The Evaluation and Analysis of the Objective Factors of the Accessibility of Education for Adults Seeking to Acquire Secondary Education

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Abstract

The article presents an objective definition of the accessibility of education as well as the factors characterizing such accessibility. Additionally, by analyzing the results regarding the opinions of education planners and consumers, the article evaluates the accessibility of education. The article also investigates the accessibility of education by considering territorial, information aspects, methods and form of education, various options and tendencies of education programs, the qualification of teachers, education assistance and the conditions of education. The article helps to better understand the situation of adult education not only in the country, but in particular municipalities and to improve the education process.

Key words: adult education, the accessibility of education, the objective factors of the accessibility of education.

Introduction

The inclusion of adults into education has been a matter of concern for all countries in Europe. During the economic crisis several important tasks regarding adult education have become evident. Such tasks included providing the conditions for adults to improve their ability to adjust to the labor market and the changing society. Adult education is becoming one of the ways for those who lost their jobs or those who are planning to change their occupation to get a formal education by acquiring new skills and competences. A life-long education strategy (Žin., 2008, Nr. 122-4647) and the plan for its implementation seeks to offer a 'second chance' for adults who seek to acquire formal education. There has been an attempt in the European Union to reach 12, 5 percent of employed people aged from 25 to 64 who study, however such numbers have not been achieved. If Lithuania is compared with the other countries of the European Union, the number of employed people aged from 20 to 64 who take part in the life-long education is low. However, from 2003 it started increasing and in 2011 it reached 5, 9 percent. The data shows that the number of people aged from 18 to 24 who acquired secondary education is increasing; however the number of people who choose to study further is decreasing. Additionally, the organization of education appears to be different in particular municipalities. Furthermore, the residence and sex of people aged from 18 to 24 who do not have secondary education and do not work is important, as there are differences between those living in cities and villages as well as differences if males and females are compared.

Providing conditions of education is an important factor of a successful adult education. Education must be accessible and appropriate. It must also provide learners with the necessary knowledge and skills. Therefore, the question regarding the accessibility of education and the uniformity of people of different social layers and regions is being raised, because it is the accessibility of education which reflects the effectiveness of an education system and the ability to satisfy various education needs of the society (Laužackas et al., 2003). The current research attempted to explore the accessibility of education from two different perspectives: the subjective (learner's point of view) and the objective (establishing certain conditions of education) aspects. This article analyzes the objective context of the accessibility of education.

Various aspects of adult education have been investigated by Lithuanian and foreign authors. The concept of adult education and the development prospects were analyzed by Laurinavičiūtė (2001), Šutinytė (2006), Linkaitytė, Žilinskaitė (2008), the motives of adult education and the development of opportunities was explored by Ališauskas (2009), Anužienė (2006), Juozaitienė, Juozaitis, Lukošiūnienė (2008), Boeren, Nicaise, Baert (2010), Sapia-Drewniak (2005) and others. Information and communication means and the ability to use various education forms and their importance are analyzed by Barkauskaitė (2006), Žvirdauskas (2008), Rutkienė, Trepulė (2009). The experience of other countries in planning adult education is discussed by Downes, Maunsell, McLoughlin, Taljūnaitė (2006) and others.

Even though the situation regarding adult education has been analyzed in Lithuania, the common object of different research was non-formal adult education and the learning of students of schools

of higher education and other people who further cultivate their acquired qualification. Education accessibility for those who seek to acquire secondary education has been less analyzed (in 2006 the research 'the condition of the organization of adult education in different municipalities' was carried out, some statistics on the condition of adult education are provided in the periodical 'Lietuva. Education in regions').

The aim of the research is to analyze and evaluate the objective factors of the accessibility of education.

The object of the research is the objective aspect of the accessibility of education for those who seek to acquire secondary education.

The methodology applied in the research includes qualitative and quantitative analysis. The methods in the research include the analysis of literature and legal framework; the analysis of departmental statistics, questionnaires of education consumers and the statistical analysis of the results of the survey; semi-structured interviews with the organizers of education and its analysis.

The definition of the accessibility of education

The contemporary dictionary of the Lithuanian language (2000) defines the word 'accessible' as 'easy or possible to get or use'. In the dictionary of vocational training terms (Laužackas, 2005) the accessibility of education is explained as 'the right and the ability to use resources and opportunities provided by an education system. The accessibility of education is determined by the price and other difficulties etc.' Accessibility is defined as 'the correspondence of programs, prices, suitability of distance of a certain education institution to people of a certain age, interests and education' (Jovaiša, 2007). The accessibility of education is presented as an important factor by the authors (Žalimienė et al., 2011), who believe that it develops the indicators of social justice in an education system and is defined as a complex concept of the accessibility of opportunities. Therefore, 'accessibility is the income and the financial situation of a family, its residence and the accumulated social and cultural capital which do not obstruct the family from getting involved in an education system'. Ališauskas (2009) believes that the main factor of the successful accessibility of education involves the input of students and teachers as well as the reforms in education system: state exams, student funding, free meals, the transportation of students etc. Degėsys (2009)points out three aspects which contribute to making adult education attractive and accessible: accessible learning environment for people of various needs; the range of education forms; methods which

encourage active, independent and cooperation based learning as well as an independent and autonomic practice. Degėsys (2009), Žilinskaitė (2009) define the accessibility of education as not only the ability to start studying, but to continue studying and acquire education. Žilinskaitė (2009) defines adult education as the synergy between two processes: education as an artificial process, during the course of which the opportunities for studying are created; and the natural learning process which is implemented by relying on the created opportunities. In order to achieve such synergy, personal, social, political and occupational needs have to be taken into consideration and then the opportunities which would help to implement those needs have to be created. The majority of authors stress the complexity of the accessibility of education, because 'accessibility is a multifunctional platform of objective and subjective conditions which assures the most efficient teaching of individuals as well as socially favorable results (Laužackas ir kt., 2003). It is 'a multifaceted platform of conditions which assures the most efficient teaching and socially favorable results' (Brown, 2003).

