

Perspectives on sexuality education and family formation and their coverage in the normative documents of the Republic of Latvia on education.

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Rationale for the study

- Problem(s) to be addressed in contemporary Latvian society and culture :
 - demographic crisis;
 - crisis of stable marriage;
 - discussions and confusions in the understanding of marriage and family (in the last 10 - 20 years in Western society) in contrast to the Latvian cultural heritage and pre-World War II Latvian society;
 - new approaches in education reform (Skola2030) - integration of all dimensions of education (virtues and values, competences and knowledge);
 - Topicality of virtues and values in normative documents (Introduction to the Constitution, Education Law, Regulations of the Cabinet of Ministers: education standards, guidelines for the education of pupils);
 - Topicality of sexuality education issues (including in the context of violence) in Latvian society and culture today.

Aim: to identify the current perspectives on sexuality education and family-formation values in the existing normative documents of the Republic of Latvia related to education, interpreting them in the context of Latvian cultural heritage.

Research question: how are the dimension of sexuality education and family-formation values reflected in the normative documents of the Republic of Latvia in the field of education, taking into account the cultural heritage of Latvian society?

Research framework

Current legislation on education was studied

Latvian cultural heritage and experience of education between the World Wars was taken into account

The interpretation of the documents was carried out in the cultural and historical context of Latvia, with an ethically neutral attitude (trying to avoid any ideological positions).

Research base:

Current regulatory documents

Latvian Constitution;

Education Law, General Education Law, Youth Law;

Guidelines for the Upbringing of Educatees (Cabinet Regulation No. 480);

Regulations Regarding the State Basic Education Standard (Cabinet Regulation No. 747, 2018);

Regulations Regarding the State General Secondary Education Standard (Cabinet Regulation No. 416, 2019);

Latvia's Sustainable Development Strategy (“Latvija2030”) & Latvian National Development Plan 2021-2027;

Latvian cultural heritage: education regulatory documents and pedagogical thought materials between the World Wars

Method and process of document analysis

- Document analysis and interpretation.
- An initial list of key words and concepts reflecting the values of sexuality education and family formation.

Groups of concepts :

1) *Reflecting the value of family formation and its problematics :*

family, marriage, fertility, life, parents, mother, father, generations, children, lineage;

2) *Reflecting the sexuality dimension :*

sexuality, male, female, sex, sexuality education (sex drive, sexual relations, sex roles), gender; love, happiness, fidelity or faithfulness (especially in marriage, family).

Table 1 : Reflecting family-formation aspects in documents

Doc / concept	Constitution	Education Law	General Education Law	Youth Law	Upbringing Guidelines	Basic Ed. Standard	Secondary Education Standard	Strategy "Latvija-2030"	National Develop. Plan 2021-27
Family	3	10	1	-	8	21	5	13	112
Marriage	1	1	-	-	3	3	2	(2)	1/3
Life	1	11	-	-	2	5/18	2/15	1	1
Fertility	-	-	-	-	-	-	(1)	(3)	-
Parents	2	33	4	-	5	(21)	(3)	23	24
Mother	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	2
Father	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	1
Generations	1	-	-	-	1	(1)	3/11	7	11
Children	-	62	13	-	2	6	-	95	52

Table 1 : Reflecting sexuality education aspects in documents

Document / concept	Constitu- tion	Education Law	General Education Law	Youth Law	Upbringing Guidelines	Basic Ed. Standard	Secondary Education Standard	Strategy "Latvija- 2030"	National Develop. Plan 2021-27
Sexuality	-	-	-	-	(p)	-	1	-	1
Woman	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	3	(7)
Man	1	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	(6)
sex- (‘dzimum’)	-	1	-	-	2	3/7	1/4	(3)	(3)
Love	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Happiness	-	-	-	-	-	6	2	-	2 (5)
Fidelity	(2)	-	-	-	1	2	(2)	(8)	(15)

Concepts related to values not mentioned in the documents

Nowhere mentioned are important aspects of sexuality education - sexual life, sexual relations, sexual drive, gender roles, nurturing relationships between the sexes, childbearing as a value and openness to life in sexual relations.

There is also the absence of the now controversial concept of "gender" (which may be linked to "gender role", "gender awareness").

None of the documents analysed (not even the "Guidelines for the Upbringing") mentions love as a value or at least as a matter of discussion (which could be mentioned, for example, in the Standards).

No mention of the broader family framework - in Latvian: "dzimta" ("lineage") - a wider circle of relatives.

