



IN SEARCH FOR CULTURAL IDENTITY: STRATEGIES OF ETHNO-CULTURAL EDUCATION IN LITHUANIAN GENERAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

Many researchers of education and culture maintain that contemporary culture undergoes essential changes. The young generation understands culture and its aims differently from their parents. They are easily influenced by present day culture. The previously valued national ideals, symbols, history, language, religion have a different meaning for them. At the same time the personal cultural identity is changing and becoming hybrid. As one of the most frequently presented ways how to resist globalization and to preserve one's cultural identity is the development and fostering of ethnic culture. The article will analyze the situation of ethnic culture and ethno-cultural education in Lithuania. Following the data of the qualitative research "Identity, cultural transmission and national education" (2010), the attitude of learners (11th formers) and educators (learners' parents, grandparents and teachers) towards the importance of ethnic culture in the process of education to the (self-)formation of cultural identity as well as various strategies for ethno-cultural education in school are discussed. (The article was supported by the Lithuanian Science Council; project "Education as enculturation", contract no. LIT-4-16.)

The search for cultural identity is not a new thing in the sphere of Lithuanian science and publicity. The issues of Lithuanian identity were widely analyzed in the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, in the period of liberation from the grip of Tsarist Russia and in 1918 – 1940 in the years of the revival of the Republic of Lithuania. After the Second World War, when Lithuania was still a part of the Soviet Union, the issues of Lithuanian identity were examined in detail only in exile. In 1988 during the beginning of the second national revival period in Lithuania, and especially in 1990 when Lithuania regained its independence, the research into cultural identity gained its relevance again. While analyzing the issues of cultural identity, scientists from different fields of research inevitably touched upon cultural and educational links (Čepienė, 1997, 2001, 2008; Lukšienė, 2000; Trinkūnienė, Krukauskienė, 2002; Trinkūnienė, 2010; Grigas, 2010, etc.).

The issue of the influence of educational institutions and individual educators on the formation of cultural identity became a matter of particular importance with the fear that Lithuanian culture loses its identity and integrity due to globalization, that it is becoming mosaic and fragmented, that the younger generation lives in a radically different way than the older generation and understands culture and its purpose differently, that the ideals, symbols, history, language, religion lose their previous value and that cultural identity is acquiring ambiguous, hybrid-like characteristics. It is considered that this could be one of the main reasons of the increasing emigration flow of young people (Lithuanian education. Just the facts, 2010, p. 127). The saying of one of the classical scholars of the science of comparative education M. Sadler could be adapted to the analysis of the current situation, which says that things outside of school are even more important than within the school (Sadler, 1964, p. 310) that the processes independent of educational institutions had the impact on the decline of the importance of cultural identity: the society was trying to get out of the Soviet space and enjoyed what had for many years been banned. Personal goals of well-being overshadowed commitments to their own culture and community, the change of needs and values, public dissatisfaction with the current economic situation and social policy have been having a continuous influence on the growth of contempt towards their own culture (Lithuanian education. Just the facts, 2010, p. 127).

However, there have been mistakes made in educational policy as well. As an example of one of them is the fact that Lithuanian linguistic education has long been regarded primarily as the education of preserving heritage, while the rapidly modernizing



country needed “renewable way of thinking that is suitable for modern living, a non-provincial Lithuanian linguistic culture” (Ibid, p. 127).