Therefore, it is clear that there is no single definition of what the accessibility of education is. Authors discuss various factors characterizing the accessibility of education, some of which have similar qualities. Factors and indicators vary due to the fact that the accessibility of education can be analyzed by taking into consideration geographical, social justice and law aspects. The similarities involve the fact that the accessibility of education can be understood as a system which contains parts that can be analyzed by formulating indicators which reflect certain selected aspects.

The accessibility of education is defined in chapter three 'Accessibility and Quality of Education' of the law on education (Žin., 1991, Nr. 23-593; 2011, Nr. 38-1804) as the right and duty of every resident of Lithuania to study and acquire education and qualification. The law on education regulates various aspects of the accessibility of education for the citizens of Lithuania (the ability to select education programs, education providers; the right to study the state and native languages; the right to study religion etc.) as well as the assurance of the accessibility of education for the employed residents, for people with limited mobility, people who suffer from social exclusion, students and those who have special needs. The 2003-2012 provisions of the state's education strategy (Žin., 2005, Nr. 12-391; 2010, Nr. 8-363) refers to the accessibility of education as one of the main aims of the educational development. It is being planned how to offer opportunities for the life-long learning, anticipated indicators are set. The framework

of the development of the life-long learning and its implementation by stressing occupational and adult education areas, is prescribed as well as the life-long learning strategy and its plan for implementing all the necessary actions (Žin., 2008, Nr. 122-4647). The document defines the coordination of life-long learning and the responsibility of institutions. Also, regulations created to increase the accessibility of education are provided. Such regulations guarantee the accessibility of education for various social groups which have fewer opportunities to study due to social exclusion; develop the legal basis by creating premises for those people who were dropped from the education system to get the 'second chance' and acquire secondary education; increase the accessibility of service in the virtual space etc.

In the network creation rules (Žin., 2011, Nr.79-3869) of schools performing formal education, the main aim of creating network of schools is stated – ' to create opportunities to develop compulsory and general education, increase its accessibility for a reasonable price for the country and municipalities.

Seeking to assure that all who study according to the secondary education program for adults would receive quality conditions to acquire secondary education, the accreditation of the secondary education program for adults has been started according to the criteria for the accreditation of curricula and the respective implementation procedure (Žin., 2004, Nr. 39-1283; 2010, Nr. 24-11672012, Nr. 2-59).

The implementation of the secondary education program for adults is regulated by 2011-2013 plans for general education (Žin., 2011, Nr. 74-3561). Compared to the general education plans of the previous academic year (they are updated every second year), this text gives education institutions more freedom to implement various course programs, organize education process and provide students with the necessary help, because the majority of regulations are recommendatory. This allows schools to organize education more efficiently and flexibly, as well as to better adapt to the needs of a school's community. The implementation procedure of secondary education (Žin., 2006, Nr. 76-2930; 2011, Nr. 97-4599) includes aims of the secondary education program, its structure, regulations for its implementation and the principles for creating an individual education plan for students. The maximum and the minimum number of lessons per week as well as the compulsory lessons, their number etc. are determined. The aforementioned document also includes the requirements for the implementation of the secondary education program for adults. The contents of the aforementioned program are defined in the general programs of secondary education (Žin., 2011, Nr. 26-1283). These

are updated programs which were applied for the education of 11th grade students (gymnasiums III) from September 1, 2011. Seeking to avoid redundancies and the excess of knowledge in the education process, the contents of the program are reviewed. Topical knowledge and optional courses were added to the program. Therefore, the accessibility of education has been legalized by documents regulating education, while regulations by legal acts are directed towards ensuring equal opportunities as well as the quality and appropriateness of education.

The accessibility of education includes two factors which can be analyzed by taking into consideration subjective and objective aspects (Laužackas ir kt., 2003). The subjective aspect encapsulates the motivation of a person to study (the psychological-educational aspect) and the adaptation of the content to suit the needs of a student (socio-educational aspect). The objective aspects include creating certain learning conditions. It is analyzed by taking into account legal, information and financial aspects as well as geographical regions, curriculum relevance, accessibility and exclusion groups. This article does not analyze financial and accessibility aspects, as well as exclusion groups due to the fact it is a broad topic which requires a separate analysis.

The methodology of the research

The analysis of literature and legal framework allowed forming the principal factors, aspects and indicators of the accessibility of education for adults. The gathering of departmental statistical data and its analysis allowed determining the various aspects of the state of the accessibility of education for adults. The comparative analysis allowed comparing the situation of the accessibility of education for adults in Šiauliai district municipality and the whole country, as well as revealing possible flaws.

Questionnaires and semi-structured interviews allowed diagnosing the factual situation of the accessibility of education and the approach to it by education consumers and organizers. They also revealed positive and negative aspects of the organization of education. The opinions of education consumers – 11-12 graders who study according to the secondary education program for adults (hereinafter referred to as SEPA) were analyzed by applying questionnaire method, while the opinions of education organizers, school principals and education department specialists – by semi-structured interview.

While preparing the survey instruments, it was sought that the two sources would reveal the majority of the analyzed aspects. Thus, the questions in the two instruments were placed by taking into account the principal aspects of the accessibility of

Table 1

The places of the conduction of the research and the distribution of the respondents

Places of the conduction of the research	The number of 11-12 graders	The number of the respondents	The proportion of the respondents (percent)
Akmenė adult education centre	140	42	30
Joniškis school for youth and adults	78	52	66,7
Kelmė school for adults	64	50	78
Pakruojis education centre for youth and adults	34	30	88,2
Radviliškis Lizdeika gymnasium	45	26	57,8
Kuršėnai L. Ivinskis gymnasium	26	18	69,2
Šiauliai adult school	251	74	27,5
In total:	**638**	**292**	**45,8**

education for adults. Two types of questions were used in the interviews: the closed questions, when a respondent can choose one of the provided answers and the open questions, where the form and content of a respondent's answers are not moderated, which allows asking another question in order to explore all the additional nuances, evaluations etc. Factual questions or the clarification of the opinion were used during the interviews.

