



PREVENTION OF BULLYING EMERGING DUE TO LEARNING
DIFFERENCES, APPLYING
“LEARNING FOR LIFE” SYSTEM GROUNDED ON SELF-DIRECTED
LEARNING (LIHUANIAN COUNTRY CASE)

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Abstract

Necessity, timeliness and significance of the learning and teaching system “Learning for Life”, grounded on self-directed learning, are actualised by the lack of systematic approach to bullying prevention in Lithuania, lack of prevention of bullying due to learning differences and experience and situation of bullying prevention in the country that has formed in this context. Currently bullying cases are increasingly often spoken of but it has to be acknowledged that interest in this problems is taken more episodically, quite often reacting to resonant bullying cases. This demonstrates that the systemic approach is still missing, that the real scope of spread of bullying, its reasons, consequences have not yet been perceived and this aggravates possibilities to manage the situation. Prevention of bullying arising at school due to learning differences should be based on the learning and teaching system “*Learning for Life*”, grounded on self-directed learning and acknowledgement of the learner’s learning differences, characteristic to it, and not on the perception of differences as stigmatising shortcoming.

In the article by using the method of content analysis, abstraction actualised necessity, timeliness and significance of self-directed learning framework for the prevention of school bullying of these criteria: links of the system “Learning for Life” with European and national education documents on education; the education system “Learning for Life” interface with methodological approaches; principles of the system “Learning for life” as fundamental approaches; the aspects of manifestation of the education system “Learning for life” concept in the educational practice.

Keywords: self-directed learning, learning differences, prevention of bullying.

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Introduction

The problem of bullying is named as one of the most threatening and unfortunately currently very widely spread social phenomena. Bullying is a consequence of the society's low emotional literacy and a reason of the abundance of various failures of socialisation. Relations transfused with bullying are so common in our society that we can say they turned into "the norm", even commonness (Good C., McIntosh K., Gietz C., 2011, Johnson, 2012, Povilaitis, Valiukeviciute, 2006). Most probably we can already speak even about the forming "the culture of bullying" (Povilaitis, Valiukeviciute, 2006; Povilaitis, Jasiulione, Kuriene ir kt., 2007, Girdvainis, Poceviciene, 2009, 2011 et al.).

Based on research results, Lithuania is among the first countries according to spread of bullying among children in different age groups. The report of public organisation "Save the Children" on good practice of bullying prevention (2011) presents the situation on the spread of bullying in Lithuania in 2006-2010:

- It is stated in the report that in 2006, the international study on health behaviour in school-aged children performed in 40 countries regarding spread of bullying demonstrated that bullying among both boys and girls is most spread in Lithuania (correspondingly 45% and 36%). In 2007, the study *Save the Children Sweden* performed in the Baltic region countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Sweden, Poland, Sankt Petersburg region of Russian Federation) demonstrated that 15-25% of children in these countries constantly experience bullying at school.
- According to the data of the study conducted by *TNS Gallup* in 2008, 22% of children in Lithuania have experienced physical violence at school, 65%, other forms of bullying and 13% of children experience bullying permanently. The study conducted the same year by the World Health Organization demonstrated that in Lithuania almost 28% of boys and 27% of girls experiences bullying, 30% of boys and almost 17% of girls confessed that they were bullying their friends.
- According to the data of the study performed by researchers of Vilnius University in 2009, Lithuanian children are among the most unhappy in Europe. Up to 50% of children aged 12-17 feel features of depression, almost 42% of school age children have problems related to mental health, 70% of children indicated that they have encountered various types of bullying: either have experienced it or performed it.
- This is repeated by the study conducted by the public organisation "Save the Children" in 2010: bullying is experienced by 52% of children, bullying is performed by almost 59%. Bullying takes place in various places: everywhere where children meet and communicate (Povilaitis, Valiukeviciute, 2006), whilst the scope of spread of bullying at school and beyond its limits illustrate relevance of the problem of bullying and presuppose the need to give suitable attention to this problem.