Of course not only in Lithuania the concept of culture, nation, identity have for a long time been accepted by the educational institutions as a kind of givens and used without too much consideration. Cultural identity and the essence of sovereignty have been understood as existing since birth, as being uniform and permanent and resistant to change forever. Cultural identity is defined as “entirety of thoughts, feelings, behavior particular to and widely spread among certain groups of people and emerging in subsequent generations”. The main aim of national education is identified as a desire to preserve and transmit the cultural heritage of the nation, to promote a sense of national belonging among citizens and to ensure cultural continuity of the nation (Mallinson, 1975 in Klerides, 2009). However, globalization-related changes as well as the paradigm transformation of social and humanitarian sciences have once again stimulated the discussion of these concepts. With the appearance of new approaches towards culture, nation and identity (Bhabha, 1990; Hall, 1992, 1996, Wodak et al., 1999, etc.) the concept of *discourse* and *creation of meaning* acquire special power, sometimes not only with tangible but also with imaginary (Anderson, 1994) constructs. *Inherited identity* as a sort of ethno-cultural code, emerging through the configurations of thinking, feeling and behavior and being transmitted from one generation to the other in the process of enculturation is being replaced by the concept of *constructed identity* (M. Weber, F. Barth, M. Castells). The problem is that while “playing” with concepts and considering identity to be a multiple, vague, inconsistent, “blurred”, changing, redeveloping construct, its very essence might often be lost. As it has been aptly observed by R. Brubaker and F. Cooper (2000), that since the sixth decade of the 20th century the identity research having transcended the disciplinary boundaries, and identity having become one of the most popular research objects of social sciences, it has become possible to discuss about the crisis not of the identity as such but about the crisis of the “identity” as one of the most controversial concepts. Eventually, the identity of the identity (Nabeth, 2009) has become increasingly problematic. After all, it does not matter if one is going to speak about national identity, or of “global citizenship”, but it is the conceptual uncertainty that is the main cause of misunderstanding among education policy makers, researchers and practitioners (Rapoport, 2009). Another problem of educational policy is the attempt to “float” among the conservative attitudes and at the same time look out for new theories and instructions that would allow to catch up with social and educational innovation (Duoblienė, 2009), as well as the attempt to comply with the key documents that underpin European and Lithuanian policy of culture and education.

Besides, it should be admitted that even in the best agreement, the implementation of theoretical approaches and practical decisions of educational policy can be difficult.

The aim of this article is:

- To reveal the specifics of national policy of education in terms of formation and preservation of (ethno) cultural identity, with reference to the analysis of the documents of Lithuanian culture and educational policies and their consistency with the EU documents;
- Based on the empirical study to find out how successfully the policies of ethnic culture and ethno-cultural education are realized in educational practice at secondary schools.

Research methods

The analysis of scientific literature, and document, content analysis, as well as qualitative research data analysis. The paper presents the data of the first block of questions of Vilnius University research group study conducted in 2010 “Identity, cultural transmission and national education” on ethnic culture, its transmission and ethnic identity formation. The formation of the sample of the qualitative survey was based on the choice of ten 11th formers from different (5 urban and 5 rural) schools in Lithuania and their educators who have a direct relationship with the them in their educational process, i.e. ten



study nests were formed each consisting of four respondents (a student - his / her father or mother - his / her grandmother or grandfather - his / her class teacher / s). Using a semi-standardized interview method 40 respondents were interviewed in total.

The qualitative information obtained during the interviews was analyzed in two ways: a) responses of each interview were analyzed separately, taking into account the overall context of the interview and compared with each other; b) the respondents' answers to interview questions are sorted out in a table to show the thematic similarities of research results of each study nest, highlighting the transmission, continuity, consistency of ethnic culture, or vice versa revealing disagreements or generation gap conflicts. The results of qualitative data analysis and their interpretation are presented in the form of flowcharts of discursive structures and representative text passages.

Educational policy of ethno-cultural identity development: the analysis of documents

As it has been already mentioned, the Lithuanian cultural identity formation began to be considered when Lithuania was still a part of the Soviet Union. The need of personal development of cultural identity was particularly extensively and thoroughly discussed in 1988 issue of *Lithuanian Secondary School Concept*, more commonly known as the *National School Concept*. It tackles both the general cultural issues and the relationships of a developing personality with culture. The origins of national (ethnic) culture, the importance of interculturalism are also pointed out. It is unequivocally stated that “the cultural process, being closed in its form and content, degenerates,” and “cultural isolation poses a threat of ossification and stagnation” (Ibid, p. 5.).

The principles of the *National School Concept* are partly echoed by the *Lithuanian concept of education* (1992), with a particular emphasis on nationalism, commitment to Lithuanian culture, concern for the preservation of its identity and historical continuity. It is also noted that “the Lithuanian education protects the national culture enriched by the multiple cultures of national minorities” at the same time retaining the national core, it is open to renewal and change (1992, p. 7). The commitment to provide the fundamentals of national and ethnic culture, to guarantee the continuity of the nation, national culture, to preserve the continuous development of its identity and values, is expressed both in the current *Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania* [Official Gazette, 2003, no. 63-2853, Article 3, paragraph 4] and its earlier versions.