Adult students were asked 39 questions, some of which were taken and adapted from the research 'the accessibility of education in Vilnius district' by Merkys, Balčiūnas, Balžekienė, Lapienienė, Pauliukaitė, Telešienė (2006). Education department specialists and school principals were asked 21 and 27 questions respectively. School principals received more questions because it was also analyzed how student groups are formed in a particular school as well as how the needs of students are determined and what the internal information system of a certain school is. Different questions were designed for school principals and education department specialists of those districts where there are no adult schools and adult students study in youth schools.

Characteristics of the sample. The research was carried out in secondary schools of Šiauliai district municipalities. In order to achieve the aims and goals of the research, groups which participate and develop the education process were selected: 14 organizers (of all education institution which organize SEPA, heads and education department specialists of seven municipalities who supervise adult education) and 292 secondary school students that are 11-12 graders, who account for 45,8 percent of all adult students of Šiauliai district municipalities and demographic characteristics basically reflect the features of adult students in a country.

During the conduction of the qualitative (interviews) and quantitative (questionnaires) analysis, the method of target group formation was applied, which according to Kardelis (2002) implies that a researcher can select people who he/she believes to be the most typical for a certain research.

During the conduction of the quantitative analysis, students of seven Šiauliai district municipalities who study in secondary schools according to SEPA were interviewed. It was decided to interview only secondary school students, because the aims of other education institutions (vocational schools) for adult students differ from those of secondary education sector. Secondary education in vocational schools is acquired in two years, however, apart from secondary education, a vocational program is taught which is finished after the third year. The first table presents places where the research was conducted as well as the distribution of the respondents. The representativeness of the sample of the research is closely related to the size of the sample. In this case the coefficient of the sample accounts for 46 percent of the total population of adult students of Šiauliai district municipalities who study according to SEPA.

The demographic characteristics of the research show that females dominate the sample, accounting for 62, 9 percent. The majority of the respondents are aged from 20 to 29 (38, 5 percent), the smallest number of the respondents – 40 or older. The majority of the respondents (87, 2 percent) acquired basic education, while 10, 8 percent – basic and vocational qualification. More than a half of the respondents (58, 3) indicated that they are employed. The distribution between 11 and 12 graders was equal. 98, 3 percent of the respondents indicated that they were Lithuanians. This fact proves that the distribution of the respondents (except for gender) corresponds not only to the factual tendencies of Šiauliai district municipalities but of the entire country as well. The research was conducted in May 2012, because this is the time when the academic year ends which allows students to better evaluate the education process and its results.

Table 2

The change of the number of students in Šiauliai district municipalities from 2007 to 2011

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Akmenė district municipality	182	144	155	151	140
Joniškis district municipality	53	63	74	98	78
Kelmė district municipality	77	82	66	81	64
Pakruojis district municipality	49	59	53	33	34
Radviliškis district municipality	64	61	52	45	45
Šiauliai district municipality	399	381	350	330	251
Šiauliai region municipality	50	39	30	19	26

Results and discussion

The evaluation of the accessibility of education by considering territorial aspects. One of the objective conditions of the accessibility of education includes territorial aspects which according to (Laužackas, 2005) define the dependence of qualitative and quantitative characteristics on the geographical location of students and education institutions. Not only the number of schools where adult students can study is important, but their geographical location in municipalities as well. The bigger the number of schools, the better the accessibility of education is. In 2011 sixty seven general education schools were functioning in Lithuania, where 11219 studied according to basic and secondary education programs. From 2007 to 2011 the number of schools barely changed. This shows that education organizers attempt to maintain the opportunities for residents of different municipalities to receive education services.

In every Šiauliai district municipality there is one general education school where adult students study. From 2007 to 2011 the number of schools for adults has decreased by one. The number of students who study according to SEPA has decreased by 27 percent from 2007 to 2011, while the most noticeable decrease was in Šiauliai district municipality (table 2).

The majority of students who study according to SEPA are older than 18 years old. Students who are 16-17 years old account for 2, 9 percent of all students (figure 1); most of them are in Pakruojis region (11, 8 percent) and Joniškis region (9 percent) municipalities. The least number of students of the aforementioned group study in Radviliškis region (2, 2 percent) and Kelmė region (1, 6 percent) municipalities.

The biggest student group in the country is students aged from 20 to 29 (51, 8 percent), the smaller groups include students aged from 30 to 39 and from 18 to 19 (25, 5 percent and 18, 9 percent respectively). The smallest group includes students aged 40 or older (0, 8 percent). Students aged 40 or older do not study in Kelmė and Pakruojis region schools. The biggest number of students are in Šiauliai (3, 8 percent), Joniškis (2, 6 percent) and Radviliškis (2,2 percent) regions. This exceeds the average of the country – 0, 8 percent. The smallest numbers are in Šiauliai (0, 8 percent) and Akmenė region (0, 7 percent). The number of students aged from 18 to 19 ranges from 15, 4 in Šiauliai region to 38, 2 in Pakruojis region, the number of students aged from 20 to 29 – from 33, 3 in Joniškis region to 66, 7 in Radviliškis region, while the number of students aged from 30 to 39 – from 8, 8 in Pakruojis region to 40, 6 in Kelmė region.

