INTERNATIONAL BUREAU OF EDUCATION

DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

NATIONAL REPORT OF LATVIA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SCIENCE OF THE REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

29 March 2001
1 INTRODUCTION

The national report on the development of education in Latvia comprises four various parts that help to clarify separate aspects of the same subject. The first part of the report presents the changes at the end of the previous century when the totalitarian state of the USSR collapsed and the independent Republic of Latvia began to take shape, changing completely both the previous policy and economics that had been based on centralised principles in all spheres of life. Foundations were laid for a democratic state, the monopoly of a single party was replaced by a multi-party system, the economics was transformed on the basis of trade relations. Radical changes took place in the public life. All this inevitably affected the development of education in the State, as the centralised system that was based on mechanical learning of facts and their false interpretation had to be replaced by a democratic system of education that would enable pupils to acquire skills and abilities to be developed in the new dynamic situation. Due to the new legislation great changes took place in the sector of education in Latvia. They were not always understood by the society. Reforms in education in particular often caused protests among the population.

It should be noted that the last decade in the education of Latvia has been a period of complicated reforms. We have tried to show this in the general report to the UNESCO. We have emphasised the quantitative changes, new approaches to the creation of education content, transformation of the learning strategy in conformity with the experience of the European states.
The report may not involve all the vital questions that are significant at the turn of the centuries not only in Latvia, but also in other countries of the world: this may be due to the lack of experience of Latvia on the way to democratic, civic society, based on the principles of market economy. The report will hopefully highlight the basic problems of the national education at the beginning of the 21st century.

2 The Latvian Education System in the Last Decade of the 20th Century

2.1 Interaction of the education system with the political development of the country in the last decade

The Republic of Latvia restored its independence in 1991 after 51 years of incorporation in the Soviet Union. After regaining independence the priorities of Latvia were the development of market economy, transition to democratic society and development of culture and language. The country had to work towards achievement of these aims in a complicated economic and political situation characterised by a steady decline of manufacturing, fall of inhabitants' purchasing power, rapid increase of unemployment and social problems. It was very important to institute the educational reform, which would make education system meet the requirements of the new situation.

Economic and political changes have radically altered the basic aims of education, which are closely connected with the key changes in the educational process.

- **Depolitisation of education and training** – renewal of democratic principles in political and social structures has stopped the close control over the contents and methods of education. The unity of opinions stressed by the Soviet ideology as well as conformity to collective rules was the result of the single party system, which governed Latvia till 1991 and used education as a tool for setting the opinions and aims of the youth;

- **Free choice for pupils and their parents in pursuing education** – the main aim of the restored Republic of Latvia is to provide freedom to everybody to implement his intentions and strivings in conformity with his abilities and interests. This means that it is possible for pupils and their families to choose the school, which most of all corresponds to their wishes. The respect for the wishes of an individual and his choice is a constituent part of the overall process of liberalisation;

- **Abolishment of state monopoly in education** – allowing to establish private schools is a significant step in returning to market economy and democracy. Depolitisation of education has considerably contributed to improvement of the quantity, quality and diversity of education possibilities. It has also promoted competition among institutions of education;

- **Decentralisation of the administration and financing of education** – up to now decentralisation of education has mainly been achieved by delegating several decision-making functions to local governments, schools and their directors. The distribution of the administrative functions and establishment of the public institutions with the competence in the local level could be considered part of the liberalisation process.

The geopolitical location of Latvia, limited resources of raw materials and energy determine that educated people are and will be the main factor for the development of the country. Taking into account the limited availability of resources it is very important to identify the main directions for the development of the branch, where finance should be concentrated to promote development.
2.1.1 The impact of the political situation upon the development of the education system

The development of political processes in overcoming the heritage left over by the Soviet rule influences also the development of the education system. After incorporation of Latvia into the Soviet Union two different types of schools with different study contents and different language of instruction existed in Latvia – Latvian and Russian schools. Both of these types existed separately. The length of studies also differed. The Law On the Language of the Republic of Latvia provides that the official language in Latvia is Latvian. To implement this law in the education system means to bring the formerly separated types closer to each other. Formation of a single and united education system instead of two simultaneously existing ones was also one of the main tasks of the Education Law (1991), which provides a special place in the system for the education of minorities in order to raise awareness and keep and develop the unique national character of each minority in Latvia. However, the Law was also aimed at solving the significant task of forming the idea of a state in the ethnically inhomogeneous society of Latvia, thus fostering the development of civic education.

It must be pointed out that still in 1995 700 000 of 2.5 mln inhabitants of Latvia had very weak or no knowledge of the Latvian language. Latvia is solving the problem of language acquisition with the help of international organisations and foreign donors. In 1995 the Cabinet of Ministers accepted The National Programme of the Latvian Language Acquisition, supported by the United Nations Development Programme. The Latvian Language Acquisition Programme was designed to create the national capacity for teaching the language to the adult inhabitants of non-Latvian origin and to develop the acquisition of Latvian language as a second language in the minority schools. Besides the acquisition of the Latvian language would help non-Latvians overcome the language segregation policy of inhabitants practised in the Soviet Union. The National Programme of the Latvian Language Acquisition is also a part of the National Programme of Social Integration.

In the Programme of Social Integration education is one of the mechanisms, which facilitate the development of the understanding of the state, democracy and tolerance among the population of Latvia. One of the biggest target groups in the Programme of Social Integration are children and youths, simultaneously paying big attention to adult education, and in particular to the acquisition of the official language and promotion of civic education. Education must become promoter of social integration and creator of integration values by providing the possibility to acquire the Latvian language, civic education as well as for minorities – their language and culture as a part of formal education.

The declared aims of Latvian foreign policy – to integrate into the European Union and NATO also put forward their requirements to the education system. The education system of Latvia had to become more open and compatible as well as adequate to the new economic situation. To join the European Union Latvia has to proceed through the harmonisation of laws and other regulatory enactments with the requirements of the European Union. The laws governing the branch of education, Cabinet regulations and other legal enactments not only have to be formally harmonised with the directives of the European Union, but also the education system must be formed in the way to be compatible with the respective systems in other European Union Member States. It must be noted that bilateral negotiations on harmonising the legislation in the area of education have been successfully completed.
The Latvian National Programme for Integration into the European Union provides that the Ministry of Education and Science must compose the draft law on the regulated professions and submit it to the Parliament for examination.

With the obtaining the status of the associated state of the European Union the main contact of Latvia with the European Union in the area of education was the PHARE programme. It finance the TEMPUS programme in the tertiary education as well as reforms in the vocation education. In 1996 Latvia started preparation for introduction of the European Union educational, vocational training and youth programmes Socrates, Leonardo da Vinci and Youth for Europe. Since 1998 Latvia is a full-fledged member state in these programmes. When engaging in these programmes, serious attention had to be paid to their availability to all area of education. In Latvia it is inevitably connected with a new approach to teaching foreign languages. In most European countries foreign languages is a compulsory course already in level 3 and the smaller the country the more foreign languages the youths learn. Latvia also had to ensure growth in acquisition of foreign languages; besides the possibility had to be provided to learn several foreign languages instead of one. However the attitude of the society and legislators against languages as a measure of general erudition and culture is changing very slowly. The promotion of language acquisition is hampered by lack of educated teachers, particularly so in the countryside.