Currently bullying cases are increasingly often spoken of but it has to be acknowledged that interest in this problems is taken more episodically, quite often reacting to resonant bullying cases. This demonstrates that the systemic approach is still missing, that the real scope of spread of bullying, its reasons, consequences have not yet been perceived and this aggravates possibilities to manage the situation. In the society the influence of bullying on children's mind is often ignored, "nothing in particular" is envisaged or even a certain tolerance to bullying is noticed, treating them as natural and common, harmless to anyone and "innocent" manifestations of childish behaviour or even as a certain measure of "tempering". The soviet inertia of thinking contains a myth that bullying helps the child to acquire suitable social skills, teaches to fight for oneself, etc. (Povilaitis Valiukeviciute, 2006; Puras, Petkevicius, Zemaitiene et al., 2006 Povilaitis, Jasiulione, Kuriene et al., 2007).

However, researches show that bullying is not that experience which helps to harden and temper. On the contrary, their consequences are always traumatic; i.e., related to disorders of children's physical and mental health and negative lifestyle peculiarities, cause or can cause in the future various short-term and long-term negative consequences of the child's emotional state, further communication or other behavioural consequences (Puras, Petkevicius, Zemaitienė et al., 2006).

R. Povilaitis (2012) acknowledges that in recent years positive although inconsiderable changes in the context of reduction of bullying problem are noticed. According to him, processes of changes take place slowly and will result in reduction of aggressive behaviour and changes in communication culture at school after more than one decade.

R. Prakapas, J. Liubeckaitė (2013) point out that various preventive programmes have been created and implemented in Lithuania since 1996. The authors also highlight the pursuit of such programmes: "to reduce manifestations of unsuitable behaviour, risk, seeking to prevent manifestation of unsuitable behaviour" (p. 113). It is sought to prevent violence, aggressive behaviour and bullying among children in Lithuania, employing similar type programmes (e.g., Olweus Bullying Prevention Programme, "Second Step" – a programme for teaching social-emotional skills, etc.) in order to develop social skills in pre-school age (e.g., the programme "Zippie's Friends"). Such programmes aim to provide knowledge for children about various forms of violence, to develop tolerance, self-control and safe behaviour skills, enhance children's self-esteem and self-confidence, encourage cooperation with peers and adults, learn to perceive responsibility, provide possibilities to apply acquired knowledge in life (Sruoga, Jakubkaite, 2002).

Research problem. As it is known, quite often preventive programmes are limited by their duration; preventive measures in the educational institution are most often applied until the programme takes place, while results reached are written in various reports and are only of episodic type. Upon completion of the project or programme it is often complicated to ensure continuity of implemented measures, universalise possibilities of their implementation, etc.



Besides, programmes created and implemented in one sociocultural context become inefficient, non-adaptive while their implementation becomes complicated because often are forthright transferred to another social cultural environment, not considering polarity of subjects (Gaucaitė, Kazlauskienė, Masiliauskienė, Pocevičienė, Rudyte, 2012 (b)). Such situation encourages scientists and practitioners to constantly search for new ways of bullying prevention, which *would maintain a systematic and long-term, continuous nature, be integral, and adaptive (i.e., their implementation would become a natural (organic) part of culture of learning and at the same time of school life).*

In this context scientific problem question is formulated: what theoretical assumptions actualize the learning and teaching system „Learning of Life”, grounded on self-directed learning, seeking prevention of bullying emerging due to learning difference?

What has been said concretises the aim of this article: to actualise significance of the learning and teaching system “Learning of Life”, grounded on self-directed learning, seeking prevention of bullying emerging due to learning differences.

Method. In this investigation it was used content analysis and abstractions method that makes it possible to actualize the phenomenon being essential connections.

In this article, the educational system “Learning for Life”, actualised significance of these theoretical criteria:

- links of the system “Learning for Life” with European and national education documents on education;
- the education system “Learning for Life” interface with methodological approaches;
- principles of the system “Learning for life” as fundamental approaches;
- the aspects of manifestation of the education system “Learning for life” concept in the educational practice.