Strengthening the role of culture in Lithuania in response to the challenges of globalization is also highlighted in the *Strategic Regulations of the Development of Education in Lithuania for 2003-2012* (2002). While drawing up the guidelines of education this document states that “modern technological development does not in itself guarantee the survival of the nation” and “Lithuania can shape and retain its identity only through culture”, therefore “education should be based on a coherent national cultural and civic tradition, its communication, interpretation and development” (Guidelines of the Ministry of Education, 2002, p. 23). However, having surveyed the work done in the implementation of these regulations, the Ministry of Education and Science acknowledges that no specific targets and measures were provided (Education in Lithuania, 2010, p.127).

It would seem, a lot of attention is devoted to the regulation of ethnic culture and educational relations in the *Framework Convention for the Protection of Ethnic Culture of the Republic of Lithuania* (1999), which states that the Ministry of Education and Science together with the institutions under its governance should integrate ethnic culture in all types and levels of educational curricula, create conditions for the introduction of ethnic culture courses in the curricula of general education schools, promote diverse ethnic cultural activities in extra-curricular education, strengthen the training and professional development of teachers of ethnic culture, take care of their qualification, etc. in order to ensure transmission and nurturing of ethnic culture in formal and non-formal education system (Official Gazette., 1999, no. 82-2414, 9).



In order to achieve a more targeted, consistent and higher quality education of ethnic culture the *Strategy Project of Lithuanian Ethnic Culture in Secondary Schools* is presented in 2006. While analyzing the current cultural and educational challenges, the project puts even more emphasis on the threats caused by the process of globalization. There were concerns expressed about children and youth's alienation from nature, the decrease of cultural and physical activities, students' computer and internet addiction syndrome, the fading position and social power of local communities to impose moral norms and disintegration of traditional family (*Strategy Project of Lithuanian Ethnic Culture in Secondary Schools*, 2008, p. 3). Noting that the objectives and tasks of the educational institutions to develop ethnic culture as defined by the legislative acts of the Republic of Lithuania "have not been implemented yet", "schools as well as society are dominated by scenic culture, whereas live culture is almost neglected," on November 19th, 2009 the *Strategy of the Development of Ethnic Culture in Educational Institutions* was approved by the Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania. This strategy provides the analysis of the challenges that the contemporary society and national cultural continuity face nowadays, the relevance of the development of ethnic culture is also re-emphasized. It is stated that "the experience of successfully working schools in the field of ethnic culture development has shown that ethnic culture presented by methods of informal education is attractive to young people, brings school community together and strengthens its ties with the local community"; "educational institutions which foster ethno-cultural education express a greater need for the knowledge of traditional culture, Lithuanian students are more patriotic and less likely to emigrate." However, the analysis of the current situation, among other things, highlights the lack of ethnic culture specialists, pointing out that those, who are working, usually do their job led by the mere enthusiasm and dedication, receiving no award for the organized ethno-cultural activities. This is one of the reasons why teaching of this subject is significantly reduced - in 2002 according to the survey carried out by Ethnic Culture Council the subject was taught in 56 schools (44 – Highland, 4 - Dzūkija regions, 8 - Kaunas city) and in the survey conducted by Teacher Professional Development Center in 2006 - only 18 schools.

Particular problems arise in the process of curriculum design and its implementation. *Strategy of the Development of Ethnic Culture in Educational Institutions* (2009) noted that "general curricula include ethnic culture neither as mandatory nor as an optional subject", "the integration of ethnic culture into the curriculum is superficial and does not produce tangible results. Therefore, many students lack basic knowledge about traditions of their country, find it difficult to understand their national history and cultural identity", "formal educational programmes integrate ethnic culture into separate individual subjects (e.g., the Lithuanian language, world knowledge, art, history, technology, music, choreography, moral education and others.)", "no special classroom time and attention is given to ethnic culture." This is especially true of secondary education (*Strategy of the Development of Ethnic Culture in Educational Institutions*, 2009).