In 1996 the administrative and territorial reform was started in the country. The aim of the reform is to create such conditions, which provide for sustainable development of regions and ensure equal opportunities to all population to provide and receive services and develop manufacturing. The reform also will provide for bigger financial independence and efficiency of decision-making in the level of local governments. One of the tasks is to reduce the number of local governments, providing that there must be at least 4000 inhabitants in the first level of a self-government. The reform also envisages significant reduction of the number of the second level of self-governments. The reform is to be completed by 2003. However, it must be admitted that the reform is behind the schedule at the moment. One of the most important reasons for the delay is the insufficient explanation of the need for the reform. The protracted reform, in its turn, hampers the development of the education system administration as during the territorial reform a conceptual agreement has not been reached on the regional structures of the education administration. Although the functions of the local governments of the second level have been significantly reduced, the question about their transition has not been solved. A goal-directed and precisely organised model of regional administration of education is one of the basic conditions for optimisation of the network of education institutions.

The reforms that have to be instituted in the area of education also comprise work with public to explain the reforms to be implemented and their planned results. The institutions of public administration of different levels have to provide for the dialogue with society, and in particular in the area of education as every inhabitant of Latvia is either directly or indirectly linked with the area. Therefore there are forums of the education specialists are organised as well as discussions with parents and pupils.

2.1.2 The Legal Basis of Education

The Education Law (adopted 19 June 1991) and the National Education Concept (adopted 4 July 1995 by the Cabinet of Ministers) were the basis for starting transformations in the education system in the Republic of Latvia.
The Education Law of the Republic of Latvia determined the main principles and aims of education. The law was adopted, when Latvia was going through the transition period from a planned to market economy. It set forward the general principles and tasks for the organisation of the new education system as well as the competence of each level of public administration in the organisation of the educational process.

The principles provided for by the Law were as follows:

- the permanent inhabitants of the Republic of Latvia have equal right to obtaining education disregarding their social status, property, race, nationality, gender, religious or political conviction, occupation and place of living;
- the education system is united, continuous and diversified, thus providing for the possibility to acquire the higher levels of education;
- education possesses humane and virtuous character.

The revision of the Law was started in 1993 in association with the composition of the National Education Concept. The Concept was designed in 1994 – 95 and adopted by the Cabinet of Ministers on 4 July 1995. Before adoption the Concept was widely discussed in the professional organisations of education specialists, as well as in the congress of the specialists of education of Latvia in 1994.

This document determined the strategy for the development of education as well as the main principles for establishing long-term educational policy and indicated the basic directions of the educational reform.

According to the Education Concept the main tasks of the education system were to promote:

- formation of a knowledgeable, skilled, well-bred, virtuously and aesthetically developed active personality;
- education of an independent, skilled and responsible person in a democratic society;
- formation of a creative person, who can contribute to enrichment of national and world culture;
- formation of a competent and professional personality, who can compete in the labour market;
- provision of the necessary conditions for creating life-long education.

The Concept was assessed and changed during the educational reform as there is still the discussion going on whether the Concept really reflects the needs and strivings of the Latvian population and sets the right strategy for the development of the education system of in Latvia.

Based on the Concept the Ministry of Education and Science composed the draft of the new Education Law and submitted it for the examination in the Parliament in March 1998. The aim of developing the draft law was to create the education law, which would provide basis for development of education system of Latvia simultaneously integrating Latvia into the community of modern developed countries.

The Parliament adopted the Education Law on 29 October 1998. The Concept also envisaged development of legislation in the area of general and professional education. Thus a logical step in improvement of education legislation was the development of the draft laws on general and professional education. The Parliament adopted these laws on 10 June 1999.
The adoption of the three above mentioned laws created a new legal basis for the development of education reform in Latvia. The laws were more precise in defining the competence of each executive level in organisation of the education process and provided for legal basis for the arrangement of all levels and kinds of education within the framework of the formal education system. To ensure implementation of the laws the Ministry of Education and Science is continuing to design the regulatory enactments subordinated to the laws and thus to provide a mechanism for the implementation of the new laws.


The Education Law provides that all citizens and permanent inhabitants of the Republic of Latvia and those citizens of the Member States of the European Union, who have a temporary residence permit in the Republic of Latvia have equal right to obtain education disregarding their social status, property, race, nationality, gender, religious or political conviction, occupation and place of living.

The Education Law provided for compulsory preparation of five and six year old children for acquisition of primary education as well as the continuation of basic general education till the age of 18. However, it was impossible to implement the provision about the five and six year old children due to insufficient finance therefore the provision was excluded from the Education Law, although the idea itself was not given up fully.

The Law on the Official Language provides for the right to education in the native language and respective guarantees also for the non-Latvians living in Latvia. The State creates conditions for the implementation of the right.

2.1.3 Reforms in education, their aims and most significant features

The aim of education reforms in Latvia is:

- orientation of the education to a personality;
- formation of a responsible member of a civic society;
- development of practical skills for using the acquired knowledge
- availability of educational services – the education system must be able to provide equal possibilities to all members of society.

The process of education reforms in Latvia is characterised by three features:

1. The depth and wide scope of reforms. That refers to all education levels and branches.
2. Rapidity of the reform process. Apart from the generally accepted belief that education reforms are implemented over a long period of time, the reforms were designed and instituted in Latvia during the period of several month to one year at most.
3. The process of education reforms has usually developed spontaneously and from the bottom up. Changes in education have more often taken place as a result of an individual or local initiative rather than purposeful action. As an exception to this practice the introduction of new methods in financing education must be mentioned.
Here the public administration authorities have developed a completely new legislation thus creating the basic pre-conditions for reforms. Although some more and some less extensive reforms have been made and are still going on in all branches of education, the overall education system is conservative, which can be explained by the big number of people involved in the process. We can consider education reforms successful only if they are accepted by the majority of teachers and faculty of tertiary institutions as well as society as a whole.

The reforms have been rather successful in the administration of the education process, in institutional structures of education and partly in financing the education. Success is ensured by the fact that there is a centralised decision making on changes in these areas.

The most characteristic changes in the education system are as follows:

- Design of new teaching materials is taking place in general education to meet the needs of a democratic society in market economy. New standards of general primary and secondary education have been made, which determine the state policy for the reforms in the contents of primary and secondary education.
- Improvement of the administration of the system has been started in the professional education in correspondence with the Law on Professional Education thus facilitating co-operation between the state and social partners. Besides development of national standards of professional education has started.
- The improvement of the quality of the tertiary education is continued as it certainly influences all areas of economy, education among them, and only teachers, who have obtained a high quality education, can implement reforms in all levels of education.

The education reforms are closely connected with the financial resources of the state. Latvia had to become aware of one of the basic ideas of free market economy: everything has its own price and we have to pay for everything. This idea was already reflected in the Education Concept of 1995, where it was stated that education cannot be for free, however, there is a certain order of who and when covers these costs. Therefore the reforming in education financing included a significant transition to financing of every person to be educated in accordance with a standard set by the state. The development of the financing system based on the principles of standards was intended for the most efficient use of the resources available to the branch of education.

2.1.4 Changes in the administration system of education

The changes that have taken place in the administration of education are connected with the decentralisation of the education system. During the period of ten years the transition from a centralised education system to a decentralised one has been implemented and the competence of each level has been distinctly separated in the process. Education has become a public service. The principles of organisation and order of financing of the service are determined by the state, but its administration is implemented by various institutions. By precise definition of the competence of each institution in education the conditions were created for faster institution of education reforms. Education reforms are closely connected with the reforms in the public sector as a whole. A good result can be achieved only by co-ordination of these reforms. Unfortunately the implementation of reforms differs among the sectors of public administration.

Articles 14 to 21 of the Education Law of the Republic of Latvia (1998) provide for the following division of competence among the subjects of administration of education system:
• Saeima (Parliament): The Parliament of the Republic of Latvia adopts laws, which govern the operation of the education system, including the Law on the State Budget, which provides finance for education. The competence of the Parliament also includes approval of the charters of tertiary education institutions as well as approval of four year education development curricula.

