Toward The Humanistic Paradigm In Education: A Case Study

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Abstract

Alongside constructivism, the humanistic approach is a core premise in the Good School Concept (2016), a major document on the educational policy in secondary schools in the Republic of Lithuania. However, the humanistic approach is driven by the psychological, rather than educational, perspective and does not have an educational framework. The present study seeks to explore the theoretical notion of humanism from the educational perspective. We first develop an approach to the humanistic paradigm in education as comprising five other paradigms, viz., instrumental pragmatism, social constructivism, humanism in the narrow sense, postmodernism and care ethics. We then deliver a qualitative case study of a Lithuanian sports and distance learning school, employing Stake's (1995) triangulation method, thematic analysis by Terry et.al. (2017) and elements of discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995, van Dijk 2008, Wodak and Meyer 2006). The findings of the study summarize the expectations of the participants of the educational process in light of the humanistic model proposed in the work. The proposed framework is hoped to be of interest in the research into humanism in education.

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1. Introduction

The incorporation of humanistic principles into Lithuanian secondary education system stems from the educational reform launched after the restoration of Lithuania's Independence and following the publication of the of the *General Programs of the Lithuanian General Education*[2] (1994) (*General Programs and Education Standards*[3], 2003). Signed by the Lithuanian Parliament in 2002, the *National Agreement for Economic and Social Progress*[4] emphasizes the importance of the development of the civil society through the orientation towards humanistic provisions. Humanistic philosophy is also indicated as the main philosophical approach in the *Good School Concept*[5], which has become a formative document for the educational system in Lithuania since 2016 (*Education in Paradigm of Change*[6] (hereinafter *EPC*), 2016). Humanistic values have drawn significant attention of Lithuanian scholars Bitinas (2013), Duoblienė (2011), Lepeškienė (1996), Lukšienė (2000), Targamadzė (2010), alongside a series of works examining the practical manifestations of humanism in Lithuanian educational institutions and individual subject programs (Baltrušaitytė, 2015; Bigelienė, 2004; Jančiauskas, 2013; Salienė and Toleikytė, 2014; Survutaitė and Vaičekauskienė, 2014). In themes dealing with the critical assessment of the application of humanism in Lithuanian educational system, researchers explore the potential impediments to the implementation of humanism as a free educational paradigm. A common understanding of the provisions of the humanistic educational paradigm is posited as a prerequisite for its successful implementation in the school system, while lack of a systematic approach puts to question the efficiency of the application

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[2] Lith. Lietuvos bendrojo lavinimo mokyklos bendrosios programos. Projektai.
[3] Lith. Bendrosios programos ir išsilavinimo standartai.
[4] Lith. Nacionalinis susitarimas siekiant ekonominės ir socialinės pažangos.
[5] Lith. Geros mokyklos koncepcija.
[6] Lith. Ugdymas paradigmos kaitoje.

of the Good School Concept and the feasibility of the humanistic paradigm overall (Bruzgelevičienė, 2020, Targamadzė, 2016, 2018).

Humanism is perceived here as an anthropocentric paradigm of free education (Bitinas, 2013; Bruzgelevičienė, 2017; Targamadzė, 2010), grounded in the values of democracy, human dignity and recognition of human individuality, and placing the student in the center of the educational process. However, although humanism is well-defined in psychology through works by Maslow (1943, 1971), Rogers (1951, 1969, 1970), with traces deducible at various time periods throughout history (e.g., Lollini 2008, Sellars 2020), it has no clear framework in education (dr. Simona Kontrimiene, personal communication). This is why the present study has two goals: a) to develop a theoretical framework for humanism within the educational field and b) to practically apply the proposed humanistic paradigm in a case study.

The article consists of five parts. Part 2, the Theoretical overview, develops an approach to humanism in education. Part 3 lays out the methodology for the case study. Part 4 is a discussion of the findings. Part 5, the Conclusions, summarizes the study.

