools in the school year of 2014-2015. On the basis of the conducted scientific literature analysis, two questionnaire forms were drawn up for 6th-8th formers and their teachers. Seeking to investigate the moral culture from the meaningful-evaluative aspect, the description of moral values was applied, which consisted of ten moral values: respect, sensitivity, altruism, responsibility, devotion, love for another person, tolerance, honesty, justice and self-control. Seeking to compare how school learners are able to envisage the importance of moral values compared to other values, the respondents were also asked to rank other common human values, which are not directly linked to morality but are very close to them: determination, humour, rationality, independence and creativity. The chosen degree of acknowledging significance of values, which revealed the importance of one or another value to a learner, was chosen as a criterion of assessment. During the research the school learners were asked to rank values, i.e. to number them according to the importance ascribed to values.

Seeking to better perceive the importance of moral values to the respondents, the manifestations that express the content of the aforementioned values were presented to the respondents for evaluation. The school students evaluated the significance of manifestations employing a five-point scale (very important, important, don't know, somehow important, unimportant) and creating a picture of a cultured and attractive to him individual. In this way the degree of acknowledgement of most significant values was highlighted. The acknowledgement of value significance has impact on their practical implementation. The viability of moral culture manifests itself in conscious application of values making decisions to behave in accordance with the abovementioned values (Kantas, 1987; Šalkauskis, 1990). It is also important to identify the extent to which the learners understand the importance of moral values to themselves and others, i.e. to what degree they are able to justify them. Therefore, attempts were made not only to identify the moral values that are of significance to school learners but also how deep they are able to justify their significance. The respondents were asked to explain why the highest and lowest values are important to them.

The interview method, as the most important method of qualitative research data, was applied conducting the research. The formal (standard) interview was chosen as an additional method for processing the obtained information. During the interview the formulation of questions was foreseen in advance as well as their order, number, encoding and form of recording. The interview questionnaire form consisted of 4 open-ended questions to reveal behaviour evaluation and moral decisions.

The sample of the pilot study in Latvia included 114 school learners from 6th to 7th forms (6th formers: 68 (60 %) respondents; 7th formers: 46 (40 %) respondents), who all study in schools of general education and are assigned to Z generation according to their age. To obtain information the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) offered by S.H. Schwartz (Schwartz, 2002) was employed, since it provides the tendency of choosing common values including moral ones as well. The questionnaire form

included 40 statements, which the respondents were requested to evaluate in the following way (6 – very much like me; 5 – like me; 4 – somewhat like me; 3 – a little like me; 2 - not like me; 1 – not like me at all). This allowed to identify the degree of their adoption of values (conformity, tradition, benevolence, universalism, self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power and security).

Participants. The total sample of the research included 374 school learners (54 % of girls and 46 % of boys) of Z generation (6th to 8th formers). The biggest number of respondents were 8th formers, the number of 6th to 7th formers was the same and made up 31 % of the total sample.

The teachers working with the school learners in the research were also surveyed: 39 teachers (68 % of women and 32 % of men). The majority of teachers (64.1 %) had the professional qualification of senior teacher, 20.5 % of the respondents had the qualification category of teacher and 15.4 % of them were teachers-supervisors. The accumulated experience of the respondents in teaching was extensive. The experience of 51.3 % of teachers was 10 years and more; 25.6 % of the respondents worked as teachers from 7 to 10 years; 15.4 % of teachers had experience from 3 to 6 years and only 7.7 % of the respondents were young specialists. The interviews with social pedagogues, a special education teacher and a psychologist were also carried out.