Theoretical background.

On the other hand, many of currently applied preventive programmes are directed to elimination of the already arisen problems, bullying facts, etc. This in turn is more like “fighting a fire” or coping with emerged results and consequences. Meanwhile developing the culture of tolerance to otherness and non-discrimination, which in the authors’ opinion would be one of the essential preconditions of bullying prevention, it would be purposeful to apply broader type approaches, which would substantially change society’s approaches that are favourable for emergence and flourishing of bullying.

Pupils’ main activity at school is learning; therefore, quite often the reason of bullying is the perception of differences in pupils’ learning (understanding, organisation, managing, control, assessment, etc. of one’s own and other pupils’ learning processes) and inability to tolerate them. As we know, one of the most important constituents of bullying prevention is development of pupils’ tolerance to otherness and uniqueness. Thus, the most important objective preventing bullying should be search for such forms and ways of teaching/learning which would develop pupils’ tolerance to otherness and uniqueness in pupils’ very concrete activities, in the analysed case, learning to manage one’s learning processes.

Prevention of bullying arising at school due to learning differences should be based on the learning and teaching system “*Learning for Life*”, grounded on self-directed learning and acknowledgement of the learner’s learning differences, characteristic to it, and not on the perception of differences as stigmatising shortcoming.

Based on that, prevention of bullying emerging due to learning differences would be integrated into the very teaching/learning process as an essential, continuous and non-interrupted activity and learning to manage this process. This way systematic approach to prevention of bullying arising due to learning differences is maintained; i.e., integrity and lasting of bullying prevention are ensured as well as latent type of applied measures, openness to methodical diversity and relevance to the learner.

On the other hand, this could be done without additional time resources intended for (self-)education; i.e., not organising additional activities or events but just self-developing corresponding attitudes during time allocated for teaching/learning, which would enable to perceive and accept otherness as a natural or even positive phenomenon, which would concentrate every learner’s attention not to how he/she or others look like in the context of the class or group (in our system of education this gradually determines competition and non-positive rivalry, eventually creating preconditions for various types of discrimination and bullying) but on his/her learning results and the process of seeking them. In other words, everyone first of all should be concerned about his/her success of learning and endeavour to reach it. Meanwhile the general attitude that the same aim (the learning result) can be reached in different ways and measures would create the environment, in which differences are not only tolerated but also encouraged because they enrich the general result of (self-)education and for the bigger share of learners help to reach the anticipated learning results.

Individualisation of the very teaching/learning process creates preconditions for lesser friction among pupils, particularly between those with learning difficulties and teachers and between the very pupils. This way the situation characteristic to frontal teaching/learning is just eliminated when more talented pupils or better achieving pupils (or just those who find concrete organisation of the teaching/learning process convenient/acceptable) have to wait for weaker learners, the share of which never completes any tasks because the teacher and other pupils just cannot wait until this happens. This way practically friction and non-tolerance situations, which can later determine emergence of bullying, are created almost in every lesson.

Methodological insights of learning and teaching system “Learning for Life” actualise meaningful contexts of the said system, which are particularly important eliminating the real and/or supposed basis of bullying, reducing the level of



competition and domination, (self-)developing tolerance to otherness, uniqueness, etc. because based on this system every learner is enabled to learn in his/her own pace and style, foresee his/her choice consequences for himself/herself and others and take responsibility. Besides, applied innovative teaching/learning strategies form approaches of benevolent cooperation, tolerance that are necessary for bullying prevention and non-discrimination, encourage to respect and tolerate different learning experience, respect learners' needs, commitments, opinion, responsibly act seeking aim and foreseeing one's behaviour consequences, defend one's attitude, not offending others and one's own dignity, not bullying and not applying discriminatory behaviour models. This system is orientated to encouragement of learning motivation and elimination of discriminatory elements, emerging due to disregard of learners' different learning experience.