2. Theoretical overview

We propose that, within the framework of educational philosophy, *humanism* may be perceived from the broad and the narrow perspectives, linking the notion itself with its first official use in Humanist Manifesto I (1933). Taken broadly, humanism (hereinafter humanism$_B$) is perceived here as the anthropocentric perspective on education, within which several schools of thought are subsumed: the humanistic paradigm in the narrow sense (hereinafter humanism$_N$), instrumental pragmatism, constructivism (both social and cognitive dimensions, the latter not discussed here for space considerations, but see below), postmodernism and care ethics (Fig.1):
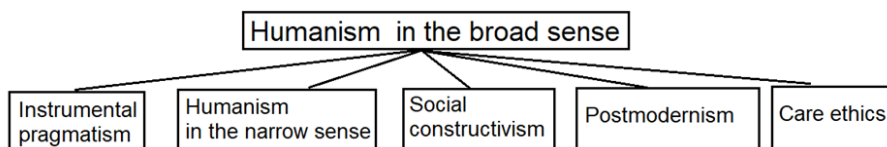
Fig. 1 The proposed humanistic paradigm in education

Thus, humanism$_B$ spans over the entire period in which anthropocentric views permeate education. From the evolutionary perspective, its latest stage is postmodernism, where the central position of the individual is put to question; overall, constitutive paradigms are humanist-driven in that they highlight the changing views of humanism$_B$, which prevailed at various time periods (Lamont 1997, Porrovecchio 2006, Višňovský 2020, Welsch 2017). The interrelatedness between these paradigms will be discussed below.

The question of what is to be perceived as humanism is ingrained in the notion itself: being the core theoretician of instrumental pragmatism, Dewey is also one of the signatories of Humanist Manifesto I; consequently, a humanist himself. Dewey's developed paradigm of instrumental pragmatism may be taken as the main point of reference as it is reflected in the other schools of thought. Notably, his work reveals constructivist sentiments, e.g.: a) his critique of the society of the time for underestimating the effect "of education as a constructive agency of improving society" (Dewey 1916/2008: 92); b) his emphasis on interaction, e.g., a class as a symbolic embodiment of a democratic society (ibid.); c) the formative effects of communication between people (Dewey, 2012). His proposed paradigm of thinking (Dewey 1910/2011) is close to the cognitive constructivist *zone of proximal development* (Vygotsky 1978) in that in both theories knowledge is built up gradually, starting with what is simple (Dewey) —or known (Vygotsky),—and is progressively accumulated. Both theoreticians perceive the teacher as a friend and emphasize the importance of the balance between seriousness and playfulness.

Both Humanist Manifesto I and Dewey himself express concern over the instability of the world and emergent risks (echoed later in Humanist Manifesto II and Humanist Manifesto III), which may be interpreted as early manifestations of postmodernism, instability being the landmark of later postmodern deliberations. Erasure of the authoritarian model of the teacher-student relationship, voiced by Dewey, unfolds in the postmodern notion of deprofessionalisation and increasing skepticism (Illich 1972, Lyotard 1979/1984).

Care ethics takes roots in the very inception of humanist thought. In his 1885 lecture on the problem range confronting Christianity and

Judaism, Felix Adler, the first proponent of ethical movement (Heinrichs 2018, https://ethicalsocietywestchester.org/), puts forward the idea that morality stands beyond religion, and hence is the unifying force in bringing the opposing parties together in pursuit of the common good and universal love (Adler 1885, pp. 18-19). The subsequent establishment of ethical societies in both the US and Europe is perceived here as an evolutionary link to the early humanist societies of the 1930s in the US, with Dewey being an active participant in a humanist society in New York (Speckhardt 2015).

Noddings (1995, 1998), the main representative of care ethics, amply references Dewey's thought and thus overtly acknowledges the evolutionary origins of care ethics[7]. Noddings (1988) adopts Dewey's view on virtue as an environmental adaptation to work and transfers it onto the educational setting. She also elaborates on the empathic, perceptual relationship between the educator and the learner, which must enable successful content delivery. Interestingly, Noddings' feminist stance on caring as primarily a female trait, hence preference for gender rather than the individual, is a posthumanist characteristic (Bolter 2016). Thus, the essence of Noddings' care ethics, her public views, and even the very idea of femininity as a metaphor rather than an identity shaped by discourse and society (cf. Butler 1990) allow us to attribute Noddings' care ethics to the late stage of humanism$_B$.

The postmodernist paradigm is another late manifestation of humanism in evolutionary terms, and arguably (given the origins and the far-reaching effects of postmodernism and the rise of posthumanism), the last stage of humanism$_B$. Postmodernism is not the antithesis of modernism, but rather, its natural, and even "obligatory", development and continuation, driven by the advanced technologies of the 20th century. Dewey's concern over volatility and risks of the world becomes a typical postmodern theme[8].