According to the Department of Statistics, the number of youth living in cities aged from 18 to 24 who do not have secondary education and do not study decreased by 0, 3 percent and in 2011 reached 4, 7 percent of the entire aforementioned age group (it
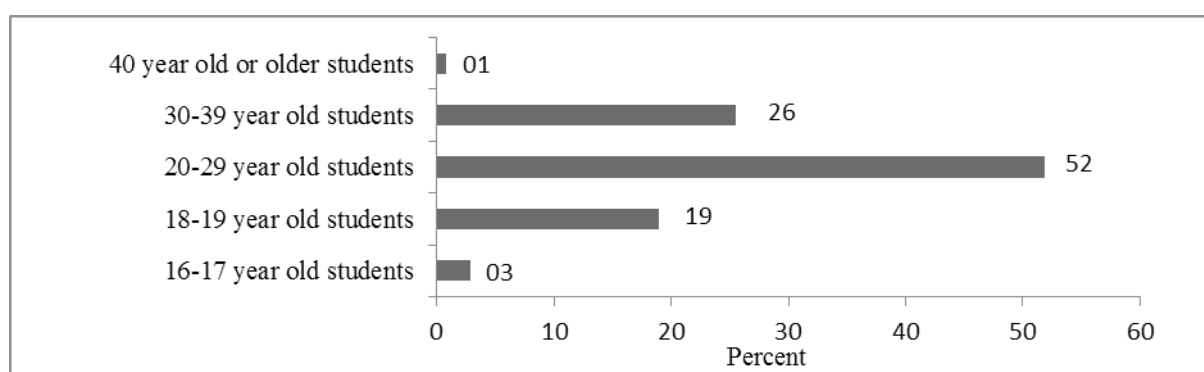
Figure 1. The distribution of students in the country according to their age group.

should be noted that the article follows the law on the territorial administrative units and their boundaries (Žin., 1994, Nr.60-1183; 2010, Nr. 41-1934) which provides the definition of a city and a village. In rural areas the situation appears to be different, as over the five years the number of students aged from 18 to 24 who do not have secondary education and do not study has increased by 1, 4 percent and reached 13, 4 percent which is a few times more than in cities. It has been identified that in 2011 more males (10, 6 percent) than females (5 percent) did not have secondary education and did not study. 6, 6 percent of males who live in cities and 17, 2 percent of males who live in villages did not have secondary education. As regards women, 2, 6 and 9, 1 percent respectively did not have secondary education. Therefore, the accessibility of education for people living in villages (especially males) should be of particular importance.

Adult students can study in different types of schools. In 2011 the bigger part of students (54 percent) studied in secondary schools, the lesser part (46 percent) – in gymnasiums. Some of the schools had only adult students while other schools had different age group students, where adults studied in separate classes. According to the existing legal acts, from 2015 schools will be able to implement only accredited secondary education programs. The accreditation of a secondary education program is the acknowledgement that evaluated education program meets set requirements. Some of the schools became gymnasiums before 2003 (before the accreditation processes), however such schools also had to meet certain requirements. Thus, the conclusion can be drawn that the education conditions are better in gymnasiums because they already meet the set requirements. In 2011 students of 18 municipalities studied in gymnasiums, while students of 26 other municipalities studied in secondary schools. In 5 municipalities the situation was different. 11 municipalities did not have schools (classes) for adults.

In 2011 students of Šiauliai district municipalities pursued secondary education in 4 gymnasiums (Akmenė adult education centre, Šiauliai adult school, Radviliškis Lizdeika gymnasium, Kuršėnai L. Ivinskis gymnasium) and 3 secondary schools (Kelmė school for adults, Joniškis school for youth and adults, Pakruojis education centre for youth and adults). Therefore, 72, 4 percent of students studied in gymnasiums. Education for adults is organized in schools of 4 different municipalities - Akmenė adult education centre, Šiauliai adult school, Kelmė school for adults, Pakruojis education centre for youth and adults. Other municipalities do not have such schools and adult students studied in special classes for adults in schools for children and youth.

As mentioned before, seeking to assure quality conditions to acquire secondary education for those who study according to secondary education programs (hereinafter referred to as SEP), from 2004 the accreditation of SEP was started. However, until 2010 there were no separate criteria to evaluate SEPA. The aforementioned criteria were approved in 2010 (Žin., 2010, Nr. 24-1167). 13 education institutions with SEPA were accredited in December 2011. 2091 students (36, 3 percent of all adult students) studied according to SEPA. This accounts for 20, 3 percent of all education institutions where adults study according to SEP. In other 12 education institutions with 774 students (9. 3 percent) SEP was accredited. Therefore, one third of all adult students can study according to evaluated programs, another 9, 3 percent study in education institutions where SEP was evaluated in order to achieve gymnasium status (until 2000) or according to the accredited SEP. 54, 3 percent of adults study in secondary schools.

In 2011 adult students have the opportunity to study according to SEPA in 2 schools of Šiauliai district municipality: Akmenė adult education centre (SEPA accredited in 2010) and in Šiauliai adult school (SEPA accredited in 2011). It should be noted that these two Šiauliai district municipalities have the most adult students. 61, 3 percent of Šiauliai district students have the opportunity to study according to SEPA (it exceeds the average indicator in the country – 34, 7 percent). Currently the number of students is decreasing and schools do not have two 11 grade classes (a compulsory criterion for the accreditation of SEPA, therefore, schools might lose the ability to organize SEPA.

Seeking to explore the conditions of territorial accessibility of education, questions to education organizers took into account the influence of the location of a school in a municipality, transportation and reforms of networking system of a school. The majority of education organizers evaluated positively the accessibility and convenience of the location of a school. The respondents grounded their answer not only on the fact that a school is in the centre of a city or region, but also on the fact that schools contributed to creating better conditions for students (coordinating timetables with bus schedules, if students cannot arrive to a school, they are offered other education forms). Two education organizers believed that a school is accessible not for all students, but only for those who live in the centre of a region nearby it. This is especially topical for the students of the so called 'circular' municipality of Šiauliai region who often choose Šiauliai school, because it is closer to their place of living. According to education organizers from Joniškis district municipality, the location of the

school is inconvenient and inaccessible, because the school is located not in the centre of the region, but in the village's territory – Kalnelis village, located 12 km away from the centre of the municipality – Joniškis. Therefore, almost all students have to use public transport.