Links of the system “Learning for Life”, grounded on self-directed learning, with European and national documents on education. The system “Learning for Life”, grounded on self-directed learning, is based on documents regulating European and national education. The essential axis of the (self-)educational process of the system is learning when it is sought to *assist the pupil to acquire understanding grounded on scientific knowledge in active learning* but not by memorising formal knowledge, *by the ability to act following essential general human values*. “Learning for Life” pays particular attention to learning orientated to innovative solutions and *corresponding the needs of every personality* (the conclusions of the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the governments of the member states, dated 21 of November, 2008, “To prepare young people for the 21 century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools”).

Recommendations provided in the Communiqué “Reconsidering Education. Investment into Abilities Seeking Better Social and Economic Results” (Strasbourg, 2012 11 20) encourage openness and flexibility of learning at various levels, concentration of efforts for development of *universal and key abilities* at all levels. Item 2.1. of the Communiqué “Needs of Abilities for the 21 Century” recommend member states to prepare new systematic reforms, which would enhance early testing and intervention related to learning difficulties while such measures as repeating the course or pupils' distribution according to abilities would be replaced with bigger learning support.

In this context the systems of “Learning for Life” are actualised, grounded on self-directed learning, and links with practical implementation with bullying prevention, emerging due to learning differences. This means that the created system enables *members of the learning process to organise this process in such manner which would be more related to person centred attitude to teaching and correspond to every pupils' individual needs, be related to suitable assessment forms and application of which would enable to reach better learning motivation* (European reference framework in the field of key competencies of lifelong learning (OL L 394, 2006 12 30).

Self-directed learning orientated to innovative solutions is to be treated a non-traditional form of bullying prevention and development of non-discrimination (R. Gaucaite, A. Kazlauskiene, E. Masiliauskiene R. Pocevicene, K. Rudyte, 2012 b). This is not a specially created bullying prevention programme or project implemented during a defined time period but an integral and continuous process when bullying prevention is a natural consequence of that process, emerging when pupils are learning to learn and manage their learning processes. This way bullying prevention is implemented self-developing general abilities that are necessary for self-directed learning because this system enables every learner to learn in his/her own pace and style, make choices and project consequences of his/her decisions for themselves and others and take responsibility for that. All of it creates possibilities to reduce competition and pursuit to dominate, to tolerate otherness, acknowledge uniqueness, etc.

This correlates with the conclusions of the Conclusions of the European Council which emphasise enhancement of competencies related not just to separate subjects but also interdisciplinary competencies, first of all social and civic competencies (the conclusions of the Council of the European Union and the representatives of the governments of the member states, dated 21 of November, 2008, “To prepare young people for the 21 century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools”). Their development creates preconditions for prevention of bullying due to learning differences (e.g., tolerance to otherness and uniqueness in the learning process. Such type of prevention also requires another practice-related peculiarity of self-directed learning orientated to innovative solutions – *self-directed learning creates conditions to apply this system to different experiences, differentiate and individualise education*. It is stated in Council conclusions of 11 May 2010 on social dimension of education and training that it is particularly important to further apply cultural richness, existing knowledge and abilities with regard to learning needs for different experiences of citizens.

National documents, such as General Curriculum Framework for Primary and Basic Education (2008) emphasise orientation to development of general competencies and essential subject based competencies, particularly focusing on learning to learn and to enhancement of individualisation of education, “considering pupils' different needs” (P. 5).

Self-development of learning to learn competencies is also important for prevention of bullying due to learning differences. Self-development of learning to learn competency will help to understand oneself and others as able and having individual learning strategies that are characteristic only to a concrete pupil. Seeking to adjust school curricula to every person's needs, The European Union adopted “The European Framework for Key Competences”, i.e., the reference means related to general abilities necessary for every person for successful management of his/her life in the knowledge society. They encompass “traditional” abilities as well as skills applied in various areas; e.g., the ability to learn, social and civic abilities, proactiveness, entrepreneurship, cultural consciousness and manifestation (Schools of the 21 Century, 2007).