• Cabinet of Ministers: The Cabinet of Ministers establishes, re-organises and liquidates state education institutions after the recommendation of the Minister of Education and Science or some other minister. It determines the form of the education certificates recognised by the state and the order of issuing them.

The Cabinet of Ministers determines national standards in education as well as the order of registration and accreditation of education institutions. It also provides for regulation for licensing and accreditation of the education curricula implemented by the educational institution. Besides the Cabinet of Ministers provides for the regulation and order of accreditation of tertiary education institutions.

The Cabinet of Ministers also determines the order by which the state and local governments can finance private education institutions of pre-primary, primary, secondary and tertiary education. It also provides for the order of financing institutions of special education and special forms in the institutions of general education.

The Cabinet of Ministers determines the order by which the state finances the development, approbation and purchase of teaching materials. It determines the minimum standard of finance and material provision for education institutions. Besides it issues regulations on the order for receiving, repayment and removal of loans for studies in tertiary education curricula.

The competence of the Cabinet of Ministers also includes developing of a four year education development curricula once in four years and their submission to the Parliament for approval. The Cabinet of Ministers approves the list of the pedagogical professions and positions as well as requirements for the qualification needed to teachers. It also determines the order of teachers’ certification and the order of salary payment to teachers.

• The alignment of the education documents issued abroad to the ones obtained in the Republic of Latvia takes place according to the order set by the Cabinet of Ministers.

• Ministry of Education and Science. The Ministry of Education and Science implements a united state policy and development strategy in education. To achieve this aim the Ministry designs the draft regulatory enactments concerning education. The Ministry also carries out licensing of the education curricula as well as accreditation of education curricula and tertiary education institutions.

It compiles, updates the registers of education institutions, education curricula and teachers as well as approves the classification of the registers in the order determined by the Cabinet of Ministers. The Ministry guides the process of teachers' professional development and coordinates research. It also organises assessment of the professional qualification of teachers and heads of education institutions.

The competence of the Ministry includes development of the national education standards and approval of the sample education curricula and subjects/courses in accordance with the national education standards. It also includes the organisation of the composition of the contents of texts in accordance with the national education standards. Besides the Ministry organises the state order for design and publishing of texts and teaching materials in accordance with the basic education curricula.

The Ministry has to determine the order of state examinations for the accredited education curricula as well as to control the results of the teaching process in the education institutions financed by the state. The Ministry also designs and implements the measures for improvement of the quality of education process.

The Ministry of education and Science establishes, maintains and supervises the state education support institutions and submits recommendations on establishment, re-organisation or liquidation of the state education institutions and state education support institutions to the
Cabinet of Ministers and co-ordinates the issue with the respective local governments. It also
designs sample regulations of educational and education support institutions and approves the
regulations of state education and education support institutions.
The Ministry of Education and Science compiles proposals and submits requests for awarding
of state budget finance to education in the order provided. It controls legal use of the state
budget resources awarded to education in the education institutions under its supervision.

- Other ministries. Other ministries, after the approval by the Ministry of Education and
Science submit proposals to the Cabinet of Ministers on establishment, reorganisation or
liquidation of state education institutions. They determine the education contents in special
subjects/ courses as well as design the curriculum of the special subject/ course. They also
design and approve the standards of professional education curricula, provide for control of
the education institutions under their authority as well as set the order for state examinations
in the accredited education curricula.

- Local governments. Local governments have to provide the children living in their
administrative territory with the possibilities to obtain pre-school and primary education. They
also provide youths with the possibility to obtain secondary education. For exercising their
competence the local governments establish the local government education board.
As there are two levels of local governments in Latvia, the Education Law sets certain
function to each of them. Regional government, after the approval of the Ministry of
Education and Science establishes, reorganises and liquidates boarding schools, institutions of
professional education, special schools and forms and interest group education institutions.
Regional governments maintain the institutions they have established and control the use of
financial resources. Regional governments also organise adult education, which includes the
improvement of teachers' pedagogical mastery and provide for methodological work.
The local governments of the first level, with the approval by the Ministry of Education and
Science, establish, reorganise, and liquidate pre-school education institutions, primary schools
and secondary schools as well as maintain the education institutions under their authority.

- Society. Society participates in organisation and development of education indirectly by
defending the interests of pupils and teachers as well as by forming education support
institutions and non-government organisations.

- Education institution. An educational institution is independent in developing the education
curricula as well as in its financial and household operations in accordance with the existing
regulatory enactments and the regulations or charter of the educational institution.

The functions of the State Control in education are completed by the State Education
Inspection.

2.1.5 Main problems and difficulties in the process of education reforms

During the process of education reforms the problems have become apparent, which
require big additional resources for their solution. Unfortunately the reforms are
prolonged due to limited resources and the desired result is not achieved. The efforts of
the state to find additional finance for education maintain the system at a certain level,
however, it is hard to speak about overall development.

Already since restoration of the independence of Latvia one of the most difficult
questions to be solved by the state is the low payment to teachers. The Education Law
(1998) provided that the minimal full-time salary of the teacher with the lowest
professional qualification must not be lower than two minimal monthly salaries. initially
it was planned that this provision will come into force starting from 1 January 2000.
However, when adjusting the provisions of the Law with the potential of the state budget
it was found that this provision could not be fulfilled in the envisaged time. Therefore
amendments were made in the Law, which provide that the provision will come into force
on 1 January 2003. As a result of protests on part of education specialists the government and the trade union of education specialists agreed that teachers' payment would be gradually increased to reach the level set in the Law in 2003. At the moment due to the low pay many teachers work in average 38 hours per week, which lowers the quality of their work. Young teachers educated mainly for the state finance avoid to work in schools because of the low pay. Thus the resources invested in one of education sectors are not recovered.

The insufficient pay equally concern general, professional and tertiary education employees.

The reforms in the education system of Latvia are hampered by teachers' conservativeness. If the new teachers are educated with the old methods, we obtain specialists, who do not meet the requirements of the new situation. In Latvia teachers mainly use the methods, which are aimed at the reproduction of knowledge and do not provide for opportunities to develop pupils' creative thinking. Most of teachers lack knowledge, skills, teaching materials and time for introducing other methods. Disregarding the decentralisation of the system the education system is conservative and school environment is not directed towards change.

There is insufficient finance for teachers' further education and improvement of their professional qualification. The courses of further education provide for continuation of the further education begun. There is no state system, which would ensure the process. The insufficient finance does not allow even for offering equal further education possibilities to the teachers of one subject in equal time intervals.

The low pay to teachers and insufficient improvement of teachers' education are the main causes for the fact that it is impossible to achieve a crucial change in raising the education quality.

The process of reforms in professional education system lags behind the economic situation in the country. Due to the fast development of the private sector and service sector of economy the demand for employees with narrow specialisation has decreased. The need has appeared for a person with professional education to improve his qualification for several times in his life as well as to react dynamically to the requirements of labour market. Unfortunately the material and technical basis of professional education is not able to provide the observing of standards needed for a developed economy. This creates the need to design new curricula of pedagogical further education.

The education costs are comparatively high in Latvia, which is mainly explained by the high maintenance costs of the buildings. Big losses of warmth and energy take place due to poor insulation and big spaces. Schools were built disregarding the demographic forecasts about the size of population in the particular region and the economic changes have seen the flow of inhabitants from the economically inactive regions to towns, which increases the problem. There are huge costs on teachers' salaries, which is connected with the small number of pupils per class and the inadequately big number of teachers. Thus, on the one hand the salary of a teacher is small, but on the other hand total finance used for paying salaries to teachers is considerable. At the moment a project, financed by a loan from the World Bank is implemented, to reduce costs of maintaining the buildings of education institutions. It is planned to invest the money saved as a result of the project in raising the provision of education quality.
Not all of the reform directions have been sufficiently analysed and proved by research. Some of them have been adopted based on ideals. For example, right after the restoration of independence a decision was made to liquidate the special institutions of re-education the under-aged criminals. Such a decision was grounded in the illusions of the social quality of the new state and in the belief that this was the way to abolish the repressive re-education system established during the totalitarian regime. Now we have to fight the consequences of this decision.