While postmodernism is concerned with deconstruction in art, architecture, literature, historiography, and philosophy, the

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[7] https://www.ikedacenter.org/thinkers-themes/themes/%20humanism/hgse-ed-panel
[8] The subsequent evolutionary transformation of postmodernism into posthumanism, following Hassan's (1977) work, is not unproblematic, given the acknowledged difficulty of assigning posthumanists like Deleuze and Guattari to only one paradigm (Bolter 2016, Semetski 2003, Brinkmann 2017, Pastor and Cuadrado 2014).

posthumanist direction, first clearly articulated by Haraway (1991), on the one hand, stands as a technological opposition to man, and on the other, erases the humanist-cherished boundary between the animal and the human (Bolter 2016; cf. Baumlin 2020). Both humanism and postmodernism focus on the individual and his/her subjective experiences. Unlike humanism, postmodernism explores even *minutest* experiences through narrative and constructivism (an idea Berger opposes to in his interview on social constructivism (Socialwissenschaftliches Archiv Konstanz, 2016)). The reason to that is the lack of the formal foundations in humanism as a philosophical paradigm, due to which postmodernism cannot turn humanistic insights into a narrative (Hansen 2005). Ultimately, while backed by psychological clinical practice, humanism lacks in the explanatory potential and solely outlines the conditions for healing to occur.

Postmodern focus on the individual permeates with scepticism; it is "anti-rationalist and therefore disillusioned with the great projects that modernity wished to achieve" (Pastor & Cuadrado 2014, p. 341). Human diversity and fragmentation are at the centre of *tardo-modernity* (ibid.): a farewell to modernity and at the same time, its direct consequence. Adopting the notion to postmodernism as *tardo-humanism*, the stages of humanism in education are now defined.

3. Methodology for the case study

For our case study, a mixed research approach was used: Stake's (1995) case study triangulation method; thematic analysis based on Terry et al. (2017), and elements of discourse analysis (Fairclough 1995, van Dijk 2008, Wodak & Meyer 2006). Given certain affinity between thematic analysis and discourse analysis, the discursive strategies of nomination, predication, and argumentation were examined in the collected data as a specifically language-driven tool facilitating the identification of themes and subthemes.

The study involved five participants aged 35-65: the Principal[9] of X School (hereinafter P), two Deputies (hereinafter D1 and D2, D2 is also a social educator at the same school) and two English language teachers (hereinafter T1 and T2). The participants were chosen

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[9] The Principal referred to in the article is now retired.

purposefully, knowing that X School takes pride in its approach to students, as well as the School's openness to all Lithuanian citizens who have not obtained secondary education, regardless of their age or place of residence. The mission and vision of X School, posted on the website, clearly articulate the School's focus on the implementation of humanistic philosophy. The research data were obtained from X School documents, lesson observations and semi-structured interviews with the participants, following the standard procedural stages of transcription, verification, encoding and thematic analysis.

4. Findings and Discussion
4.1. X School's documents
X School's documentation is based on the legislative framework of the Republic of Lithuania regulating education. These documents are as follows: Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania; The National Education Strategy for 2013–2022; The Good School Concept; Procedures for Sequential Learning According to General Educational Curricula; Procedures for the Forms of Learning and Teaching According to Formal Education Programmes (except for Higher Education Study Programmes); General Teaching Plan for the Primary, Lower Secondary, Upper Secondary, Adult Lower Secondary and Adult Secondary Curricula; X School's Teaching Plan (hereinafter *TP*); General and X School's Teaching Plans for Primary, Lower Secondary, Secondary, Adult Lower Secondary and Adult Secondary Curricula; X School's Description of Work Procedures (hereinafter *DWP*); X School's Strategic Plan (hereinafter *SP*).

X School's activities programme was prepared by the administration, in cooperation with teachers and methodical groups. Both the mission and the vision of the School are based on the humanistic values of liberal democracy. They emphasize modernity and dynamism, and view the relations between the students and the teachers as grounded in high moral standards. The SP formulates the aim to construct interpretive pedagogy — a priority, also reflected in Article 3 of the Description of Primary, Lower Secondary and Upper Secondary Educational Curricula (*EPC*, 2016, p. 15), alongside humanistic and social constructivist provisions in education.