Council conclusion of 11 May 2010 on social dimension of education and training stating that provision of general competencies to all learning all their life will be one of the most important factors improving citizens' employment opportunities, social coverage and self-realisation is also significant for (self-)development of learning to learn competencies. The report of the European Council: lifelong learning for promotion of knowledge, creativity and innovation



(2008) names the area of learning to learn as the one that has made insufficient progress. *To avoid social exclusion, it is proposed to self-develop key competencies to everybody, including the competency of learning to learn.* Committee communiqué (2010) emphasises that (self-)development of learning to learn is foreseen in many curricula but there is a lack of systematic inclusion of this ability into teaching/learning processes.

The said Communiqué addresses schools and teachers, encouraging them to include learning to learn into general teaching/learning processes and advocate the culture of learning in the whole school. Innovative methods, like personal learning plans and learning grounded on researches, can be particularly useful for those who previously have not succeeded at school (General competencies in the changing world. Committee communiqué for the Council, European Parliament (2010). Learning to learn is related to encouragement of pupils' proactiveness and disposition to create new knowledge instead of their reproduction (Gaučaitė, Kazlauskienė, Masiliauskienė, Pocevičienė, Rūdytė, 2012 (b)). The aspect of creating new knowledge is emphasised in the General Curriculum Framework for Primary and Basic Education (2008), which state that it is important for pupils to get involved into active and conscious learning.

R. Gaucaite, A. Kazlauskienė, E. Masiliauskienė R. Pocevicienė, K. Rudyte (2012 b) emphasises that self-directed learning, orientated to innovative solutions creates conditions to ensure high quality teaching and learning using all possibilities (p. 9). Council conclusions regarding efficacy of education and teaching, fairness propose to identify learning difficulties early and find solutions grounded on more individual pedagogical methods, applied for every pupil's needs and abilities (Conclusions of the European Council and government representatives of member states of 21 November 2008. To prepare young people for the 21 century: An Agenda for European Cooperation on Schools).

Generalising links of the system "Learning of Life" with European and national documents on education, it can be stated that self-directed learning creates conditions for prevention of bullying arising due to learning differences because the said system encourages to find innovative solutions, grounded on more individual pedagogical methods, adjusted to every learner's needs and as a consequence to help the pupil to acquire understanding grounded on knowledge through active acting. Self-directed learning is integral of individualisation and differentiation of education and learning to learn when it is acknowledged that everyone can and has the right to have different learning strategies. This means that implementing the system "Learning of Life" application of the learning process for different experience is enhanced. Besides, learning to learn is a possibility to avoid social exclusion and help those who earlier succeeded worse at school.

Methodological grounding of the self-directed teaching/learning system.

The system "Learning of Life", grounded on self-directed learning and acknowledgement of every learner's learning differences characteristic to it and not on their perception as a stigmatising shortcoming, created by the authors of the article, is one of the examples of educational innovations which can contribute to prevention of bullying arising at school due to learning differences.

First of all, grounding the methodology of the created system, it is necessary to introduce philosophical approaches and theories, grounding self-directed learning. The said system is based on the *constructive learning theory*, which states that the basis of cognition of reality is individual structure of knowledge formed by subjective experience while learning takes place when the man doubts his beliefs, personal theories and existing understanding. Knowledge creation is an active process, during which, based on the earlier acquired knowledge and his/her experience, the learner forms new concepts, ideas and meanings (Dewey, 1949; Kohlberg, 1958; Vygotsky, 1978; Piage, qtd. In Kitchener, 1986).

Social constructivism theory actualises constructive attitude to teaching, learning and knowledge (self-)formation, accentuating the importance of previous experience, acquiring and applying knowledge in new situations. The man's activity is explained as the interaction of cognitive behaviour and determinants of the environment, when the man and the environment interact (Merton, 1968; Vygotsky, 1978; Lave, Wenger, 1991; Bandura, 2010). *The experiential learning theory* points out that the endeavour of the contemporary society to become a constantly learning society is integral of its citizens' abilities to act jointly, cooperating, seeking common activity aims and constantly learn from each other. Such experiential learning is also treated as an active process of construction of knowledge and meaning, grounded on cooperation and investigation of one's existing experience, constantly observing, reflectively investigating one's environment, experience, knowing and activity (Kolb, 1984; Boud, Keogh, Walker, 1985; Jarvis, Holford, Griffin, 2003).