Disproportion among separate subjects and age groups has arisen in providing the study literature in the conditions of free market economy. The teaching materials and study literature are expensive and have to be purchased by pupils and their parents. Thus the low-situated families face additional difficulties in obtaining the study materials.

It is very difficult for the education system now to overcome the idea frequently mentioned in early 1990s that school is the school has to provide knowledge not values. Due to this mistake schools are insufficiently prepared for patriotic and civic education as well as for promotion of social integration.

Overall Latvia develops its education system evenly, taking into account the mistakes made and the biggest problems in the process of education reforms and striving for efficient use of available resources. In Latvia the education reform had to be simultaneously implemented in two different directions: the system inherited from the Soviet Union had to be changed and it had to be developed adequate to the status of a democratic country. Not all of the initiated reforms gained the needed public support therefore public education had to be made.

The problem still to be solved is the availability of education in different regions of Latvia. When children start school, they are often not sufficiently prepared. Besides the number of children due to different reasons not attending school is increasing. State institutions do not provide sufficient support to families for education of their children. It must be admitted that too many children are under institutional care, which does not facilitate their integration into society. at the moment the role of the social educator in an educational institution. The so-called alignment forms are still being developed for the children, who have not started school in time or have interrupted it for a longer time.

3 Assessment of Quantitative and Qualitative achievements based on the analysis of pre-primary, primary and secondary schools

3.1 Assessment of Quantitative Achievements

Table 1. The number of students over the last decade

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ISCED 0</th>
<th>ISCED 1</th>
<th>ISCED 2</th>
<th>ISCED 3</th>
<th>ISCED 2,3,4,5</th>
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<td>pre-school (age 3-6)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>formal</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-formal</td>
<td>74423</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>143338</td>
<td>166199</td>
<td>40700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990 / 1991</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>1991 / 1992</td>
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<tr>
<td>professional</td>
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</table>
3.1.1 Primary education

The curriculum of pre-school education is implemented by general pre-school educational institutions, special pre-school educational institutions, advisory centres of pre-school education, playgroups and pre-school groups at schools. Pre-schools can be attended by children starting from one till seven years of age based on their physical and psychological readiness, but not longer than till 8 years of age.

Table 2. Number of children in formal pre-primary education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
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<tr>
<td>1990/91</td>
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<tr>
<td>1991/92</td>
<td>55000</td>
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<tr>
<td>1992/93</td>
<td>50000</td>
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<td>1993/94</td>
<td>45000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994/95</td>
<td>40000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995/96</td>
<td>35000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996/97</td>
<td>30000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997/98</td>
<td>25000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998/99</td>
<td>20000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/00</td>
<td>15000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As it is shown in the chart, the number of children in pre-schools sharply dropped in year 1992/93, when the number of pre-schools decreased almost twice. After that the number of children in pre-schools slowly increased till 1996/97 and now it tends to fall slowly.

Table 3. The number of pre-schools in Latvia
### 3.1.2 Schools of general education

During the period from 1990/91 till 1998/99 the number of general education schools (both day and night) increased from 962 to 1111. As a result of the optimisation of the school network 14 schools were closed in year 1999/2000 therefore in comparison with the previous year the total number of schools decreased to 1095.

The number of private schools increased from 24 in 1995/96 to 48 schools in 1999/2000, mainly in the primary and secondary level. From 1991/92 till 1999/2000 the number of pupils accepted to the schools of primary and secondary education (both day and night) increased from 352.4 thousand to 361.7 thousand or for 2.6%.

From 1990/91 till 1999/2000 the number of pupils in forms 1 to 9 decreased from 311.7 to 299 thousand or for 4.2%, which reflects the demographic situation in the country. However, the increasing demand for general secondary education (which often represents the potential way to tertiary education) is shown by the fact that the number of pupils accepted in secondary schools has increased by 34.7% or from 40.7 to 62.4 thousand pupils. The number of pupils accepted to night schools and private schools, although a very small percentage of all pupils, had the fastest increase and particularly it was evident in forms 10 to 12. From 1995/96 till 1998/99 the number of pupils accepted to night schools increased from 9881 to 14380 (45%) and to private schools – from 1655 to 3007 (82%).

### 3.1.3 The secondary level professional education

In school year 1999/2000 altogether there were 121 institutions of professional education, among them 74 vocational schools and 46 secondary professional schools.

The distribution of professional education institutions and curricula has formed in accordance with the extremely centralised policy of the Soviet Union. Vocational schools were closely connected with big industrial enterprises and collective farming. The network of education institutions was with a high level of specialisation and big number of small one-profile schools. The collapse of the centralised economy as well as other changes, which took place after 1990 influenced the very basis of professional education. After restoration of independence till 1996 there was a sharp fall in the number of pupils
in professional education institutions. These changes were intensified by the re-organisation implemented in 1993 after transformation of secondary professional pedagogical schools transformed into institutions of tertiary education and merging of the small one-profile schools and private schools. At the moment the number of pupils in professional education institutions is stable and a small increase can be observed every year.

In 1999/2000 8.4% of all persons involved in the education system were learning in the initial professional education system. 32% of those who had finished primary schools and 11% of those who had finished secondary schools continued education in the institutions of professional education institutions.

Table 4. Changes in the number of pupils in the professional education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of Pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90/91</td>
<td>80000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>91/92</td>
<td>75000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93/94</td>
<td>70000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>94/95</td>
<td>65000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>95/96</td>
<td>60000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96/97</td>
<td>55000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>97/98</td>
<td>50000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>98/99</td>
<td>45000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>99/00</td>
<td>40000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the period from 1990 till 2000 the number of professional education institutions has decreased as a result of both the fall in the number of pupils, which facilitated elimination of small schools, and optimisation of the school network, during which many schools were merged.

The network of professional education institutions covers the whole territory of Latvia, with the exception of Balvi district. More than a third (37%) of all professional education institutions are located in Riga.

There are also schools for pupils with special needs. Over the recent years the number of schools designed for teaching the disabled and other people with special needs has considerably decreased. The number of prison schools has also decreased—now there are only two such schools.

3.1.4 Availability or attendance of schools

The school network has formed in Latvia, which provides for availability of education in all districts of Latvia. The number of places in schools is sufficient to provide all children and youths in school age with the possibilities of education.

The law provides that every local government, including 483 small parishes and seven cities is obliged to provide the children living in the administrative territory of these local governments with the possibilities of obtaining pre-school and primary education in the school, which is the closest from the place where the children live. Local governments
also have to provide the youths with the possibility to obtain secondary education. The law provides that pupils are fully entitled to choose schools in the territory of other local government. In such case finance is provided by drawing contracts between local governments.

The distribution of the network of primary education institutions follows the principle of providing equal opportunities for obtaining compulsory education and it is determined by their proximity to the places where pupils live. In future due to the decreasing number of pupils in the first forms the maintenance costs per one pupil of these education institutions will increase. However, it does not mean that it will be possible to reduce the number of schools with the available possibilities for financing education.