As it has been shown by the study of *The Use /Efficacy of General Education Curricula and Standards in Planning and Organizing Education at School* (2008), 11th and 12th class teachers are really more focused on course presentation and delivery and preparation for the exams, with frequent treatment of broader educational goals and development of value attitudes as a kind of ballast of little importance. Such results of the research encourage to further explore the general curricula of secondary education.

In order to reveal the changes in cultural education and identity formation there were chosen the *General Curricula and General Educational Standards of the Schools of Lithuanian General Education. 11th -12th classes* of 2002 and *General Secondary Education Curricula* approved at the beginning of 2011. Attention was focused on general curricula of the Lithuanian language and history, the basic subjects of Lithuanian linguistic education.

The analysis of general curricula of the Lithuanian language and history of the Lithuanian general education secondary education curricula revealed that in 2002 the



Lithuanian language curriculum was more concentrated on the development of professional competence, whereas in 2011 more focus was given to cultural education. In her response the researcher of the Lithuanian literature and literary critic professor Vanda Zaborskaitė welcomed the fact that in the new curriculum version literature generally “is understood as an integrating factor of all the students’ cultural experience” (2011, p. 1). Literary and cultural links, or even their identification is particularly visible in the description of the Lithuanian language course objective: “to help students develop their communicative Lithuanian language and their literary (cultural) competences, help students shape the mentality of a free, responsible human being, develop their personal relationship with literature (culture), strengthen their identity and self-esteem; help perceive themselves as inheritors, promoters and creators of language and culture.” (*General Secondary Education Curriculum. Lithuanian language*. 2011, p. 2). Cultural education in history curriculum is given less emphasis, but the curriculum of the year 2011, stresses the need to provide students with the conditions for the development “of their Lithuanian national, European identity” (*General Secondary Education Curriculum. History*. 2011, p. 3).

In order to find out how much attention is paid to the formation of Lithuanian culture and national (ethnic) identity not only by setting educational goals, but also in designing the content of the curriculum, content analysis of the Lithuanian General Secondary Education Curricula of the Lithuanian language and history was done. Assuming that the key units (words, compounds, and their presence and intensity in the text) reflects certain aspects of the study analyzed, the following concepts were identified: *nation(s)*, *nationality*, *national*, *ethnic*, *ethnicity*, and *culture (national, Lithuanian, ethnic, European, world)*, *intercultural*, *interculturalism*, *multicultural*, *multiculturalism*, *identity (European, national)*, *customs*, *tradition(s)*, *traditional*, *globalization*, *global*, and quantitative analysis carried out.

On the basis of content analysis, we can state that the curricula of 2011 have devoted much more attention to the aspects related to the nation or nations. Among those mentioned are as follows: national consciousness, nation’s mentality, nation building, national survival, outlook, the historical destiny of the nation, the national spirit, national movement, etc. The curricula focus not only on the Lithuanian nation, culture and identity, but also on ethnic minorities, that were not mentioned in the curriculum of the Lithuanian language and history of 2002. However, it should be noted that ethnic minorities are not directly linked to interculturalism and multiculturalism. In general, the term “multiculturalism” has been referred only once: in the curriculum of history of 2011 it is noted that the students should know and understand how to “describe the means and the ways in which European Union countries are trying to build a multicultural society” (p. 15). Though the Lithuanian language curriculum (2011) draws more attention to European culture, yet, like in the former one, the curriculum developers do not see any challenges of globalization, threats or opportunities. History curriculum developers in 2002 advised to take into account localized and global aspects and included the theme of “globalization”, in the curriculum of 2011 offering to “evaluate the impact of globalization on social life” so that the students could be able to “determine which areas of the modern world and Lithuanian social life are affected by the process of globalization”, “provide examples to illustrate positive and negative effects caused by globalization” (p. 17).