Although the term *constructivism* is not mentioned explicitly in the documents of X School, its spirit stands out in the X School's

Procedures. The X School's SP is based on the premise of students' individuality: the school consistently develops an approach crediting each student's character traits, experiential education, and personal progress. Much attention is paid to building *bona fide* relationships in the school environment. Since X School primarily positions itself as a sports school, SP lays out specific conditions for athletes, who "due to their exceptional talents in sports have special educational needs" (SP, pp. 10-17, 35; TP, p. 3; cf. *EPC*, 2016, p. 17, 33).

Once every six months, students are offered a discussion of their personal progress to highlight "that personal development, getting to know oneself, and improvement are as important as learning skills" (SP, p. 31). This echoes the Good School Concept, emphasizing the significance of raising a versatile personality (*EPC*, 2016, pp. 33-34).

As regards distance learning, X School positions itself at the vanguard of making information and communication technologies an integral part of the learning process and puts consistent efforts at developing ICT competencies among its members (SP 2018-2022, pp. 21-27). Endorsed foci on ICT and diversity, including socially disadvantaged groups, exhibit postmodern features.

As noted by the Principal and Deputies 1 and 2, the Description of the Distance Teaching and Learning Procedures (Lith. Nuotolinio mokymo(si) tvarkos aprašas) and the Description of Work Procedures (Lith. Darbo tvarkos aprašas) of X School were prepared together with the teaching staff, and hence are constructivist at their core. The documents emphasize consistent cooperation of students with teachers and detail the procedure of assessments and reports. The psychological well-being of the student is highlighted: "The teacher is responsible for the physical and psychological safety of the students during the lesson" and "Students are not to be expelled from the lesson" (DWP, 2017, p. 1). Articles 4.1 and 4.2 of the School's SP describe the Principal's commitment to introducing all staff to core humanistic values, as well as to fostering their implementation in X School.

4.2. Observation of environment

Somewhat unexpectedly, the Principal's office is located immediately to the left upon entering the school. Separated from the hall by a large plastic window and a partition, the Principal's office looks rather like a booth of a school guard. As the Principal put it in their interview,

"*Otherwise I couldn't observe life*". The door to the Principal's office is always kept open. These features reveal a postmodern trait.

The two English classrooms visited during the study are equipped in a modern way: each has a smart board, tablets, a computer with a large screen on the teacher's desk, a copier and a scanner, and a projector attached to the ceiling. During the COVID-19 quarantine and the resulting online study mode, the teachers were provided with laptops.

In the English classrooms, the teachers do their best to introduce elements typical of British culture. Posters of English streets in Teacher's 1 class connote communication: one features the classical red phone booth, two others depict buses rushing through winding London's streets. Hints on the discipline can be found on the wall stand. These are: a) a list of rules adopted for work in the classroom, drawn up with the students early in the school year; and b) a paper cut blue cellphone with a red stripe across it – a ban on using the phone during class. Behind the teacher's desk is a stand with pinned thank-you notes from former students and a photo of the school staff, thereby connoting bi-directional connectedness.

Teacher's 2 classroom looks somewhat richer than that of Teacher 1. The number of books densely set on the floor-to-ceiling closet behind the Teacher's desk is impressive, and so is the number of souvenirs (one of them is, ironically, a police helmment)—all create an almost library-like spirit around Teacher's 2 place. On the windowsill are miniature figurines of British landmarks, the Big Ben and the Houses of Parliament. Photos on the wall feature members of the royal family. Teacher 2 takes pride in her carefully compiled collection, yet perceives her efforts as an integral part of her professional expertise.

4.3. Lesson observation

Ten lessons of Teacher 1 and one lesson of Teacher 2 were observed. The discrepancy in the number of classes is due to the conditions of the study (see Acknowledgment). There was some unease from the Teachers towards allowing a stranger into their class, and apprehension of the possible assessment of their own work. That said, we believe that this limitation accompanies all observations.

The study took place during the quarantine period of 2021 when all observed classes were run in the distance mode on a video conferencing platform. While students in both classrooms freely asked questions about their grades in the tests from the preceding classes and

lessons of both Teachers demonstrated certain preference for one-way communication, the overall atmosphere reveals certain differences. Thus, Teacher 1 maintained a more friendly and relaxed atmosphere than Teacher 2. Meanwhile Teacher 2 used more English in the classroom in comparison to Teacher 1, albeit with a certain lack of consistency in the register when addressing the students: "students", "guys" and sometimes through an emphatically polite and formal form "Would you be so kind as to ...?" The latter sounded as a distancing communicative strategy, while register variation in the forms of address used created a somewhat uneasy atmosphere in the classroom.