In 1990 almost 75% of children in the age under 6 years attended school, but in 1998 only 40.3%. Consequently, from the education point there is a serious concern that increasingly more children come to the "big school" completely unprepared. The Education Law adopted in 1998 enlarged the compulsory education involving 5 and six year olds and thus aligning the age of starting school with the practice common in Europe. The amendments to the Education Law passed in 1999 declared this provision invalid.

Significant differences exist between towns and the countryside (in particular, between Riga and other regions) in terms of economic conditions, living standard and possibilities of education. In the Report on the situation concerning poverty in Latvia the United Nations Development Programme found in 1997 that poverty is more spread in the countryside rather than in towns. In Latgale only 24.9% of inhabitants spend more than the declared minimum for survival. That refers to serious social problems in the region, the solution of which must be started immediately. Comparatively less people live below the poverty margin in Riga region (the City of Riga and surrounding territories). As in every country there is a direct link between poverty and education – both in relation to obtaining education and its quality, then such differences simultaneously are an issue of education policy and socio-economic policy as well.

Poverty is one of the main social problems in Latvia, which leads to "fast polarisation of society" economically, socially and culturally. The impact of poverty upon the life of families, children's health and social involvement can be felt in schools, and in particular in the districts, which have most suffered from the economic crisis. May families live on the edge of poverty or even below it as they are only able to obtain food and pay for utilities. Consequently no money is left for education, health and transportation.

It is impossible to ensure a sufficient number of optional curricula in the secondary schools where the number of pupils in forms 10 to 12 is small. On the other hand, creation of secondary schools of optimal size in the countryside is hampered by poor transport infrastructure, lack of hostels in schools and social situation of inhabitants (poverty).

One of the conditions for providing equal opportunities for obtaining education are hostels in the countryside schools. This issues is of particular importance for secondary and grammar schools – a lack of hostel or insufficient number of places there can become an obstacle for those, who would like to continue their education in these schools after finishing their primary schools (i.e. would like to acquire the chosen education curriculum). Establishment of hostels is hampered by insufficient budget finance available to local governments as well as lack of suitable buildings.
One of the biggest problems in Latvia is the lack of a united register of all children in the school age: there are three registers now, which provide different figures. Evidently the reason for it is an outdated system of population registers.

3.1.5 The Differentiation of the Number of Pupils in Schools According to Nationality

In early 1999 the ethnical composition of Latvian population was as follows: 55.7% Latvians, 32.3% Russians, 3.9% Belarussians, 2.9% Ukrainians, 2.2% Poles, 1.3% Lithuanians and 1.7% other national groups. Russians are mainly concentrated in Riga and big towns, as well as in the south-eastern part of Latvia and form majority there. However, the figures on ethnic origin do not always reflect language differences (there is a rather big mixture – for example, Latvians mainly using Russian and Russian mainly speaking Latvian, as well as about 120 000 people using both languages at home).

In the last decade Latvia has had to face rather complicated and politically sensible issues associated with the language, ethnic aspects and social integration. These questions create considerable problems for the education policy of Latvia.

For decades the simultaneously existing Latvian and Russian school systems have been one of the sharpest expressions and facilitators of social splitting as the systems have differed not only in their language of instruction, but also in the attitude of pupils and teachers against history and changes taking place in Latvia.

Most non-Latvians learn in the schools with the Russian language of instruction. In the beginning of 1999/2000 there were 189 day schools with the Russian language of instruction and 131 schools with two languages (Latvian/Russian) of instruction. In these schools there were 113.9 thousand pupils, i.e. 33.2% of the number of pupils in the schools of local governments and the Ministry of Education and Science

Table 5. Schools according to the language of instruction in the beginning of 1999/2000.


The Education Law provides that the language for obtaining education in Latvia is Latvian, but simultaneously with the Latvian language other languages may be used in minority education curricula as well as in the specific cases provided for by international treaties or laws. The minority education curricula are included in the national standards and the Ministry of Education and Science designs the respective sample curricula for each level of education. The Education Law provides that only those private education institutions can receive state and local government finance, which carry out accredited education curricula in the official state language. This means that also the private education curricula, which carry out minority education curricula can receive state and
local government finance, but they have to follow the requirements of the national standards.

In pre-school education establishments 73% of children learn in Latvian and 24% in Russian, both (Latvian - Russian) – 2.5%.

The proportion of pupils who have the Latvian language of instruction in the secondary level has also increased – from 61.6% in 1995/96 till 66.3% in 1998/99. In 1997/98 69% of general education schools and 57% of pupils had the Latvian language as the language of instruction. In Riga Latvian was the only language of instruction only in 51% of schools and to 39% of pupils, which reflects the differences in the concentration of inhabitants in different regions. In the countryside, except for the south-eastern part of Latvia the number of children, who had Latvian as their language of instruction was considerably bigger than in Riga and other towns.

Table 6. Dynamics of the number of pupils in schools with Latvian and Russian language of instruction.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Language of Instruction - Latvian</th>
<th>Language of Instruction - Russian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990/1991</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991/1992</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992/1993</td>
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<td>1993/1994</td>
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<td>1994/1995</td>
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<td>1995/1996</td>
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<tr>
<td>1996/1997</td>
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<tr>
<td>1997/1998</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1998/1999</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999/2000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Besides the schools with the Russian language of instruction there are general education institutions in Latvia, which carry out the minority education curricula of other nationalities. The minority education institutions cover general education from pre-school till the secondary level. The number of such schools in each local government varies depending on the number of the pupils, whose families have chosen the respective education curriculum. After restoration of independence 6 Polish schools have opened in Latvia (in 1999/2000 – 1191 pupils) as well as two Jewish schools (313 pupils), a Ukrainian school (258 pupils), an Estonian school (114 pupils), a Lithuanian school (105 pupils), a Belarussian school (49 pupils) as well as forms of gypsies in Ventspils Night School (95 pupils).

The studies in professional institutions take place in two languages – Latvian and Russian. In 1999/2000 education was acquired in Russian by 12002 pupils or 25%, respectively in 1998/99 – 28%, but in 1995/96 – 35%. As the statistics show, starting from 1995/96 the proportion of pupils acquiring their education in Latvian is growing, but the number of pupils with the Russian language of instruction is very slowly decreasing.

There are large differences regarding the use of Russian as the language of instruction. In Riga 46% of pupils study in Russian, the respective figure for Latgale region is 40%.
The Education Law (1998) provides that starting from 1 September 2004 in state and local government professional education institutions the first-year studies will be started solely in the official language.

There are still discussions in the society, whether the professional education only in the official language will not hamper the acquisition of education and facilitate splitting in the society. Experience shows that people will be looking for the opportunities to study in the native language and if the state and local government institutions do not provide for such a possibility, the number of pupils in private professional education institutions will rapidly rise.

Statistics show that the number of schools with the Russian language of instruction and the number of pupils in these schools are decreasing, although there is still a significant proportion of such schools and pupils in big towns. Changes have taken place mainly due to the migration process. After restoration of independence the population of Latvia has decreased almost by 150 000 as a result of migration.

Intensive changes in respect to the language of instruction have taken place upon taking up school. To provide for competitiveness of their children in future non-Latvians and particularly parents of mixed families choose schools with the Latvian language of instruction for their children. In 1999/2000 73.9 % of all, who came to form 1 started their studies in Latvian. Over the last three years the number of children starting their studies in Latvian has increased by 4.4%. Over the last decade (from 1990) the respective figure has increased by 19.8%.