Results and discussion

The analysis of common and moral values of 6th -8th formers in Lithuania. The evaluative aspect of meaningful – evaluative competent manifests itself in behaviour evaluation as a significant condition of moral decisions. Evaluation is very important making decisions how to behave in one or another situation (Heckhausen, 2003). Moral evaluation is conducted on the basis of moral values. Therefore, seeking to clarify the extent to which evaluations of 6th -7th formers' behaviour are grounded on moral values, the criterion of the validity was applied in the analysis of evaluations. Moreover, school learners' ability to evaluate own behaviour in various life situations considering their context, also reveal the results of evaluation of contextuality. On the other hand, it is important to remember that an evaluation action is a subjective, sensual and efficient experience, which is evoked by the individual's relations with other people and public events (Girdzijauskas, 2012).
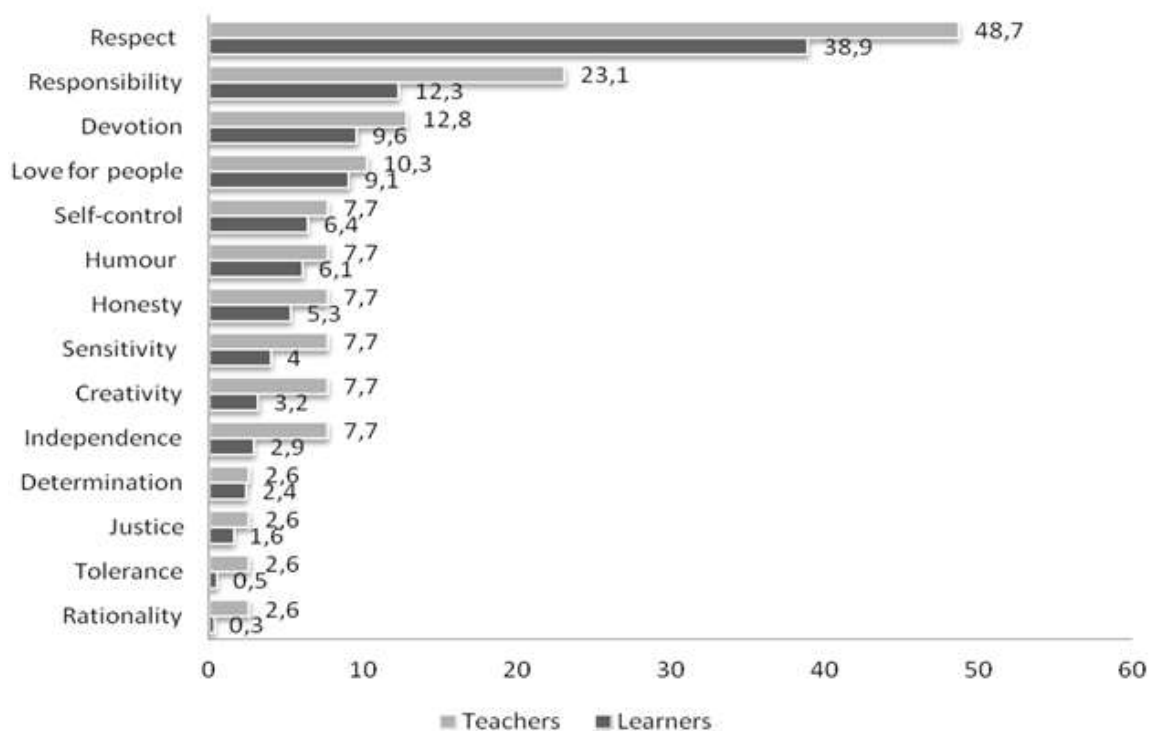

Figure 1. The most significant values chosen by learners and teachers (%).

The research results revealed that as much as 38.8 % of the respondents ranked respect as the most important value. Devotion was most important to 12.3 % of learners, responsibility was seen as most significant by 9.6 % of the respondents. Love for other people was ranked highest by 9.1 % and self-

control – by 6.4 % of the respondents. About 6.1 % of the learners chose humour as the most significant value. Honesty was evaluated highest by 5.3 % of the learners, sensitivity – by 4 %, creativity – by 3.2 %, independence – by 2.9 % of the respondents. The least appreciated values included determination and altruism (2.4 %), justice (1.6 %), tolerance (0.5 %) and only 0.3 % of the children chose rationality as the most significant value (Figure 1).

As much as 48.7 % of the teachers also ranked the value of respect highest. Comparing the results of our research with those obtained by A. Girdzijauskas (2012), the acknowledgement of respect as highly significant moral value, was also confirmed. Responsibility was most significant to 23.1 % of the respondents, honesty – to 12.8 % of the respondents, love for other people – to 10.3 % of the teachers. More than 7 % (7.7 %) of the teachers in the research acknowledged humour, creativity, justice as the most important values to their learners, whereas sensitivity, determination and tolerance received the same evaluation from 2.6 % of the teachers. They did not consider self-control, devotion and rationality as most significant values to their learners.