The theory of activity science states that practical knowledge can be expressed through reflective investigation. The science of activity seeks to enliven status quo of new knowledge, presenting new alternatives and encouraging learning at the level of norms and values (Dewey, 1949; Argytis, Putnam, Smith, 1985; Schon, 1991; Lewin qtd. in Smith, 2010). *Modern didactics* also emphasises learning as the essential axis of the educational process when it is sought to help the pupil while he/she himself/herself actively acts, participates, to acquire essential understanding about nature and people's life, the ability to act following basic values.

Self-directed learning develops very different combinations of the pupil's competencies. Most often he/she is able (according to Knowles, 1983): to perceive oneself as an independent person and self-directed personality; start cooperation with others, see them as sources of identification of needs, plan one's learning, receive and provide support for others; identify one's learning needs being assisted by the teacher and other learners; transform learning needs to aims and objectives, present them in such form that the achievements could be assessed; communicate with the teacher as a facilitator, assistant, consultant, be proactive using existing resources; identify human and material resources necessary for reaching different learning aims; choose effective learning strategies, use his/her learning resources, apply chosen strategies in a quality and proactive way; collect and assess(validate) proofs of achievements as indicators of implementation of various learning aims, etc.



Principles of the system "Learning for Life" as fundamental approaches are as follows: the principle of relevance to the society and the pupil, of value to further learning and work, accessibility and applicability, sustainable development, innovation, acknowledgment of individuality and tolerance, interactiveness, continuation. In the context of the analysed topic it is purposeful to present the principle of individual acknowledgment and tolerance broader. Its essence, according to R. Gaucaite, A. Kazlauskienė, E. Masiliauskienė, R. Pocevičienė, K. Rudytė (2012 b), is related to the key approach of self-directed learning: the essential approach of self-directed learning: cognition, acknowledgment and appreciation of every child's individuality, particularly manifestation of his/her individuality in the teaching/learning process, that is why various learning strategies are studied, their personal, individual conventionality is emphasised.

Based on this approach, acknowledgment of different learning styles, strategies, etc. and organisation of the teaching/learning process determine the possibility of eliminating stigmatisation, labelling, discrimination, bullying and other negative phenomena in the educational process. *Providing conditions for every learner to manage his/her learning process, one's own learning progress, individual learning pace, content, etc. become important. Seeking common result of teaching/learning, working in the classroom, otherness in case of applying the system becomes an advantage rather than a shortcoming.*

The system "Learning of Life", grounded on self-directed learning, develops bullying prevention and non-discrimination competency. This competency is emphasised in General Curricula for Primary and Basic Education (2008). The objectives of bullying prevention and non-discrimination competency are: to self-develop self-respect and respect for others; perception of one's own and other people's value, self-confidence; self-develop resistance to risk factors; self-develop benevolent communication and cooperation and tolerance approaches necessary for bullying prevention and non-discrimination; to self-develop life skills, values and approaches, necessary to cope with pressure of the environment and crises.

In the process of developing the bullying prevention and non-discrimination competency corresponding approaches are developed (to assess oneself and others positively, to honestly, respectfully and responsibly act seeking aim and foreseeing consequences of one's behaviour; to learn to listen to another person, respect his/her opinion, defend one's attitude not offending dignity of others and oneself; to self-develop tolerance to other attitudes; feel solidarity with peers, respect their needs and commitments) and developed abilities (seek aim, plan one's actions, foresee their consequences for oneself and others; while communicating with others to recognise manifestations characteristic to bullying; critically think and solve problems; encourage respect and tolerance towards different learning experience; manage stress, conflict situations; reasonably choose and apply various strategies for problem solving).