Table 7. Division of pupils according to the language of instruction in form 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Learn in Latvian</th>
<th>Learn in Russian</th>
<th>Learn in other language</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>20000</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>22000</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>24000</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>26000</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>28000</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>30000</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>32000</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>34000</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>36000</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>38000</td>
<td>15000</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.1.6 Division of schools according to their finance: state and private schools

Most of state pre-school education institutions and schools, which provide primary and secondary education are under the authority of local governments (towns or parishes), which provide education and are subordinated to the general supervision of the Ministry of education and Science. The Government pays salaries to teachers and the social tax,
but local governments are responsible for the costs of maintaining the buildings as well as other operational costs. Local government budgets cover the salaries of pre-school staff. The state bears direct responsibility for the most of special schools (for example, for schools for children with special needs) as well as for the most of vocational schools and secondary professional schools.

Both the state and local governments provide finance for pre-school education institutions, primary and general secondary education. The state directly supervises and provides finance for vocational schools, secondary professional and special education institutions as well as for the education curricula for national education, special education and socially corrective education.

Table 8. Finance for the state and local government day schools (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>State budget</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>60.7</td>
<td>59.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local government budget</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>38.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Basically the distribution of the liability between the state (state government) and local governments is as follows:

- The state finances teachers' salaries and social taxes in accordance with the policy and regulations set forward by the Cabinet of Ministers. The state also provides finance for text books. This amount is included in the budget of the Ministry of Education and Science as a separate position and is further allocated to school-boards, based on the standards per one pupil. The salary fund contains reserve (~ 2%) for accredited private schools.

- local governments (parishes and big towns) provide finance for study materials, school maintenance and repairs, technical (non-teaching) staff (cleaning, maintaining and security), for catering and utilities (heating and electricity). the Cabinet of Ministers sets the minimal level of finance to provide for approximately equal level of provision all over the country.

In 1996 a reform was started in the financing of schools in Latvia. The new policy is designed based on the financing principle, where the standard per one pupil is determined.

School-boards have at least a formal right to distribute finance among schools. Taking into account the difficult financial situation the country is facing in some regions and parishes there is a considerable difference between the plans and real finance. Regions do not receive full state finance in the form of ear-marked subsidies and schools receive less than it is envisaged in the budget.

The richest local governments (Riga, Ventspils and other big towns) are able of providing significant supplements to teachers' salaries, which are provided by the state. However, other local governments are unable of meeting the minimal requirements set by the state.
3.1.7 The Number of Pupils per One Teacher

In 1998/99 there were 35,880 teachers for 361,722 pupils accepted to general education schools, including those, who hold more than one office. Most of teachers (97%) and pupils (96%) were in the full-time general education schools.

In 1999/2000 5380 teachers worked in the professional education institutions and they taught 47,703 pupils. The proportion of teachers and pupils in the professional education is influenced by the branches of art and music, where there are a lot of individual classes. Thus in the professional education institutions under the authority of the Ministry of Culture the proportion is 1:2.4, but in the professional education institutions of the Ministry of education and Science it is 1:12.

3.2 Assessment of Qualitative Achievements

3.2.1 Factors, which show positive changes in the development of education system

Over last decade significant changes have taken place in the education system of Latvia. Legislation governing education has been changed and education reform has started in many areas.

3.2.2 Education legislation:

Law On Craftsmanship (1993.) provides basis for vocational education.


Education Law (1998) governs overall system of education; provides for the rights and responsibilities of the state, local governments, non-government organisations, professional associations, private persons, education institutions, parents, pupils and students as well as defines the education types, levels and the types of education institutions.

Law On Professional Education (1999) provides for:

- the principles of organisation and provision of professional education as well as principles of awarding qualification,
- tasks, competencies, and relations between the state, employers, teachers and pupils,
- ways of obtaining professional education,
- organisation of contents of professional education,
- principles for financing professional education.

Law on General Education (1999).

General Education

- Since 1990 the contents and the provision of general education has been changed;
- In 1992 a new system of organisation of education contents was introduced – the system of standards of educational subjects;
- in accordance with the aims and tasks of education the role of each teacher has changed as well as her tasks and education methodology; a transition is taking place from memorisation of facts and academic knowledge to, the skills of understanding the basic knowledge, causes and logical connections and using them;
• from 1995 designing and manufacturing of teaching materials take place in the conditions of free market;
• In 1995 decentralisation of the subordination of general education institutions took place – schools were given under the authority of local governments and the role of local governments in the organisation and provision of education has significantly increased.
• The network of private schools is under formation;
• In 1995 accreditation of schools was started as a part of the control mechanism of the quality of education organisation;
• Starting from 1995 Latvia has been participating in the international measurements of comparative education quality (TIMS, COMPED, CIVIC);
• In 1998 certification of the directors of general education schools started;
• In 1997 the introduction of the unified state education quality control system started as well as introduction of a centralised examination for those finishing secondary schools in order to be able to combine the secondary school leaving examinations with the entry examinations in tertiary institutions starting from 2002/2003.
• In 1997 a gradual transition to the standard financing principle – "finance follows a pupil"—was started; local governments finance school maintenance;
• In 1998 state informatisation project was started – provision of the education system with up-to-date computer equipment and development of the education system data base;
• sample education curricula have been developed and the curriculum principle is being introduced. In the minority primary education four models of bilingual education have been offered, which provide for the acquisition of primary education as well as the knowledge and skill in the Latvian language to ensure the ability of acquiring the professional education in the official language starting from 2004;
• In 2000 the Cabinet of Ministers approved of the schedule for increasing teachers' salaries.

Professional education

• Legislation governing the professional education has been created, which forms a good basis for the development of the system and continuation of reforms;
• Professional education is available to all social layers of society. It provides possibilities for young people to acquire independence faster. Hostels, allowances, cheap catering etc. are the factors, which attract the youths from unprosperous families. The forms of pedagogical correction attract the youths, who for some reason have left education system before.
• The people working in schools are energetic and enthusiastic. Disregarding the small state finance they look for the possibilities for the school to survive and develop. Some schools engage in international programmes, which provide them with the latest experience, methodological materials and equipment;
• There is an increasing co-operation with the social partners. With the partners gaining economic stability, they can pay bigger attention to the professional education. Employers are becoming aware of the fact that some input is needed to get good employees;
• The centralised system of examination for obtaining professional qualification is being introduced and over last 5 years 7 training and examination centres have been established in the following professions: electrician, metalworker, Metalworking machine worker, car mechanic, welder, decoration worker, carpenter, tailor;
• Development of profession standards has started. The following profession standards were approved by the Trilateral Co-operation Board of Professional education and employment till November 2000: locksmith, milling-machine operator, welder, repairing locksmith, turner.
Several other projects of profession standards have been submitted for approval to the professional associations;

- The standard of professional education has been created.

Since 1992 the system of national education standards has been existing in Latvia in educational subjects. These regulatory enactments define the aims and tasks of the subject, the compulsory part of its contents, basic criteria for the assessment of pupils knowledge and skills, which have to be acquired by the end of the respective level of education (primary and secondary) as well as forms of testing and technology. Thus the final result is determined which every pupil must achieve in any educational subject. The acquisition sequence of the standard requirements is more precisely defined in study curricula, the samples of which have been designed for every educational subject.

The Education Contents and Examination Centre (ECEC) was founded in 1994. Its main areas of activity are the improvement of education contents and the development and improvement of the system of state tests. Every year ECEC involves about 1000 teachers from primary, secondary and tertiary schools as well as professional associations of teachers in the development of education contents and state test works. At the moment the education standards and sample education curricula are being developed and improved in 27 primary education and 37 secondary education subjects. Every year the Centre composes 30 – 35 state test works.

In 1999 The Education Classification of the Republic of Latvia was approved. Its task is to provide basis for the development of the Register of Education Curricula and information base of education curricula as well as to ensure development of a unified database of education statistics and compatibility with the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED 97) approved by UNESCO in 1997 and education statistics of other countries.