It was sought to find out from the respondents if schools have the opportunity to organize transportation of adult students, because the accessibility which can be achieved by organizing transportation is basically more important than physical distance. However, none of the municipalities organize transportation of adult students (there are no yellow buses, transportation is not funded). Some of education organizers acknowledged that adult education is limited by low accessibility and a small number of education forms. The law on transportation benefits (Žin., 2000, Nr. 32-890; 2009, Nr. 54-2139) states that students of secondary schools who live in cities and villages and who need to travel according to the route indicated in their student identity card up to 40 km to reach a school and get back home shall receive a full compensation from their respective municipality. It is regulated by the law on education (Žin., 1991, Nr. 23-593; 2011, Nr. 38-1804) that students shall be transported to the respective school by public transport, school buses or other types of transport according to the route indicated in their student identity card. Students who study according to general education programs and who live in towns and villages 3 km away from their school shall be transported to their respective school and back home.

According to the analyzed data, 92 percent of all students in Šiauliai district municipalities study in those schools which are closer to their home. In all of the schools (except for one) there are students (from 2 to 17 percent) who chose a school which is not the closest one to their homes. The majority of the respondents based their decision to choose a school which is not the closest one to their homes on the fact that the later did not choose different education forms. 23 percent did now want to study together with younger students. 16 percent indicated that they wanted to avoid various education difficulties. Another 16 percent wanted to receive education services of better quality, while 3 percent wanted to study together with friends.

The analyzed data shows that the majority of respondents live nearby a school – up to 5 km, while the smaller number of student lived more than 40 km away from their respective school. The respondents indicated the following methods of transportation: getting to a school by their own cars (41 percent),

on foot (36 percent) and local public transport (20 percent). Such tendency is common to all of the municipalities. The compensation of transportation expenses and the ability to receive transportation service would be relevant for 56 percent of the respondents living from 3 to 40 km away from their respective school as well as for adult students of all municipalities.

The evaluation of the accessibility of education by considering information aspects. It is determined in article 26 'Provisions of Information about Education' in chapter three of law on education that the main purpose of provisions of information about education is to furnish a person with information that would help him choose education, an education provider as well as the aspired-to attained education level and profession in line with his interests, dispositions and abilities. The aforementioned document includes publicly available information: information about programs of formal and non-formal education implemented at schools, choices offered, enrolment terms, paid services, teachers' qualifications, major school audit findings, traditions and achievements of the school community. 'General requirements for the internet web pages of municipalities and communities' (Žin., 2003, Nr. 38-1739; 2009, Nr. 154-6976) determines the structure of a web page of an institution, information requirements and other criteria which institutions have to follow. Public information presents all the information regarding a certain school's activities: public speeches by principals, press conferences, information days (the so called 'open doors'), press interviews, publicly distributed newspapers, periodics and other printed matters, as well information published on web pages. Such information presents the society with everything that is happening in an education institution, helps to become publicly accountable for completed actions and serves as a primary source for the media as well as helps to create a positive image of an organization (Želvys, 2003). Cross (1982) believes that different types of information play a significant role for adult education organizations, because the preparatory period which includes the involvement in education process is particularly important for adults. The aforementioned author mentions three internal factors (the approach to education, self evaluation, expectations and aims, possibilities and obstructions) and two external factors (life changes and information which may or may not influence the participation or non-participation in education process. In conclusion, it is possible to state that the accessibility of information about education institutions is one of the main factors of the accessibility of education.
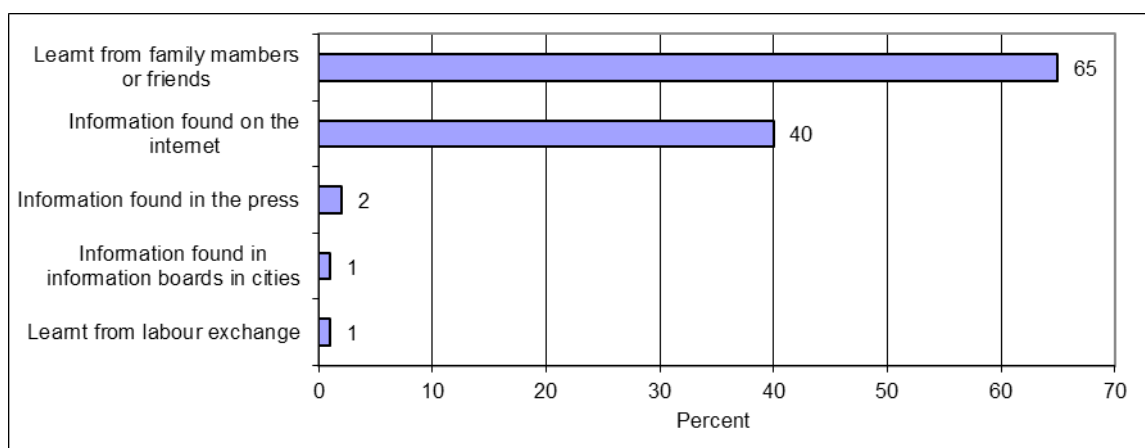
Figure 2. Information sources about school indicated by the respondents (percent)

Education consumers indicated that lack of information was one of the reasons which did not encourage them to return to the education system. The majority of the respondents pointed out that they learnt about a certain school from friends or family members (figure 2). Therefore, the assumption can be made that the accessibility of information about schools is very limited or that schools improperly administer such information. Also this shows that adult students are not motivated enough.