4.4. Interviews

In line with the proposed theoretical framework, five main themes, reflecting the paradigms of humanism$_N$, instrumental pragmatism, social constructivism, postmodernism and care ethics, were identified. They are presented below, alongside the identified subthemes:

- *Humanism*: humanistic values, teacher as a helper;
- *Instrumental pragmatism*: experiental learning and its applicability in life, analytical thinking, personal growth;
- *Social constructivism*: construction of reality through language, mechanisms of control;
- *Postmodernism*: decline of hierarchy, scepticism and reform, rearrangement of environment;
- *Care ethics*: care towards administration and teachers, care of administration and teachers towards students, care towards students and teachers, care towards pupils and their parents.

Due to space constraints, in the discussion below we will illustrate only some of the subthemes that stood out in the respondents' accounts. The quotations below are translations from the original interviews and containing minimal editing for style.

Manifestations of Humanism$_N$

The humanistic$_N$ paradigm emphasizes the attitude of the learner as an independent, dignified personality, in which the educator is a helper.

1) T1: *Children are getting bolder, they are not afraid of [teacher's] messages or remarks, because [they say] "these are my rights".*

2) T2: *A lot has changed over the years. I'm really glad that we now look at the child differently. There is friendly attitude, the barrier disappears... The kids are braver now, they behave more freely, ask questions, and do object if they disagree, which I think is very good.*

The Principal shared a story when, during a School's celebration, one of the senior students reflected on their experience interacting with the Principal after some misbehaviour on the student's part. Then, contrary to the student's expectation to be punished, the Principal held a conversation with them trying to identify the roots of the conflict, rather reprimanding for misconduct. The Principal remarks:

3) P: *…they [the student] will remember this till the rest of their life. The point is: although it is difficult, if you can build such a relationship, no more are there confrontational camps at school, with students on one side of the barricades, teachers on the other.*

The role of the educator as a helper is very consciously formulated:

4) T1: *We are counselors, guides, mentors showing how to do everything, but children have to take responsibility: what will I learn, what strategies will I use, what is my goal? As teachers, we are just assistants in this endeavor.*

In explaining their approach to a hypothetical student with humble accomplishments, the Principal formulates "the incomparable value of the individual regardless of his/her social status":

5) P: *The human value cannot be overestimated. The individual lives only once. And they must be able to live that life with dignity.*

Manifestations of instrumental pragmatism

The respondents highlight the experiential component of education, both in learning and testing: in the former, experientialism is manifested in direct communication with the students during the lessons; in the latter, in the critique of the current testing practices.

a) Experiental learning

6) T.1: *What I lack [in the curriculum] is adaptability in life, because we study for the exam, we study for the test. This is why I seek to ignite motivation in the children themselves. You are athletes, I say, you will have to sign contracts. So you have to speak foreign languages so that you avoid situations that may place you at a disadvantage...*

Teacher 2 also criticizes the gap between the examination material and the real needs. She views English examinations as "narrowing down" all the previous work done in class and expresses her regret at the exam program having little to do with real life. To support her words, Teacher 2 cites a former student's words that it took her "half a year to adapt" to the language upon her arrival in England.

b) Problem-solving

To understand the behaviour of "problem" students, teachers apply the problem-solving methodology and critical thinking themselves. Below Deputy 2 describes her analysis of repeated misbehaviour of a student:

7) D2: *...I learnt to observe her, I learnt to notice her eyes: when she would be a provocateur, and when not — because I noticed that her eyes would change greatly. Her body language always changed, too... It took me two or three months to start reading her body language...*

Dewey's metaphors for a better future and personal growth are often reflected in the school's pedagogy:

8) T1: *We prepare them [students] for life, because we have to raise a person... Education and human values are not the same. Education is needed for the bettering of the humanity, for the common good and better life... I always say: children, learning does not depend on me only... I can open the door, but you will have to walk through it.*

Since distance education has not yet become a common practice in the pandemic-free environment, the school's conscious movement toward distance education should also be commented upon. Initiated by the Principal through their eurika-like realization of the purpose of computer technologies *as a tool*, the School's focus on ICT is nearly legendary within the school's premises, and is described with emotion by Principal themselves, Deputy 1, and Teacher 1. The Principal's perception of learning as an integral component of play reflects both Dewey's pragmatism and cognitive constructivism. Comparing the financing allocated to formal and informal education, the Principal remarks: the former gets a lion's share, but it is the latter that promotes "*friendship, common interests, sports, art, a campfire and what not*".