The curricula of the Lithuanian language refer to the concept of ethnicity only by offering to discuss the concept of nation (ethnic and political) (2011, p.24). Meanwhile, the use of this concept in the history curriculum has increased substantially: the 2002 curriculum offered only the analysis of the development of an ethnic group, the curriculum of 2011 already includes such notions as ethnic composition, ethnic groups, ethnic tolerance and ethnic change. Unfortunately, neither the ethnic culture or ethno-cultural traditions and customs fail to be found among the concepts of secondary education curricula of history or the Lithuanian language. However, these concepts are partly compensated by the concepts of national culture, Lithuanian culture or national cultural traditions. These notions are evident in the curricula of 2011. In 2002 curricula the concept



of tradition is mentioned in combination with concepts of literature (literary) tradition, the tradition of Christian culture.

Overall, we see that the content of the curricula often ignores such notions as the development of ethnic culture and ethno-cultural identity formation. Although some positive changes are being observed in the curricula of 2011, they are not sufficient. Moreover, we observed a weak connection of these curricula with the existing educational documents, e.g., the mentioned strategy of ethnic culture development in educational policy (2004).

The promotion, development and conservation of national, ethnic and cultural identity, the formation of national identity are the issues addressed not only by educational, but also other documents, for example, *Law on Basics of National Security of the Republic of Lithuania* (1997), *the Regulations of the Lithuanian Cultural Policy* (2001), the *National Programme of the Development of Ethnic Culture* approved by the Lithuanian Government (2003). Yet, not only that the publications do not have clear links or even contradict each other, but they are hard to be implemented in practice due to lack of cooperation of various institutions. This fact is recognized by politicians and public servants. *The Lithuanian cultural policy change guidelines* (2010) noted lack of cultural cooperation targeted at the development of cultural education, creative industries. Cultural policies are often separated from other areas of life in Lithuania, and thus education.

It is even more difficult to reconcile national aspirations and maintain the European Union standards, promote national culture and cultural diversity. In 2008 Convention (*“The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions 2005”* (Paris, 20 October 2005), the main document covering five consecutive years that focus on the diversity of cultures and their life in union, seeks to comprise all aspects and new challenges of cultural life (ethnic, religious, linguistic, gender, social). The document pays a great attention to education (Article 10) that could help preserve cultural welfare, material and spiritual heritage in terms of ensuring sustainability of culture and diversity and local cultures. More emphasis on local culture preservation is laid by the *UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention* (2004) – “Each State / Country by all appropriate means, seeks to ensure recognition of the intangible cultural heritage, its respect and prestige in the society, by implementing programmes that aim to educate, raise the awareness and provide information targeted at general public, especially young people, by implementing specific educational and training programmes within the communities and groups” (Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention, 2004, article 14). However, as the study of Čičinskas J. political documents on the cultural development of the European Union revealed, although the EU is not trying to impose but promote joint cultural activities and to ensure the independence of its all member states, yet, in the common European policy context, weaker new EU member states will inevitably face a greater threat to their national culture and cultural identity than the most powerful longstanding members of the EU (2006, p. 263).

Perhaps for this reason, quite a number of more conservative politicians and educators perceive the emphasis on cultural diversity, the development of multiculturalism and interculturalism as a clash or even threat to the enhancement of ethnic culture and ethno-cultural education rather than two sides that form cultural identity.

Expression of Ethnic Culture in Secondary Schools of General Education.

According to Urbanavičienė D., Chairperson of the Council for the Ethnic Protection, who provided public consultancy at the Ministry of Education and Science, seeking to implement the model of ethnic culture in secondary schools of general education, it is necessary to arrange the living tradition of practical activities, ethnic cultural groups of non-formal education and have compulsory lessons in ethnic culture. These three segments (especially the third) were distinguished following Trinkūnienė’s (2010) study in which the interviewed teachers emphasized the significance of ethnic culture to the development of



children and called for compulsory lessons in ethnic culture, continuous training in ethnic culture from the elementary school, in order to consolidate the status of ethnic culture and ensure the consistency of its delivery and systemic availability.