One of the most mentioned public sources were schools' web pages. The most positively evaluated information was about admission conditions and the ability to choose various subjects, education forms and lesson schedules. However, the information about teachers, their qualification and events was less evaluated. According to education organizers, the information that schools provide completely reflects their activities, while disadvantages are related to incomprehensiveness of information and lack of information resources. The most common information resources that schools use are their web pages and the press. Much more rarely informative posters, leaflets, television, information days, municipality's web pages are used. All school principals positively evaluated the topicality of information. The information published on school web pages was positively evaluated by education organizers; however, the data shows that these web pages are not a very popular source of information: in all of the schools (except for one) more than half of the students indicated that they do not look or very rarely look for information on school web pages.

School principals named various sources for the internal transfer of information, while education consumers stated that their respective school teachers provide them with the majority of information. Education consumers would prefer to have more topical and updated information about school's activities as well as electronic database.

The evaluation of the aspects of the accessibility of education methods and forms and available course subjects

Article 27 'Choice of Education programs' of Chapter 3 'Accessibility and Quality of Education (Žin., 1991, Nr. 23-593; 2011, Nr. 38-1804) of the law on education a learner enjoys the possibility of choosing education programs, different versions thereof, modules and subject courses according to his abilities and dispositions. Various education forms are considered by Government's 2003-2012 Education Strategy (Žin., 2005, Nr. 12-391; 2010, Nr. 8-363) as one of the factors which assures the accessibility of education.

From research's data it is possible to state that schools offer different course subjects and education forms. The accessibility of curriculum content and forms is closely related to the professional establishment of achievements and needs of students. All school principals indicated that the achievements of future 11 graders as well as their needs are researched by analyzing their achievements in education and interviewing them, however the majority of the respondents stated that they filled curriculum content themselves. Only 18 percent of the respondents indicated that schools offered assistance in planning individual education programs, even smaller number of the respondents (6 percent) said that curriculum content had been already filled which means that they were not able to choose such content. The presumption can therefore be made that schools do not pay enough attention to one of the most important components of SEPA which includes the creation of individual curriculum plans and consultations. Additionally, the analysis of student education needs has not been carried out. Occupational teachers and career consultants do not work in schools (except for Šiauliai). The results revealed that schools offer relatively limited curriculum content. Education

organizers explain that this is due to the fact that adult students have fewer needs. The questionnaire of students shows that the majority of the respondents chose minimal curriculum content. It was identified that student choices are relatively similar and do not reflect the aims of secondary education program which encourages the implementation of individualism and differentiation. Schools usually offer such extended courses and modules which would help to prepare for the most popular examinations, while optional courses are not popular. According to the centre of information technologies, all students have the opportunity to study their native language, in a smaller number of schools they can also choose to study religion or ethics. There is an increase in students who study one foreign language (English (the majority), Russian). More students prefer the Russian language to German or French. Even though the majority of education organizers positively evaluated the diversity of education curriculum and stated that students do not even exploit to full extent, the analyzed data suggests that some schools do not implement some of their education programs such as physical education, sports, performing arts education, economics, foreign languages, nature science, technology programs), vocational programs or that opportunities for implementation are minimal. The implementation of the aforementioned subjects is limited due to insufficient education institutions (there are no gyms, properly equipped classes, teaching resources), lack of professional teachers (due to small workload teachers refuse to work in a school), lack of funds (schools with only one set of classrooms cannot afford to form new groups). If a group is not formed, the following alternative methods are used: groups are not formed, but individual learning is assigned and distance learning is suggested. If individual learning is assigned, the lost opportunity for a student to study in a group is compensated or the adjustments to student's needs are made if dues to certain circumstances students cannot arrive to a school. This way students can study subjects they choose, have consultations with teachers, but, if compared with schools where lessons are organized, their learning conditions are more limited. However, individual learning is still better than having no opportunities to study at all. Adult schools of the country offer a relatively limited number of education forms: stationary learning and distance learning. Full-time learning is not popular. The data shows that the majority of students chose stationary learning, while some of the students chose individual and distance learning. The smallest number (1, 4 percent) chose distance learning which is organized only in Šiauliai district municipality. The majority of education organizers positively evaluated

the ability of students to choose different education forms: various education methods are suggested and organized, individual needs of students are taken into consideration. However, some education organizers indicated that schools have limited number of education forms and do not implement distance learning.

The evaluation of the aspects of teachers' qualification and education assistance

Teachers' education is one of the most important factors which assures the quality of education. According to the law on education (Žin., 1991, Nr. 23-593; 2011, Nr. 38-1804) those with higher education and pedagogic qualification have the right to work as teachers. Legal acts do not include other obligatory requirements for teachers of adults.

During the last five years the number of teachers, senior teachers and experts working in adult schools has decreased, however the number of teachers with higher education and pedagogic qualification as well as teachers-methodologists has increased. Education organizers positively evaluated the qualification of teachers, however it was identified that teachers with the highest qualification worked in schools where education is organized not only for adults but for youth as well. The majority of teachers have participated in andragogue trainings; some of teachers have acquired andragogue practitioner qualification, however there are no teachers with andragogue qualification in schools. Education organizers believe that getting more practical experience is much more important than getting andragogue qualification in higher education institutions. Schools offer different types of consultations. Normally there are two most common types of consultation, the most frequent of which is individual assistance by teachers during lessons. Consultations after lessons are considered to be the best way to provide students with individual assistance, but such consultations are related not only to students' motivation, but also financial abilities of schools to pay teachers for additional work. Also, information technologies are barely used for consulting students.