The manifestations of moral values presented in Figure 2 show the highest evaluation of respect. The majority of the learners assigned highest value to both manifestations of this value: hearing of another person (very important and important - 89.6 %) and acknowledgement of the value of other people (very important and important - 73.8 %). The manifestations of responsibility were considered very important as well: responsible performance of assumed duties – 77.6 % and preparedness to account for own actions – 71.9 %. The results of the research employing both methods coincided regarding very high relevance assigned to respect and responsibility. They may be regarded as extremely important to the respondents. High significance was assigned to the following manifestations: speaking the truth (38.2 %) as a manifestation of honesty; love of people and life (35 %) as a manifestation of love for other people and suppression of anger, spontaneous feelings and desires (34 %). The following manifestations of values were seen as important: sympathy for experiences of surrounding people (37.7 %) as a manifestation of sensitivity; inclination to do good for others and to help them (41.7 %) and readiness to make sacrifice for others (34.2 %) as manifestations of altruism; responsible performance of assumed duties (42 %) and readiness to account for own actions (36.9 %) as manifestations of responsibility; reliability and fulfilment of obligations (36.1 %) as a manifestation of devotion; coordination of own interests with those of others (37.2 %) and respect for different life (31.6 %) as manifestations of tolerance; behaviour in accordance with norms of consciousness (34.5 %) as a manifestation of honesty; just behaviour with everybody (35.8 %) and objective evaluation of others and environment (34.8 %) as manifestations of justice; behaviour in accordance with own principles and beliefs (32.4 %) as a manifestation of self-control.
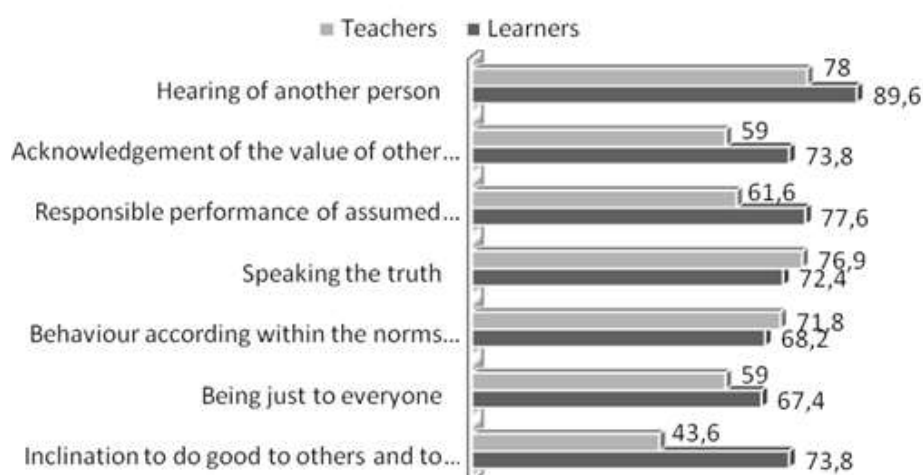

Figure 2. The attitude of school learners towards manifestations of moral values (%)

The data presented in Figure 3 revealed 6th -8th formers' perception of moral values that, according to the teachers, the learners perceive the following values well: creativity – 69.2 %, sensitivity – 61.5 %, devotion – 59 %, tolerance – 51.3 %, determination – 48.7 %, respect – 48 %, rationality – 46.2 %, independence – 46.2 %, responsibility – 43.6 %, honesty – 41 %, justice – 41 % and self-control – 41 %.