- Positive development can be observed in the computerisation of the education system, which has rapidly developed over the last decade and increasingly more schools are equipped with computers and Internet.

List of Factors showing negative changes. Areas of Education Requiring Improvement.

Besides positive tendencies of development in the education sector, there are still some areas, which require changes and improvement.

- The big number of pupils who finish form 9 with insufficient marks present an existing and potential problem. Not all school leavers receive the school report, which allows them to continue education in a secondary or vocational school.
Table 9  Pupils after finishing form 9 who face the risk of social exclusion (1998, 1999)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th></th>
<th>1999</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% of the total number of pupils in form 9</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>% of the total number of pupils in form 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils who finish school with a school report</td>
<td>881</td>
<td>2.6</td>
<td>785</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pupils who finish school with insufficient marks</td>
<td>5824</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>7893</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6705</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>8678</td>
<td>26.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Data of the State Inspection of Education

A part of pupils get socially excluded as their possibilities of further education are limited because of several reasons:

- they cannot continue education in a higher level because they do not have a certificate about primary education;
- they cannot continue education in a higher level because they have unsatisfactory marks in the certificate of primary education;
- these pupils face the risk of social exclusion because of lack of education as
- they cannot find work because of absence of any professional qualification;
- they cannot settle employment formalities because of age limits:
- they cannot acquire a qualification through the State Employment Service because it offers only programmes for youths after 18 years of age.

The low level of job payment seriously influences the quality of education. For example, it inhibits the young people from choosing the profession of teacher. It also does not motivate those, who have recently obtained the teacher profession, to work in schools, particularly that refers to those who have acquired foreign languages or information technologies. Besides the low payment influences the status and moral of the profession. Young teachers prefer other better paid jobs. Those, who stay in schools are forced to look for additional jobs. Consequently they are not able or not willing to raise their qualification or participate in out-of-class events. The low payment and status as well as unwillingness of the well-qualified graduates to work in the profession have caused the lack of qualified teachers, particularly in some educational subjects and some regions. The average age of teachers is increasing, many of them are close to retirement, but there is insufficient number of young teachers, who have acquired the modern methods of education and could step in.

- There is still insufficient number of places in pre-school education institutions.

Limited employment opportunities for school leavers. As the youths, who finish secondary schools, have neither profession, nor experience, their competitiveness in the labour market is low. Most of youths aim at acquiring the tertiary education (more than 80%) or find a job (more likely in Riga and its surroundings) or become unemployed. There is no statistics available on the employment of school leavers.
The structure of labour according to education in May 2000 was as follows:

- the highest employment was among the persons with the tertiary education (72% of all population with the tertiary education were employed),
- with the secondary education – 63%,
- with professional secondary education – 63%,
- with vocational school education without secondary education – 56%.

Table 10. The level of employment and unemployment according to the education obtained as to May, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of unemployment,%</th>
<th>Level of employment,%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No formal educ.</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary lower than primary</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational w/o sec.</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational sec.</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary prof.</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tertiary</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The chart shows that the level of education is closely connected with the level of employment. The more a person is educated, the bigger opportunities he has for obtaining his place in the labour market thus providing a secure and stable life for himself.

Since 1995 the order for publishing and purchasing of study literature has changed. The state and local government subsidies are not longer given to publishers, but rather allotted to those who purchase the literature – to schools (in correspondence with the number of pupils) for supplementing school libraries.

A full set of new text books for one primary school pupil costs 25 to 45 LVL (depending on the age), the average length of using a book is five years, but state subsidies for one pupil last year was 2.38 LVL. Consequently the situation is as follows:

- the pupils in general education schools often lack up-to-date study literature, which meet the requirements of the national education standards, for provision of the education process;
- the library funds rapidly become out-of-date, because in the situation of limited budget the systematic purchase of new literature is not made;
- there is not sufficient study literature in the Latvian language for pupils of minority schools. It hampers acquisition of the Latvian language and preparation for gradual transition to education in the official language in the state-financed education institutions, as it has been envisaged in the Education Law and other regulatory enactments;
- the pupils of special schools lack the study literature, which would correspond to the special education curricula as their composition and publishing is not rentable due to the small number of copies needed. Under no subsidies from the state budget publishers stop issuing it.
3.2.3 Demographic process as a quality indicator

In accordance with the statistics from 1990 till 1999 the birth rate has decreased by 51.5%. The number of children in the school age is rapidly decreasing in Latvia. In the period from 1990 to 1999 the number of children born per year decreased by 48% - from 37918 children in 1990 to 19396 in 1999. The birth rate (the number of new born per 1000 inhabitants) decreased from 14.2 new-borns in 1990 to 8.0 in 1999. The decrease of birth rate can be related to the heavy economic conditions, changes in the social system in relation to women during pregnancy as well as other changes.

It is difficult to forecast the impact of these tendencies upon the demand for education. For example, disregarding the possible decrease of demand due to fall in the birth rate, the demand for secondary education will increase in the closest future. As a result of birth rate fluctuations in 1980s the number of pupils finishing nine-year primary education has grown at the end of 1990s. The forecasts are that this figure will decrease in 2000 and 2001 and will grow at the beginning of the 21st century.

The number of pupils accepted to schools starts to reflect the demographic situation. The number of pupils accepted to form 1 will continue to decrease at least till 2003, when it will be 48% of the level in 1998. However, the political reaction to this rapid fall is unclear, but the less pupils come to school, the more difficult it will be for the education sector to motivate the existence of the small schools and the very low proportion (according to international standards) of pupils to teachers.

Table 11. Changes in the number of pupils in form 9. (Forecast)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of pupils</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>35000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>30000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>25000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>20000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>15000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>10000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>5000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most characteristic feature of the forecasts for the changes in the age structure of inhabitants is absolute and relative decrease in the number of children. Still at the beginning of 1990s children composed 22% of the total number of population, but in 2005 this proportion will be only 14% with the tendency for further decrease. According to the decrease in the intensity of birth rate in 1990s, the number of pupils will continue to fall, but around 2010 it will affect the number of potential students as well. In accordance with the calculations of the conditionally real development the number of youths in the age of 15 to 19 in 2020 will have decreased twice compared to 2000. In this time there will be a sharp decrease in the number of people reaching the employment age.
3.2.4 The level of teachers' education; their distribution according to age; the problem of feminisation

Traditionally people with a tertiary education work in schools of Latvia. The new education legislation provides that only people with the tertiary education will be allowed to work in schools, therefore now teachers are offered different distance education curricula for raising their qualification.

Unfortunately aging of the teaching staff presents a serious problem. In 1999/2000 there were 27.49% of teachers employed in the day general education schools in the age from 40 to 49, 15.75% - 50 to 59 and 9.18% older than 60. Only 19.61% of teachers were under 30 years of age. The same problem is present in the professional education system.

Table 12. Statistics about 1999

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education institution</th>
<th>Proportion of female teaching staff</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Preschool education institutions</td>
<td>99.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General education institutions</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional education institutions</td>
<td>65.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The proportion of female teaching staff in the schools of Latvia is rather high. It is also determined by the low payment in the teacher's profession. Men are more prepared to leave a low paid job for work in the sectors with a higher remuneration. It might be that due to the domination of women in the education sector the low salaries are more patiently endured than in other sectors, where the gender distribution is more balanced. It also influences work in the classroom. If there were more men, it might help both in social and educational respect, for example, the male role could be demonstrated to the youths.