From 2007 to 2011 the number of pedagogues, psychologists and social pedagogues who work in schools for adults is increasing, however their distribution in schools is uneven, while the accessibility of psychological, special and social assistance is not equal. In more than half of the schools the aforementioned assistance is not accessible. From 2007 to 2011 the number of students with special needs increased by 29 percent and in 2011 accounted for 1, 6 percent of all students, however in 16 municipalities there were no students

with special needs. Thus, the assumption can be made that the lack of specialists (in schools for adults there are very few special pedagogues) does not allow the special needs of students to be determined. Psychological assistance is basically assured for students in three Šiauliai district municipalities, while the accessibility of special assistance for students is assured in one municipality. Those adult students of Šiauliai district municipality who study in gymnasiums or in schools for youth have better opportunities to receive assistance from special pedagogues, psychologists or social pedagogues. The majority of the respondents positively evaluated psychological, social and special assistance offered by schools. The fact that the majority of education organizers positively evaluated such assistance and only some education organizers expressed their concern regarding this issue due to a small number of specialists shows that the majority of the aforementioned education organizers do not think that this type of assistance is necessary.

The evaluation of the aspects of learning conditions of the accessibility of education for adults

Article 40 of the law on education (Žin., 1991, Nr. 23-593; 2011, Nr. 38-1804) establishes that The school's learning environment and the learners' learning load must meet public health (hygiene) norms and requirements for learners' safety and health established in legislative acts, and assure conditions for full implementation of educational programs. Standards for education provision determine principles for material environment of schools, groups of teaching resources and their purpose. General education programs include requirements and recommendations for the learning environment of course subjects.

The data shows that not all schools of Šiauliai district which implement SEPA have appropriate conditions for organizing education of subjects. According to education organizers and consumers, the least developed subjects are sports and nature science – some of schools do not even offer these subjects. Education organizers state that seeking to solve such problem, schools try to arrange lesson in other nearby education institutions. The provision of education resources (textbooks, visual material, televisions, multimedia projectors, computers) were positively evaluated by education organizers. The usage of computer technologies in schools was particularly praised by education organizers. The disadvantages are related to the implementation of nature science education programs and limited practical basis of vocational training. It was mentioned

that schools for adults together with vocational schools do not have opportunities to participate in EU's projects and improve their practical basis. There are libraries in all schools (all the respondents positively evaluated the equipment of libraries and the abundance of available books), however there are no reading rooms in three municipalities. Only four schools (first floor environment – ramps and toilets are installed, but there are no lifts) are available for students with special needs who have movement disabilities. Schools do not have technical devices developed for students with special needs except for one school where students with impaired hearing can receive education. Education organizers of two municipalities indicated that schools are in bad condition and that overhaul is required. Nonetheless, the majority of the respondents positively evaluated education conditions that schools offer: renovated school premises, convenient furniture, appropriate lightning). Heating in classrooms, condition of toilets and hygiene is less positively evaluated. Only three schools offer catering services.

Conclusions

The accessibility of education is characterized by various factors, some of which have similar qualities. However, some factors vary due to the fact that the accessibility of education can be analyzed by taking into consideration geographical, social justice and law aspects etc. The accessibility of education is understood as a system containing several parts which can be analyzed by forming various indicators which reflect various selected aspects.

The accessibility of education for adults includes two factors which can be analyzed by taking into consideration subjective and objective aspects. The objective aspects include creating certain learning conditions which assure effective learning and good results.

If legal acts which regulate education for adults are analyzed, it is clear that the legal basis of the accessibility of education is sufficient: legal acts legalize the accessibility of education for adults, while the legal basis is always updated.

The analyzed data shows that the majority of education organizers and consumers positively evaluate the accessibility of education, while education consumers believe that territorial accessibility of education would be improved if students received transportation compensations, transportation services or if classes for adults were organized in village schools. The following services have become evident: the location of schools is more convenient for students living in cities rather than villages; only two thirds of students study according to SEPA.

The information aspect of the accessibility of education was also positively evaluated by the majority of education organizers; however some education organizers indicated that there are some disadvantages, mainly related to lack of information forms. The information aspect of the accessibility of education was evaluated more positively than negatively by education consumers. According to their evaluation, there is not enough information about teachers, their qualification and event that schools organize. As regards school web pages, it was mentioned that information there is not topical and rarely updated. These disadvantages and the fact that students are not active in finding information leads to the presumption that the form and content of the information which schools offer should be improved and updated.

The majority of education organizers and consumers positively evaluated the aspects of education forms and methods of the accessibility of education due to the fact that it is possible to choose different forms of education organization, some respondents positively evaluated the ability to choose various education forms only to some extent due to the fact that there is an insufficient number of education forms and distance learning is not implemented.

Even though the majority of education organizers and consumers positively evaluated available subject courses of the accessibility of education and education organizers explained that relatively limited number of course subjects is due to small needs of adult students and insufficient financing, the questionnaire of education consumers and the information included in databases suggest that some schools do not implement their education programs; limited attention has been dedicated to analyze education needs and the creation of individual education programs; more students tend to choose minimal education packages with fewer courses.

Education organizers believed that psychological, special and social assistance aspects of the accessibility of education were insufficient due to lack of specialists (only in some schools such assistance is available). The majority of education organizers positively evaluated the aspect of teachers' qualification. Adults who study in gymnasiums for youth or in schools for youth have better opportunities to be taught by teachers with higher qualification.

Education organizers and consumers positively evaluated the financial aspect of the accessibility of education, because schools were relatively well equipped education resources (especially computer technologies). However, education organizers did not positively evaluate the conditions of special students with needs. Some schools do not have necessary conditions to organize some courses.

Legal acts legalized a bigger spectrum of services of the accessibility of education for adults seeking to acquire secondary education than the spectrum which is currently offered and implemented by education organizers. Such fact limits social and personal opportunities of the accessibility of education.