The teachers think that their students' understanding of altruism (51.3 %), love for other people (41 %) and humour (51.3 %) is inadequate (Figure 3).
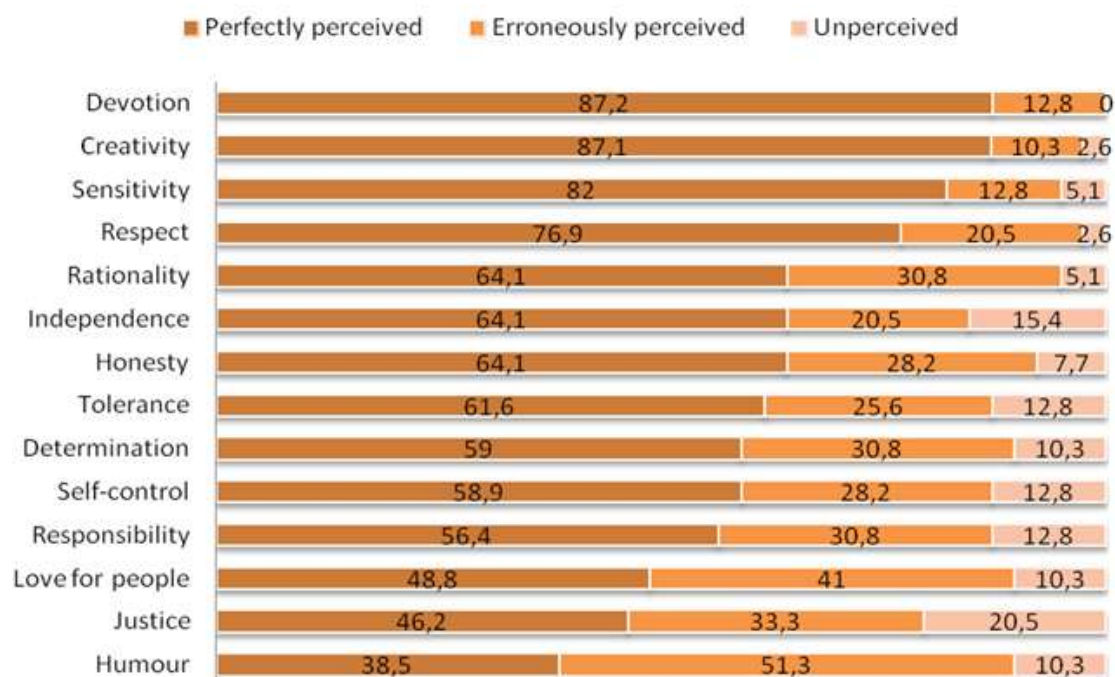

Figure 3. The opinion of teachers about school learners' perception of moral values (%).

The school students were requested to explain why the highest and lowest ranked values were significant to them. If the learners emphasised the extent to which values predetermine own spiritual well-being or that of others and contribute to becoming of a more mature personality, their justification of the significance of the value was regarded as very deep; if the students considered only personal well-being, which facilitate better self-understanding and self-expression, their understanding was ascribed to deep; if focus is laid only on personal well-being, understanding is said to be superficial; the perception was not deep if only significance or insignificance of the value was indicated and the reasons for their importance was not elaborated on. If a student did not provide any explanation of the importance or interpretation was erroneous, the importance was unperceived. The generalised data is presented in Figure 4.
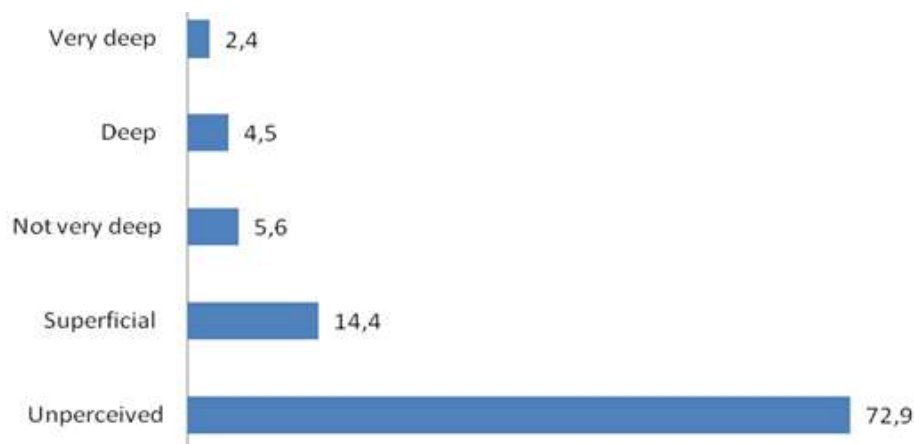

Figure 4. School learners' understanding of significance of moral values (%).