Manifestations of social constructivism

a) Reality construction. The Principal's account of the School conversion to distance learning, from an idea to official endorsement, reflects the construction of a new reality after the stages described by Berger and Luckmann (1967): subjectivity—objectification—externalization—institutionalization:

9) P: *I initiated distance learning entirely on my own. Nobody allowed me to create classes where students did not have to go to school. I presented the idea to the teachers... They didn't understand me at all, then they resisted, then laughed. But I heatedly argued that this could be done... And then we developed our curriculum, step by step...*

One of the underlying subthemes that both the administration and the staff are at pains to overcome is the school's traditionally rather low ranking among Lithuania's schools. This is ironic given the School's humanistic "unconditional positive regard" of their students, whatever the grades, or the student's background (some of them study from correctional facilities), and the readiness to accept even those who get rejections from other schools, given harsh competition among schools for a higher ranking. The shift to distance learning is viewed by the staff as one step toward the School's institutional identity:

10) P: *Ultimately our school got rid of the infamous label as second-rate. And when that explosion of distance learning took place, our bold experiments of the past years have come very much in demand...*

However, constructing a shared reality requires communication and mutual understanding not only between the school's staff and the parents, but also with the institutions. The need for a two-way communication is emphasized by all the respondents. Deputy 2 admitted that she sometimes feels "lonely" in her efforts, which was also reflected in the words of other respondents, along the commentaries for the need to be talked to and heard.

b) Control. Analysis of our data shows that school staff perceive existing practices as excessive and express overall desire to have more freedom, especially in decision-making, which we interpret as the desire of both the administration and the teachers to have less primary control and more secondary control over their professional behaviour. At the administrative level, concerns are expressed over the inability to stick to previously developed curricula, or over the need to follow the instructions whose purpose is unclear. The teachers express their doubts on the range of reporting tasks, such as registering one's presence at the workplace, filling in routine documentation, following the administrative guidelines, which are not always formally listed in the description of the teacher's position.

It is worth mentioning the construction of an internal institutionalized reality in the school structure vis-à-vis secondary control, in which even the most severe penalty may be revoked:

11) P: *Students know that there is an institution in school, called the Principal's office. They can come here and appeal that decision [i.e., penalty – Aut.], as it were, to the Supreme Court... These are very*

exceptional cases. Yet the understanding that there is a place where one can seek justice is uplifting… the moral atmosphere at school.

This example demonstrates the cooperation between participants of the educational process as well as the presence of a genuine care in X School, as students themselves know that they will be heard and thus contribute to maintaining a "moral atmosphere". However, the quote above is also tainted by a postmodernist feature, viz., the reduction of hierarchy at the middle level, between the students and the teachers.

Manifestations of postmodernism

a) Hierarchy. Hierarchy at X School is maintained in a relatively weak form; the authority of the school institution and teachers is declining:

12) T2: [in the case of a conflict] *Most teachers make the first step themselves toward reconciliation. I'm not afraid to say that I'm wrong and apologize to colleagues, to students.*

13) D1: *There's too much freedom for parents to interfere with the content, methodology, for instance, why read a given literary work. A parent says, "Life won't be like that anymore." I reply, "Maybe not, and there are no musketeers. But everybody still reads about them".*

The teachers are trying to abandon older habits, metaphorically referred to by Teacher 2 as the "crown" or "dragon". Teacher 2 realizes that the present urges her to review her perception of the teacher as an authority and admits her constant inner work:

14) T2: *The most important thing is this inability to take off one's crown at first. To step over my own "self" as a teacher.*

b) Skepticism and reform. The Principal's sceptical views on widely accepted values are, unexpectedly, are inherently humanistic:

15) *If the goal is the person, then they must be empowered to improve. If the goal is to fulfill some super ambitions, then this is wrong underlyingly, because there is always sacrifice involved.*

16) *There must be no entrance exams. If a "super school" posits itself as having any advantages [over ordinary schools]… let them rather gather children from their neighborhood, strictly based on the students' place of residence, and let them demonstrate the same achievement results. Let them not sort out students, thereby defeating other schools, humiliating the teachers and the administration of those schools; humiliating students, because this pest – the question of prestige – also holds among the students.*