R. Gaucaite, A. Kazlauskienė, E. Masiliauskienė R. Pocevičienė, K. Rudytė (2012 a) state that one of the essential hindrances of learning is the expectation to find one universal way suitable for solving all problems. The authors point out that it is important for the teacher to understand "how pupils learn, what barriers hinder teaching the child in a self-dependent way, how to cope with them better, etc." (p. 7). Thus, presenting the system "Learning for Life", grounded on self-directed learning, it is sought to accentuate such methodological foundations which would be important for prevention of bullying arising due to learning differences.

R. Gaucaite, A. Kazlauskienė, E. Masiliauskienė R. Pocevičienė, K. Rudytė (2012 b) point out that the child learning according to the system "Learning for Life" and interacting with the environment is not a passive receiver of information. On the contrary, he/she actively creates knowledge and self-develops competencies. Such learning ensures the very pupil's initiative and participation making innovative solutions. Bigger responsibility falls on the pupil, less attention is given to rendering off knowledge but the very child's activity and investigation acquiring new knowledge is ensured. Based on the characteristics of efficient learning, it can be stated that the necessary condition of organising self-directed learning is the child's acknowledgment as a tantamount member of the process who is able not only to learn; i.e., acquire knowledge, approaches, competencies but is able to manage his/her learning" (Gaucaite, Kazlauskienė, Masiliauskienė, Pocevičienė, Rudytė, 2012 (b), p. 23).

The aspects of manifestation of self-directed learning philosophy in the educational practice. Seeking to give a sense to the significance of the system of "Learning for Life" for educational practice and at the same time to actualise prevention of bullying emerging due to learning differences, certain *aspects of manifestation of self-directed learning philosophy in the educational practice* are to be actualised (Gaucaite, Kazlauskienė, Masiliauskienė, Pocevičienė, Rudytė, 2012 (b)):

- The beginning of the self-directed learning philosophy is related to pupils' need to take responsibility for learning and its results/achievements. In this context self-directed learning is first of all related to individualised learning when learners are provided with the conditions to take responsibility for self-education; i.e., for the whole educational process and not only for its results.
- Self-directed learning has to be grounded on promotion of the learner's proactiveness in the teaching/learning process. Proactiveness means both the learner's *freedom of action* and personal responsibility for decisions and actions (here responsibility for personal efforts, their management is also accentuated), which he/she makes/performs in the teaching/learning process.
- Personal responsibility in the self-directed learning context is also related to planning of the learning process, projecting and choice of resources, implementation, choice of the suitable learning strategy and self-assessment of learning. Thus, self-directed learning is related to the perspective of personal improvement whilst in a broad sense it is defined as a process, distinguished by personal initiatives while identifying



learning needs, goals, choosing learning resources, implementing learning strategies and assessing learning results.

- Self-directed learning provides pupils with the experience emotional satisfaction with learning: considering every pupil's individual differences he/she is provided with the conditions to reflect on one's actions, make sure of validity of taken decisions. This way learners' self-confidence is promoted and every child's personal achievements in the learning process are actualised.
- Learning methods, on which self-directed learning is grounded/organised, have to create suitable preconditions for the learner to learn autonomously, search for necessary information and of course, learn "here and now". Here the need of innovative activity forms is actualised. However, it is accentuated that innovativeness of such forms has to be assessed not from the standpoint of the adult's but from the child's existing experience. The importance of individualisation of the learning process shows up.
- Self-directed learning provides the learner with the possibility to assess the "experienced" learning situation and model his/her actions in it, considering individual possibilities. Such learning approaches real life situations to curricula.
- Self-directed learning should be grounded on the principles of autonomy, independence and individualisation, which in the self-directed learning context are also identified as fundamental values of such learning. This presupposes that it is important in the learning process to consider every learner's sociocultural differences. The latter approach is particularly important seeking to avoid discrimination manifestations in the learning process. At the same time self-directed learning ensures learners' right to autonomy.
- Self-directed learning is favourable in the aspect of the person's sociocultural experience. Self-directed learning also ensures that the person is liberated from "artificial needs" and learns on the basis of natural, sociocultural needs.
- It is recommended to ground the conception of self-directed learning on learner-centred approaches: to be able to cognize oneself (respect one's uniqueness, needs, interests and asses all of this objectively); be able to acknowledge "other" and respect them (not to discriminate them by one's actions); to self-develop a dynamic approach to the surrounding world and be able to respond to it, initiate changes in the society (it is important to perceive that there are permanent changes in the world); to perceive reasons and consequences of one's actions, decisions; to be able to use all personal potential (using it for creation of personal and social welfare).