Regrettably, the majority of school learners (73.99 %) did not answer the presented question, and therefore their understanding was evaluated as unperceived. Being unable to identify the significance of the value, it is complicated to evaluate behaviour because significance assigned to values as well as evaluation of behaviour and environment are closely interrelated. Evaluation of behaviour in various situations is based on moral values. The perception of significance of a moral value is very deep or deep among 6.9 % of the learners, 6 % of the school students understand importance of values superficially whereas perception of 14 % students is not deep.

The analysis of common and moral values of 6th -7th formers in Latvia. The outlook of every individual is made up of values. In psychology values are regarded as traits, motifs, attitudes, life goals, causal attributions, beliefs, expectations, intentions, behavioural patterns, concentration of interests and desires and others (Гарванова, Гарванов, 2014). There exist several approaches to understanding of values and their classification (Hofstede, Inglehart, Rokeach). It is necessary to single out values of society and social groups as well as individual ones (Potts, 2015; Schwartz, 2002; Карандашев, 2004). Currently one of the most acknowledged theories in the studies of values is the one introduced by the Israeli psychologist S.H. Schwartz, who expanded and modified the method of M. Rokeach. According to S.H. Schwartz (2012), values are beliefs, infused with feelings; desirable goals that motivate action; transcendentality is characteristic of them; standards that influence life choices and evaluation of what is happening in life. On the basis of the previous scientific studies and the research conducted by himself, he singled out ten basic motivational types (Potts, 2015; Schwartz, 2012): ***conformity*** (obedient, self-discipline, politeness, honouring parents and elders); ***tradition*** (respect for tradition, humble, devout, accepting my portion in life); ***benevolence*** (helpful, honest, forgiving, responsible, true friendship, mature love); ***universalism*** (understanding, appreciation, tolerance, protection for the welfare of *all* people and for nature (broadminded, social justice, equality, world at peace, world of beauty, unity with nature, wisdom, protecting the environment); ***self-direction*** (creativity, freedom, choosing own goals, curious, independent); ***stimulation*** (a varied life, an exciting life, daring); ***hedonism*** (pleasure, enjoying life, self-indulgent); ***achievement*** (ambitious, successful, capable, influential); ***power*** (social status and prestige, control or dominance over people and resources (authority, wealth, social power, social recognition, preserving my public image); ***security*** (safety, harmony, stability of society, of relationships, of self (social order, family security, national security, clean, reciprocation of favours, healthy, sense of belonging).

The author presented the theoretical model, which presents relationship of ten basic values and certain motivational goals in a circular arrangement (Figure 5). The values are organised as two bipolar measuring axes: ***openness to change*** (self-direction, stimulation*)* – ***conservation*** (conformity, tradition, security); ***self-enhancement*** (achievement, power) - ***self-transcendence*** (universalism, benevolence); ***hedonism*** includes ***openness to change*** and ***self-enhancement.***
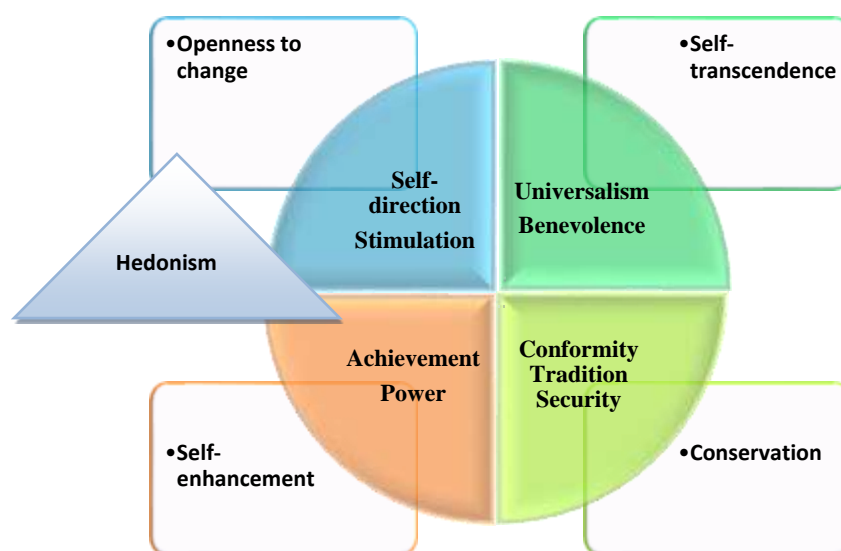

Figure 5. Ten motivational types of values (Baltušīte, according Schwartz, 2002).