Our study on “The identity, cultural transmission and national education“ (2010), revealed that in none of the investigated schools ethnic culture lessons were delivered (mandatory or optional) and none of the surveyed young people at that time participated in the activities of folk clubs. Yet, most of them expressed a positive attitude towards ethnic culture. Only one respondent, an 11th year student, noted that he was “*not very concerned about the national identity and ethnic culture is not important for him at the time being*”. Another one said he had even never heard of such a thing, so he cannot comment. It is likely that the majority of young people took over a positive approach from adults who stated that ethnic culture “*is very important for the human life, since it covers many areas, i.e., all the material and spiritual heritage*” (teacher of Lithuanian language and literature, aged 46); that it plays “*a very, very significant, very big part*” (mother, aged 42), etc. However, the detailed study showed that, unfortunately, we have to agree with Trinkūnienė, who claims that the declaration of a positive relationship with the issues of ethnic culture does not mean that these issues became the people's self, and an integral part of everyday life (2010, p. 48).

In particular, dual attitudes were revealed not when generally talking about the importance of ethnic culture to the development of young personalities but when analyzing specific educational situations. One of them was the real conflict observed between parents and school management that led to raise a question - dilemma to the subjects. The students were asked if they were given a chance to choose an additional lesson, which of the following and why they would rather select: ethnic culture, mathematics, religion, English or another subject. Their parents, grandparents and teachers were asked what the lesson and why they would advise to choose for their children, grandchildren and students.

It should be noted that, unlike in Trinkūnienė's study (2010, 2010a), none of the teachers delivered ethnic culture as a subject themselves. Nevertheless, some of them notified that they would encourage their pupils to choose ethnic culture lessons, because such lessons would enable them to resist cosmopolitan trends and maintain their own identity (history teacher, aged 49), would spiritually enrich them (teacher of Lithuanian language and literature, aged 46) students would gain better and more comprehensive knowledge about the ethnic culture, and not only familiarize themselves with “*very small episodes of it*” (art teacher, aged 61) or just such lessons would help to have a rest from the lessons of English and mathematics, that “*are numerous as it is*” so that the students relax and get involved (technology teacher, aged 31).

However, part of our interviewed teachers showed their hesitation: “*If from patriotic perspective, from the point of view of a Lithuanian teacher - the ethnic culture <...> if from a pragmatic perspective, probably, the English language – everyone is excited about English these days*” (teacher of Lithuanian language and literature teacher, aged 54) or “*being a teacher of the Lithuanian language, I would encourage them to select ethnic culture, but they are children ... in this respect, we can only explain to them, advise, provide arguments. I am in charge of the second year of high school – when they were selecting their major subjects, I strongly suggested a second foreign language*” (teacher of Lithuanian language and literature, aged 56).

Following the teachers' opinion, the final examinations are among the main reasons why students should choose one or the other subject. As one teacher stated, “*if the children are interested in culture and ethnicity, they can find the information elsewhere. Now, when their goal is to pass the exam and enter university, then I would suggest one from major subjects*” (mathematics teacher, aged 41). Unsurprisingly, the final exams have been one of the reasons for young people in taking their choice: “*I think I'll choose from the major subjects, either math or English. <...> I'm going to take the exam, and some additional lessons will be handy. It's much easier. There is little benefit in choosing ethnic culture or ethics. I am not going to take a test*” (a student).



Young people's choice of an additional English class is also decided by their future studies, especially if they plan to study abroad. The majority of parents and grandparents, and even those who expressed strong dissatisfaction about an increasingly growing migration of young people, are also not against their children's future studies abroad. Undoubtedly, these adults are in favour of an additional English language class, rather than that of ethno-cultural study.

Even in cases where young people would prefer ethnic culture lessons, English lessons are recommended by adults. A high school student from Vilnius expressed the need to study ethno-cultural issues in order to know *"who we are, where we are from, to know our traditions, customs, so that we would not disappear as a nation"*. Yet, his mother advised her son to choose the English language, because it *"will best help him in his future studies for the specialty he has chosen to study"* (mother, aged 39). The English language is advised by grandfather (aged 69) so that his grandson could be able to *"communicate with the rest of the world"*. A teacher advises foreign languages, too.