Table 3 : Sexuality education and family-formation dimensions between the World Wars

Historical sources / concepts	Education Law "On Latvian Education Institutions" 1919	Education Law "On Latvian Minority Schools" 1919	J. Students <i>Ethics</i> 1930	E. Upatniece 1938
Sexuality	-	-	-	+
Woman	-	-	+	+
Man	-	-	+	+
Family	+	+	+	+
Mother	-	-	+	+
Father	-	-	+	+
Sex- ('dzim-')	-	-	+	+
Love	-	-	+	+
Happiness	-	-	+	+
Marriage	-	-	+	+
Fidelity	-	-	+	+

The experience of the inter- World Wars in Latvia (commentary)

The 1919 Education Law mentions the competence of the family and parents :

«39. In all compulsory schools, teaching must be in the language of the pupils' family.

40. The language of the pupil's family is the language which the parents of the child specify when the child is registered at the school and in which the child can freely express his or her thoughts.»

However, the topic of sexuality education and family-formation literacy only appears in publications :

J. Students (1930) defined "the ethics of love" as including love for one's neighbor and between a man and a woman [p. 13, 51]. He distinguished stable relationships [p. 29] from casual encounters [p. 39]. Sexual passion, while natural, must be morally regulated: "Love cannot be based on it alone" [p. 53]. True love is exclusive—one person, once in a lifetime [pp. 53-54]. "It is scientifically proven, and confirmed by observation, that when young people indulge in a life of passion, especially sexual relations, before marriage, love tends to wither away as people become indifferent to each other" [p. 57].

E. Upatniece's (1938) lecture on sexual education gathered an unprecedented audience (Rīts, 1938). She emphasized the crucial role of family and school in children's and youth's sexual education. She advised that families should begin educating children from infancy and play a key role during puberty, while schools should be responsible for sexual education in adolescence..

Conclusions :

- ❖ The dimension of values of sexuality education and family formation is outlined in the legislation of the Republic of Latvia, but it is not consistently developed in other normative documents for the implementation of education, especially in Standards.
- 1) The need for sexuality education and family formation stems from the demographic situation in Latvia, and the Constitution and the Education Law declare it;
 - 2) The values of sexuality education and family formation are mostly found in the Guidelines for the Upbringing (Cabinet Regulation No. 480);
 - 3) The values of sexuality education and family formation are mentioned, but not sufficiently covered in the pupil learning outcomes - in both general education standards (Cabinet Regulations No 747, 2017 and No 416, 2019). However, the Basic Education Standard as a whole elaborates more than the General Secondary Education Standard;
 - 4) These dimensions are absent from the Youth Law, very scarcely in the General Education Law
 - 5) A more detailed perspective in this area is provided by the "National Development Plan 2021-2027", as well as by the "Latvia's Sustainability Strategy Latvia2030", but to a lesser extent.

List of recommended conceptual terms

(for improving and updating education regulatory documents)

- Sexuality education (understanding sexuality, sexual hygiene, sexual drive, sexual relations, gender equality and gender roles)
- Understanding sexual differences, respect for the opposite sex
- The value of marriage, marriage as a durable, permanent union
- Stability in the family and in marriage, fostered by mutual fidelity
- Values of love, forgiveness, patience, fidelity and friendship
- The value of procreation and upbringing of children, of the growth of the nation, of generational renewal and responsibility for the future of the nation

Use of results

The results of the research will contribute to the improvement of pedagogical practice by preparing conceptual proposals for the promotion of sexuality education and family-formation literacy in the education system, as well as for the development of the regulatory framework:

- further research will lead to proposals for a draft report on policy recommendations in this area (in the frame of the Recovery and resilience Facility project “Internal and external consolidation of the University of Latvia” (No.5.2.1.1.i.0/24/I/CFLA/007), project grant «Strengthening values-based family literacy and sexuality education in the Latvian education system» No. LU-BA-PA-2024/1-0011).

Literature used (conceptual section)

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- Obeleniene, B. (2022). *From birth control to self-awareness and free decision making. A model for the evaluation of comprehensive sexuality education from the perspective of women's health and free informed choice*. The Pontifical University of John Paul II in Krakow.

Literature used between World Wars

- Education Law «On Latvian Education Institutions» [Par Latvijas izglītības iestādēm] 1919
- Education Law «On Latvian Minority Schools» [Par Latvijas mazākumtautību skolām] 1919
- J. Students (1930). *Ethics*.
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Thank you for your attention!