3.2.5 Ways of solving the national issue (introduction of bilingual system, factor depicting the attendance of Latvian schools by Russian-speaking pupils)
Table 13. Composition of pupils of day general education schools according to nationality and language of instruction in 1999/2000 (%)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Total (%)</th>
<th>Latvian</th>
<th>Russian</th>
<th>Polish</th>
<th>Ukrainian</th>
<th>Lithuanian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Belarussians</td>
<td>1.99</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>4.98</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gypsies</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.31</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jews</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estonians</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russians</td>
<td>26.44</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>71.74</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>20.54</td>
<td>5.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lithuanians</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td></td>
<td>83.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poles</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>0.47</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>83.54</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ukrainians</td>
<td>1.49</td>
<td>0.30</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>71.71</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germans</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.21</td>
<td>0.22</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table reflects the situation, where a part of minorities acquire education in Latvian, the biggest proportion is composed by Russian pupils – almost 4%.

The Education Law provides that starting from 2004 the pupils of minority secondary schools will be taught in the official language. To introduce these provisions bilingual education curricula are being designed.

The result of bilingual education is the ability to use two languages fluently, which is crucial for the integration of the Russian speaking part of population.

The Soros Foundation Latvia has significantly contributed to the development of bilingual education curricula by preparing teachers for bilingual education. The Foundation annually invests average 20 thousand USD in the project “Open School”. A part of the sum is allotted to pre-schools. 17 schools from different regions of Latvia were chosen for the project "Open School" both from towns and the countryside with a different composition of pupils and language knowledge. The project is planned for 4 years – till 2004. It is also planned to increase the scope of the schools involved. The aims of the project are to design bilingual education curricula, teaching materials and methodological literature.

The National Programme of the Latvian Language Acquisition organises courses for the history, biology, geography teachers of forms 5 to 9 and methodologists from tertiary education institutions “Course On the Multiplicators of Bilingual Methodology”. The aim of the courses is not only the methodological provision of the education process, but also acquisition of the skill of new material design.

In 1994 the Government of Latvia started negotiations with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) representation and requested its assistance in designing a comprehensive programme for the Latvian language acquisition of the
inhabitants, who do not speak the language. During the development of the programme attention was paid to those problems, which hamper the acquisition of the Latvian language: poor integration of non-Latvians in the local society; political and historic past; the prestige and hierarchy of the Latvian and Russian languages; attitude of minority school teachers against the Latvian language and insufficient knowledge of the official language by the minority school teachers.

The programme is based on several fundamental conclusions, which characterise the approach to the problem:

- the system of teaching Latvian must be changed,
- a new educational subject must be introduced – Latvian as a second language (LAT 2), and the old method based on the methods of teaching a native language must be given up,
- the needs of the target group must be taken into account,
- the main attention must be paid to using the language instead of having the knowledge about the language and literature.

The programme started to work in 1996. Within it text books of Latvian as a second language are composed and published for the basic education curricula in minority schools as well as glossaries for particular subjects and professions. In the courses of methodology 40 multiplicators have been prepared for teaching Latvian as a second language. Almost all teachers of Latvian as a second language have participated in the courses lead by the multiplicators. 5380 educational subject teachers from minority schools have participated in the course of the Latvian language. There are language courses organised for different professions, directors of minority schools among them. Seminars have also been organised for obtaining new teaching materials. In 1999 1045 youths from Riga, Liepaja and Daugavpils in the age between 16 and 18 have engaged in 43 clubs and camps of the Latvian language.

4 3. Education Contents and Learning Strategies in the 21st Century

4.1.1 (Development of curricula, principles and assumptions)

(Pre-primary, primary/basic and secondary education)

4.1.2 Preparation of Decisions

By the term “curriculum” two kinds of educational programs are understood in Latvia:

- the program of school education (school level curriculum)
- the program of an educational subject (class level curriculum)

Regulation of the education contents both in the primary and secondary schools may be represented by the following pattern:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The content of education is determined by</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>At the school level:</em></td>
<td><em>At the class level:</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State education standards</td>
<td>Education standards for subjects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education curricula</td>
<td>Subject curricula</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two laws determine the structure of education standards and curricula during the school period:

- The Education Law;

The structure of the State education standards includes:

- the strategic goals and the main objectives of the curricula;
- the mandatory contents of education; and
- the basic principles and procedures for evaluation of the education acquired.

Compliance with the National Education Standard is mandatory for everyone who prepares and implements the relevant educational curriculum. The National education standards are approved by the Cabinet. Their preparation is supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science, by involving educational administrators, teachers, parents, pupils and other interested representatives of the general public. The National Standard for primary education was prepared in 1998 and approved by the Cabinet in 2000. The National Standard for general secondary education was prepared and approved by the Cabinet in 2000.

The structure of the State education standards for subjects includes:

- the principal goals and objectives of an educational subject;
- the mandatory contents of an educational subject;
- basic requirements regarding acquisition of an educational subject (by specifying the knowledge, skills and abilities to be acquired); and
- the forms and methods for evaluation of educational achievements.

The national education standards for subjects are approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.

Compliance with the State education standard for subjects is mandatory for everyone who prepares and implements the relevant subject curriculum. Their preparation is supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science, by involving educational administrators, teachers, parents, pupils and other interested representatives of the general public. The first State education standards for subjects were prepared and implemented in 1992, but from the present time to 2002 they are revised in accordance with the requirements of the State education standards.

The structure of educational curricula includes:

- goals and objectives of an educational curriculum;
- requirements regarding the previously acquired education;
- the content of education as a unified whole of subject contents;
- the plan for implementation of an educational curriculum;
- criteria and procedures for evaluation of the acquired education; and
- assessment of the staff and the financial and material resources necessary for the implementation of an educational curriculum.

Educational curricula are prepared by educational institutions, in compliance with the State education standards, involving parents, pupils and the local community. An educational institution may implement only licensed educational curricula. Educational
curricula are licensed (recognised as ready for implementation), accredited (tested with respect to the quality of activities and results) and registered in the Register of Educational Curricula in accordance with the procedures prescribed by the Education Law. This process is supervised and controlled by the Ministry of Education and Science.

The structure of the **subject curricula** includes:

- the goals and objectives of an educational subject;
- the content of teaching;
- the sequence of acquisition of the content, and the time intended for acquisition;
- forms and methods of evaluation of the results of learning; and
- list of teaching resources and methods used for the acquisition of the content of teaching.

A teacher is entitled to prepare his or her own subject curriculum, in compliance with the general education standard of the subject and the general educational curriculum which includes the curriculum of the relevant subject, or to select any of the previously prepared subject curricula.

Subject curricula are prepared by:

- Education Content and Examination Centre, by involving teachers, professional associations of teachers, scientists and other interested persons;
- associations of subject teachers; and
- authors of textbooks, by relating a particular textbook, or a textbook and a set of teaching materials, to a subject curriculum.

The content of teaching included in a subject curriculum may not be less extensive (but may be a little more extensive) than the content specified by the education standard of the relevant subject.

A subject curriculum is approved by the head of an educational institution.

A **pre-school education curriculum** ensures preparation of children for the acquisition of primary education and includes:

- development of the individuality;
- mental, physical and social development;
- development of initiative, inquisitiveness, independence and creative activity;
- strengthening of health;
- psychological preparation for the acquisition of primary education; and
- acquisition of basic skills of the use of the official language.

A pre-school education curriculum is acquired by children until the age of seven. Depending on the state of health and the psychological aptitude of a child, the acquisition of the pre-school education curriculum may be extended by a year, in accordance with the wishes of the parents and the opinion of the medical commission. The preparation of pre-school education curricula is supervised by the Ministry of Education and Science, involving teachers, scientists, parents and other interested persons.

**4.1.3 Planning and Modelling of Educational Curricula**

The amount of learning work for children and pupils is determined by the General Education Law.