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Objektyvieji suaugusiųjų, siekiančių įgyti vidurinį išsilavinimą, švietimo prieinamumo veiksniai ir jų vertinimas

Santrauka

Suaugusiųjų įtraukties į mokymąsi tendencijos aktualios visoms Europos šalims. Suaugusiųjų mokymasis tampa vienu iš būdų netekusiems darbo arba keičiantiems profesinę veiklą asmenims, gavusiems naujų žinių ir kompetencijų, įgyti ir formalųjį išsilavinimą. Nors vidurinio išsilavinimo įgijimo rodikliai rodo, kad Lietuvoje vis daugėja jaunuolių, įgijusių vidurinį išsilavinimą, tačiau tolesnio mokymosi, įgijus vidurinį išsilavinimą, rodiklis prastėja. Be to, pastebimi ne tik suaugusiųjų švietimo organizavimo skirtumai atskirose savivaldybėse, bet ir skirtumai tarp 18-24 m. jaunimo, kuris neturi vidurinio išsilavinimo ir nesimoko, dalies miestuose ir kaimuose bei minėtos jaunimo dalies pasiskirstymo tarp vyrų ir moterų.

Mokymosi sąlygų užtikrinimas yra svarbus suaugusiųjų sėkmingo mokymosi veiksnys. Mokymasis turėtų būti prieinamas, tinkamas ir suteikiantis reikalingų žinių ir gebėjimų. Taigi vis dažniau keliamas mokymosi prieinamumo ir tolygumo skirtingų gyventojų socialinių sluoksnių bei regionų klausimas. Svarbu, kad siekiant mokymosi galimybių ir mokymosi, kaip natūralaus proceso, dermės, būtų įvertinti asmeniniai, socialiniai, pilietiniai ir profesiniai besimokančiojo poreikiai, o po to kuriamos mokymosi sąlygos, padedančios tuos poreikius tenkinti.

Tyrimo tikslas - išanalizuoti ir įvertinti *objektyviuosius švietimo prieinamumo veiksnius.*

Tyrimo objektas – suaugusiųjų, siekiančių įgyti vidurinį išsilavinimą, švietimo prieinamumas objektyviuoju aspektu.

Tyrimo **metodologinį pagrindą** sudarė socialiniuose moksluose susiformavusi kokybinių ir kiekybinių tyrimų samprata. Naudoti šie tyrimo **metodai**: mokslinės literatūros ir teisinės bazės analizė, žinybinės statistikos analizė, anketinė švietimo vartotojų apklausa, statistinė apklausos rezultatų analizė, pusiau struktūrizuotas interviu su švietimo organizatoriais ir jo duomenų analizė.

Tyrimo rezultatai parodė, kad švietimo prieinamumas teisiniu aspektu yra pakankamas: teisės aktais yra įteisintas suaugusiųjų švietimo prieinamumo teikiamos galimybės ir teisinė bazė yra nuolat atnaujinama.

Dauguma švietimo organizatorių ir vartotojų teritorinį švietimo prieinamumą vertino teigiamai. Jų manymu, mokinių kelionės išlaidų kompensavimas, mokinių vežiojimo organizavimas ir suaugusiųjų klasių atidarymas kaimo mokyklose švietimą padarytų dar prieinamesnį. Išryškėjo šios problemos: mokyklų išsidėstymas palankesnis miestuose gyvenantiems mokiniams; tik du trečdaliai mokinių mokosi pagal akredituotas suaugusiųjų vidurinio ugdymo programas.

Suaugusiųjų švietimo prieinamumas informaciniu aspektu daugumos švietimo organizatorių buvo vertinamas teigiamai, o mažesnės dalies – kaip turintis trūkumų, siejamų su informacijos neišsamumu ir per menku informavimo formų panaudojimu. Švietimo vartotojų vertinimu, mažiau prieinama yra informacija apie mokytojus, jų kvalifikaciją ir numatomus renginius, o mokyklų interneto svetainių trūkumas – neaktuali ir laiku neatnaujinama informacija.

Dauguma švietimo organizatorių ir švietimo vartotojų suaugusiųjų švietimo prieinamumą mokymosi būdų bei formų pasirinkimo aspektu vertino teigiamai dėl galimybės pasirinkti vieną iš kelių mokymosi organizavimo būdų, mažesnė dalis vertino iš dalies teigiamai dėl nepakankamai plataus mokymosi būdų ir formų pasirinkimo spektro ir neįgyvendinto nuotolinio mokymosi būdo. Išryškėjo šios problemos: dalis mokyklų neįgyvendina kai kurių mokomųjų dalykų programų, mokykloje nėra skiriama pakankamai dėmesio mokinių individualiems ugdymo planams sudaryti, vis daugiau suaugusiųjų orientuojasi į minimalius dalykų programų rinkinius.

Švietimo organizatoriai suaugusiųjų švietimo prieinamumą psichologinės, specialiosios, socialinės pagalbos teikimo aspektu vertino kaip nepakankamą dėl neįsteigtų pagalbą teikiančių specialistų etatų. Daugiau nei pusėje suaugusiųjų mokyklų ši pagalba yra neprieinama. Dauguma švietimo organizatorių suaugusiųjų švietimo prieinamumą pedagogų kvalifikacijos aspektu vertino iš esmės teigiamai. Tie suaugusiųjų klasių mokiniai, kurie mokosi jaunimui skirtose gimnazijose arba kartu su jaunimo mokyklos mokiniais, turi daugiau galimybių gauti aukštesnės kvalifikacinės kategorijos mokytojų teikiamas ugdymo paslaugas.

Suaugusiųjų švietimo prieinamumą materialinių ugdymo sąlygų aspektu ir švietimo organizatoriai, ir švietimo vartotojai vertino teigiamai dėl gana gero mokyklų aprūpinimo mokymo priemonėmis (ypač – kompiuterine technika). Nepalankiai švietimo organizatorių buvo įvertintos specialiųjų poreikių mokinių ugdymo sąlygos bei gamtos mokslų ir sporto bazė.

Pagrindiniai žodžiai: suaugusiųjų švietimas, švietimo prieinamumas, objektyvieji švietimo prieinamumo veiksniai.