Conclusions

1. Significance of the system "Learning for Life", grounded on self-directed learning, for prevention of bullying emerging due to learning differences can be generalised by the contexts of significance for the pupil, institution and society, each of which accentuates the right, respect and tolerance to peculiar learning strategies.
 - The benefit of self-directed learning for learner's means: the wish to learn, openness to changes and novelties, the ability to solve problems, self-control, etc. Such pupils are provided with the conditions to be inquisitive and their wish to try out new things is encouraged. Problems are valued as challenges and possibilities to seek changes and not as difficulties which have to be avoided. Learners are identified as motivated and persistent, autonomous, self-disciplined, self-confident, goal-directed.
 - Significance of the system "Learning for Life" at the institutional level is related to economic changes, when the importance of knowledge society are increasingly emphasised, the requirements for the contemporary system of education are changing as it becomes more open, related to life, preparing a free, creative person who is able to learn all his/her life. Main documents on education emphasising future perspectives of school activities progressively focus on the teacher's activity grounded on the learning paradigm.
 - At the public (national) level particular attention is paid to a closer and more efficient link between the school and the community is ensured because application of innovative learning approaches encourages pupils, teachers, administrative staff of lifelong learning to use environments and resources existing beyond school limits, cooperate with close community of the city or village, non-governmental organisations or involve people beyond school limits into the dialogue otherwise, enable pupils themselves to find ways to observe or help them to do this, participate (directly or indirectly) in the activity which they are learning, etc.
2. Necessity, timeliness and significance of the learning and teaching system "Learning for Life", grounded on self-directed learning, are actualised by the lack of systematic approach to bullying prevention in Lithuania, lack of prevention of bullying due to learning differences and experience and situation of bullying prevention in the country that has formed in this context. The system "Learning for Life" is contextualised by essential approaches in European and Lithuanian strategic documents and political-strategic aims. The learning and teaching system "Learning for Life", grounded on self-directed learning, presupposes a latent type of bullying prevention when such prevention is a natural consequence of that process, emerging when pupils are learning to learn and manage their learning processes. This way bullying prevention is implemented self-developing general abilities, necessary for self-directed learning, which ensures possibilities for bullying prevention to



become an integral, systematic and constant process, treated a natural (organic) component of learning culture and at the same time school life.

3. Principles of the system "Learning for Life" as fundamental approaches creates preconditions to seek such objectives of developing the competency of bullying prevention and non-discrimination: self-respect and respect for other, perception of one's own and other people's value, self-confidence, resistance to risk factors, benevolent communication and cooperation, tolerance, life skills, values and approaches necessary to cope with the pressure of the environment and crises. Other approaches relevant to bullying prevention are development of positive self-assessment and assessment of others, honest, respectable and responsible acting, seeking the aim and foreseeing one's behaviour consequences, learning to listen to another persons, respect his/her opinion, defend one's attitude not offending other attitudes, development of tolerance to different attitudes, solidarity with peers, respect to their needs and commitments.
4. The aspects of manifestation of self-directed learning philosophy in the educational practice are to be orientated to innovative solutions, it is possible to a priori develop pupils' tolerance to otherness and uniqueness. Having perceived that every person has a peculiar learning style, individual learning aims, that every person can be motivated by different things, etc., pupils will understand and practically be convinced that being different they can successfully seek the same aims, that everyone's exceptionality is not a pretext for bullying but an advantage creating favourable conditions for cooperation, exchange of information, broader understanding of analysed topics, creation of new knowledge, etc.

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