Only in one of the studied cases we observed a unanimous positive attitude to ethnic cultural lessons - not only the participating student, her mother and grandmother, but also the teacher selected ethnic culture lessons in the first place. According to grandmother (aged 71), they would serve as the best form of engagement, promoting further interest in this area, participation in various programs, purposeful leisure time and escape from idleness. The teacher (supported by the student's mother (49)) argued that there are too many classes of other subjects as it is. Meanwhile, there is a lack of classes that provide not only with theoretical knowledge but could develop a harmonious and coherent personality, because *"the students' heads are crammed as it is, they all look so concerned"* (teacher of physical education and geography, aged 31). Yet, it was notified that in order to develop such a personality, a systemic approach to ethno-culture needs to emerge and appropriate activities should be available. The focus should not only be on folklore, but also on everyday life, Lithuanian household, and especially communication.

The element of communication is particularly important in non-formal education. In terms of educational value, the forms of performance or stage (e.g., folk festivals) are observed to be less effective rather than those that engage a majority of the school community (e.g., special occasions, especially Shrove Tuesday celebrations) (Trinkūnienė, 2010). The students involved in our study and projects also claimed that taking part in ethno-cultural activities for them primarily meant *"having fun time together, communicating with peers."* *"First of all, it was very funny. I liked the people there. I liked what we did together"*, said the student and pointed out that by *"fun"* she does not mean anything *"frivolous"*. According to this student, participation in ethno-cultural activities not only united, but also helped her feel *"being exclusive"*, *"I liked that we learned, for example, Lithuanian folk songs, which people do not sing every day. Then you feel sort of unique because you can do something more to tell and show something more than ordinary people can. You feel even better when you know that this is related to your country's past and that it is just your folklore but not anybody else's. You will be able to show that to any American or German, something that they do not have and have never seen. Indeed we have a very rich and big treasure of folklore. You really need a lot of time if you want to know. And once you start getting familiar with it, you want to learn more and more. It really means a lot to me"* (a student).

Unfortunately, this student, like many others, talked about the involvement in non-formal ethno-cultural education in the past tense. High school students due to their increased workload, preparation for the final exams, and sometimes because of a false belief that ethnographic groups and ethno-cultural events are targeted only at *"the smallest ones"* are not sufficiently involved in their activities. As shown by the survey data, the false belief of high school 11th formers that ethno-cultural activities are aimed at juniors was probably taken over from their adults - parents, grandparents and teachers.



Conclusion

Having conducted the analysis of the main Lithuanian and some of the EU's cultural and educational documents, we can state that the legal base for the preservation and promotion of ethnic culture and the formation of cultural identity is quite favourable. However, in real life the realization of the legal regulations recorded in these documents face significant obstacles.

One of them is lack of coherence and links between various documents. Strategic regulations are hardly taken into account not only by General Curricula but also in educational practice. Actually, the foreseen big objectives are most commonly not followed by foreseen means to realize them.

Another obstacle is conceptual (e.g., cultural identity) uncertainty. This is one of the key reasons of the misunderstanding among education policy makers, researchers and practitioners. Yet, even a clear definition of the concepts may not find any response in the society. The definition of ethnic culture could serve as an example. The law of state protection framework of ethnic culture describes that "ethnic culture is a continuously updated set of cultural values created by the nation (ethnos), passed on from generation to generation, helping to preserve the national identity and consciousness and identity of ethnographic regions". The declaration of ethnic cultural dynamism and continuous renewal is obvious. But in the reality ethnic culture is often perceived as a reflection of the traditional peasant culture that once existed or simply as a museum exhibit.

However, the biggest problem is declarativeness about ethnic culture, both in political and institutional levels of education – while declaring the importance of ethnic culture, majority often succumb to pragmatic temptations. The data analysis of a qualitative empirical study "Identity, cultural transmission and national education" (2010) revealed that even though emphatic words were used to describe the importance of ethnic culture, in most cases young people were invited to select additional English language classes. Unfortunately, we have to note that in adults who regret about young people taking care little of ethnic culture, pragmatic rules are much stronger.

In conclusion, it should be added that ethnic culture (especially in secondary school) should be studied in the intercultural context, whereas ethno-cultural education should be understood as an integral part of intercultural education. By understanding *Ourselves* we can be open to *Others*, by feeling proud of our own culture, we will be able to respect others.

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