From the perspective of S.H. Schwartz, the values of an individual exist at two levels: *the level of normative ideals* and *the level of individual priorities.* The first level reflects the individual understanding of how one has to behave, which determines the principles of his/her conduct in life. The second level depends on external environment and correlates with specific actions of an individual (Карандашев, 2004).

The Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ 40) was applied in the research (Schwartz, 2002). V. Karandashev (Карандашев, 2004) states that the methodology of Sh. Schwartz can be used only for individuals of 14 years and older because at this age the values start to build up. However, the procedure

itself may look complicated. The personality profile can be used at the age of 13, when adolescents are asked to evaluate themselves on the basis of specific statements.

In the beginning of the 21st century there has been an increased interest in the generation theory created by W. Strauss and N. Howe, which has served as an impetus for new research on contemporary children and learners. Teachers also understand that usual methods cannot be used teaching today's children and that they have to look for new ones. The answers to the most urgent problems of concern to teachers have been found in the generation theory by the abovementioned authors. The subject of the research included 6th to 7th formers ascribed to Z generation in terms of their age. Presenting the results of their research, the authors claim that Z generation still contains secrets in terms of values as the latter are most actively formed from 11-12 years to 14 years (McCrindle, Wolfinger, 2010).   The emphasis is also laid on what the generation will be like in the moral context. Processing the results of the responses to statements, the basic values and their average values were identified. The results obtained during the research are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

The values of 6th -7th forms (average meaning and ranges)

	Form 6	Range	Form 7	Range
Conformity	3.7	7.5	3.7	9
Tradition	3.3	9	3.9	8
Benevolence	4.6	3.5	4.2	6.5
Universalism	4.2	5.5	4.6	1.5
Self-direction	4.6	3.5	4.5	4
Stimulation	4.7	2	4.6	1.5
Hedonism	5.0	1	4.5	4
Achievement	4.2	5.5	4.5	4
Power	2.8	10	3.4	10
Security	3.7	7.5	4.2	6.5

To identify if the differences in realisation of values among 6th -7th formers exist, the Mann-Whitney U criterion (U = 49) (U$_{cr}$: p≤0.01(19), p≤0.05 (27)) was calculated, which revealed the absence of significant differences in the choice of values among 6th -7th formers (Mann-Whitney U Test Calculator, 2016).

However, the qualitative analysis of values allowed to notice differences in the rankings of separate values. The 6th formers ranked the value of hedonism (5.0) highest, while stimulation (4.7) was given the second ranking. The two most significant values among 7th formers were universalism (4.6) and stimulation (4.6). The difference was also identified in the range of averages in 6th forms (5.0 – 2.8 =2.2) and in the 7th forms (4.6 – 3.4=1.2). This is related to development of self-awareness and self-knowledge, which move to the next new level starting with the age of 14 (Žandrs, 2009). The lowest ranks in both groups were identified in conformity (3.7), tradition (6th form – 3.3; 7th form – 3.9) and power (6th form – 2.8; 7th form - 3.4). The results of the research revealed that the responses "not like me" and "not like me at all" were provided by 28 % of the 7th formers and by 11 % of the learners in the 6th forms.

On the basis of the prevailing responses to the statements of the questionnaire (6 – very much like me; 5 – like me; 4 – somewhat like me), the portrait of Z generation was devised and the trends in the dominating values were identified. The value is said to be present if its indicator exceeds 50 % (Table 2).

Table 2

The portrait of Z generation (%) (Schwartz, 2002; Карандашев, 2004)