But what can be the solution? The Principal offers to run a reform whose main principle is "*giving one a chance*".

c) *Environment.* All the respondents remark on the Principal transforming the school's space towards informality, carefully considering the immediate needs of the student-athletes. X school has done a lot to enable learning through play, comfort, and practical benefits: wireless internet, cozy bean bags in the corridors, lockers, a filtered water device, and tennis tables. The Principal does their best to ensure that the school's environment is void of any apprehension or fear, and is constantly considering new ways to further improve the lives of the students. Space reconstruction is not merely a postmodern transformation: it also connotes the idea of constructing a new reality, in which an ongoing learning process is facilitated through play. The paradigm of care ethics is also manifested here, as all the innovations are made in response to the immediate needs of the student-athletes.

Manifestations of Care ethics

Due to space constraints, only a few aspects will be mentioned (for more details, see Korostenskiene 2021). Overall, all the respondents emphasized active and friendly interactions with the immediate cared-for, the students. Care of administration towards the teachers is manifested in ensuring state-of-the-art classroom equipment and consistent encouragement of teachers to maintain their qualifications, e.g., by covering the associated costs. In conflict situations, the administration provides their staff with institutional support, e.g., psychological counselling. Given that care ethics views care as a flexible relationship in which the interacting parties may be both caring and cared-for, mention should also be made of the experienced lack of feedback from the cared-for, i.e., the students. The teachers voice concern over the low motivation of their students:

17) T1: *I'm open to suggestions. I have a document on the wall called Place for Your Ideas where students can express their thoughts and suggestions, but it is empty. The students are so indifferent at times.*

Teacher 2 has expressed even more critical thoughts towards the students. She cites Jurkevičius' (2014) opinion on the threat of raising mollies through excessive pampering and maintains that "*ultimately it is their duty is to learn*". Meanwhile parental interference in the educational process may be perceived as a concern for their children, but also permeates with postmodern skepticism:

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19) D1: *In the past, there was more respect for the teacher. But this is an era of 'supermoms' and everyone's child is "special". So they often call me and say, "I don't trust those teachers... I'm going to educate my child myself...*

Finally, our findings also reveal manifestations of parents' lack of care for their children:

20) D2: *By 8th grade, parents disappear from their children's lives... I once organized study hours and told a student: come to my office and do your homework. I worked with them for many months. The kid achieved results because they feel someone really cares for them...*

A final note: What is education?

All interviews were concluded with one question: What is education? Below are definitions given the respondents, sorted, according to the ideas expressed, into the respective paradigms:

20) (Care + social constructivism) P: *Education is the help to a young person in his or her self-development.*

21) (Instrumental pragmatism) T1: *It is raising a person, I would say.*

22) (Social constructivism) T2: *Education is communication between all the institutions. The teacher, the student's parents, and all ministries, talking to each other.*

23) (Humanism + instrumental pragmatism + postmodernism)
D: *These are the experiences through which the students improve. It is a continuous process of innovation, and it should be based on capabilities.*

5. Conclusions

The paradigm of humanism, focusing on human personal growth and values, is a fundamental provision of the current education policy of the Republic of Lithuania. This study investigates the application of the humanistic paradigm in one of Lithuania's secondary schools. In the proposed approach, the paradigm of humanism has the broad and the narrow manifestations. Humanism in the broad sense comprises the humanistic paradigm in the narrow sense, the social constructivist, the postmodernist, and the care ethics paradigms. The presented triangulation case study of a Lithuanian X School illustrates the workings of the proposed framework. The paradigm of humanism$_N$ is manifested in the abandonment of the traditional model "teacher in the centre" in favour of the "guide on the side" model. The declining

authority of the teachers, the skepticism expressed by parents about the curricula, the redesign of the Principal's workplace and the school space, as well as the pursuit of a comprehensive school digitization policy reflect the postmodernist paradigm. The analysis of care between the interacting parties reveals manifestations of mutual care with regard to daily issues, as well as the desire of school educators to experience more care from the students at the curriculum level. From the social constructivist perspective, the school staff seek to have less secondary control at both the internal and the municipal levels of school governing bodies. Finally, our findings also reveal expectations for the collective construction of a common new reality.

Acknowledgement

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