Statements	Form 6	Form 7
BENEVOLENCE		
It's very important to him to help the people around him. He wants to care for other people.	82	67
It is important to him to be loyal to his friends. He wants to devote himself to people close to him.	89	72
It is important to him to respond to the needs of others. He tries to support those he knows.	85.7	83
Forgiving people who might have wronged him is important to him. He tries to see what is good in them and not to hold a grudge.	82	78
UNIVERSALISM		
He thinks it is important that every person in the world be treated equally. He wants justice for everybody, even for people he doesn't know.	71	83
It is important to him to listen to people who are different from him. Even when he disagrees with them, he still wants to understand them.	68	89
He strongly believes that people should care for nature. Looking after the environment is important to him.	75	94
He believes all the worlds' people should live in harmony. Promoting peace among all groups in the world is important to him.	57	83
He wants everyone to be treated justly, even people he doesn't know. It is important to him to protect the weak in society.	82	83
It is important to him to adapt to nature and to fit into it. He believes that people should not change nature.	75	78
SELF-DIRECTION		
Thinking up new ideas and being creative is important to him. He likes to do things in his own original way.	78.5	94
It is important to him to make his own decisions about what he does. He likes to be free to plan and to choose his activities for himself.	85.7	67
He thinks it's important to be interested in things. He likes to be curious and to try to understand all sorts of things.	82	83
It is important to him to be independent. He likes to rely on himself.	78.5	78
STIMULATION		
He thinks it is important to do lots of different things in life. He always looks for new things to try.	75	83
He likes to take risks. He is always looking for adventures.	82	67
He likes surprises. It is important to him to have an exciting life.	89	78
HEDONISM		
He seeks every chance he can to have fun. It is important to him to do things that give him pleasure.	89	83
Enjoying life's pleasures is important to him. He likes to 'spoil' himself.	89	72
He really wants to enjoy life. Having a good time is very important to him.	100	83
ACHIEVEMENT		
It's very important to him to show his abilities. He wants people to admire what he does.	64	78
Being very successful is important to him. He likes to impress other people	57	60
He thinks it is important to be ambitious. He wants to show how capable he is.	78.5	83
Getting ahead in life is important to him. He strives to do better than others.	82	78
POWER		
It is important to him to be rich. He wants to have a lot of money and expensive things.	24	44
It is important to him to be in charge and tell others what to do. He wants people to do what he says.	18	44
He always wants to be the one who makes the decisions. He likes to be the leader.	57	61

Statements	Form 6	Form 7
SECURITY		
It is important to him to live in secure surroundings. He avoids anything that might endanger his safety.	39	67
It is very important to him that his country be safe from threats from within and without. He is concerned that social order be protected.	61	61
It is important to him that things be organized and clean. He doesn't want things to be a mess.	39	44
He tries hard to avoid getting sick. Staying healthy is very important to him.	75	89
Having a stable government is important to him. He is concerned that the social order be protected.	43	78
CONFORMITY		
He believes that people should do what they're told. He thinks people should follow rules at all times, even when no-one is watching.	32	50
It is important to him always to behave properly. He wants to avoid doing anything people would say is wrong.	50	67
It is important to him to be obedient. He believes he should always show respect to his parents and to older people.	92.8	67
It is important to him to be polite to other people all the time. He tries never to disturb or irritate others.	71	72

On the basis of the qualitative analysis of the responses to the statement in the questionnaire form it can be concluded that respect of other people, equal treatment of other people, belief in equal opportunities for all and hearing of different opinions from other people are important to 6th -7th formers. They also assign high significance to care for nature, loyalty to friends, harmony in the world, sensitivity in relation to other people and protection of the weak. The young people also acknowledge that it is necessary to envisage the good in other people and learn to forgive.

Conclusions

The research on the level of moral values acknowledgement revealed that respect is seen as the most significant value for the learners of the Z generation in Lithuania and the responses of the teachers also confirmed it. The choice of the school students is confirmed by evaluation of manifestations of moral values. The school students chose manifestations of respect as the most significant ones: hearing of another person and acknowledgement of the value of other people. This discloses the importance of moral values, which are of significance to school learners. The research on significance of values disclosed that, unfortunately, the bigger number of school students do not fully perceive the importance of values. The learners are not able to or imprecisely indicate the importance of values. Being unable to identify the significance of value it is complicated to evaluate behaviour because significance assigned to values as well as evaluation of behaviour and environment are closely interrelated. Evaluation of behaviour in various situations is based on moral values.

Adoption of certain values in adolescence (age of the respondents in terms of developmental psychology) is related to accumulated experience, development of self-awareness and moral consciousness. The values ranked highest by the learners of Z generation in Latvia are universalism, hedonism, stimulation, self-direction, benevolence, achievement. Both conducted research studies reveal a similar trend in choosing moral orientations of 13-14 year-old learners (6th -7th formers) assigned to Z generation.

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