

Influence of Socio-Demographic Characteristics to Perceptions, Assessments and Aspirations of Ivet Pupils in Latvia

Vjaceslavs Sitikovs

vss@latnet.lv

Jurijs Lavendels

Marina Uhanova

Abstract:

The ongoing project “Detailed Methodological Approach to understanding the VET educational system in 7 European countries (7EU-VET)” tries to improve understanding of what particular factors influence on VET system attractiveness and success. The project tries to answer to questions what's new in human perception of VET systems and how they see the future job opportunities, career development and mobility; how effective and successful are advising and informing systems? For these reasons the project implemented empirical study among VET schools’ pupil which results are intended for decision makers, experts and VET managers. Results derived from research made in Latvian institutions of initial VET are presented.

Keywords: vocational education and training, Livelong Learning Programme, survey, socio-demographic characteristics, drivers, influencing factors

1. SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

Developing the attractiveness of vocational education and the quality of vocational education and training (VET) system is one of the goals of Lisbon strategy. The ongoing project “Detailed Methodological Approach to understanding the VET educational system in 7 European countries (7EU-VET)”, implemented with the support of the Lifelong Learning Programme (Transversal KA-1) of the European Union, tries to improve understanding of what particular factors influence on VET system attractiveness and success.

The 7EU-VET project builds upon common European strategies, frameworks and tools that have been developed and supports them with the research action among seven European countries – Slovenia, Austria, Germany, Greece, Latvia, Lithuania and UK (7EU-VET, 2010a).

General project goals (7EU-VET, 2010b) are to understand:

- How family, gender, friends, place of living etc. determine VET population in 7 EU countries?
- What are differences and similarities in learning and teaching modes, and general practical orientation among countries and VET systems?
- In particular how to best complement workplace and classroom learning, and what are organizational aspects of this duality? What are the main characteristics of the VET programmes in relation to labour market?
- What are drivers for enrolment into VET programs and permeability to further education?
- Which are VET students’ career aspirations? How are they related to levels of education and sectors?
- What are VET student variations in terms of learning outcomes (competencies) and how are they determined?
- What impacts VET student educational and vocational satisfaction? How are their individual goals in line to those at the system level?
- How operate systems of advising and career orientation?

One of the instruments envisaged to find an answer to mentioned above questions is large scale survey in each participating country among 17/18 year IVET population resulting in international data base of approximately 15000 VET students (7EU-VET, 2010c). Research results are intended for decision makers, experts, and VET managers. Presented paper contains results derived from research made in Latvian IVET institutions. Preliminary results of survey in

Latvia presented in (Lavendels, 2012a) and (Lavendels, 2012b) are elaborated further in this paper.

2. SAMPLING AND QUESTIONNAIRE

To be statistically valuable the sample size calculations required that all IVET schools existing at the moment in Latvia had to be included in the survey. To correct for the different chances for students to participate in the survey resulting from the differences in the number of students in the institutions multiple classes were sampled in larger schools. Hence, the number of classes selected varied according to the size of the school. The target group of survey is 17-18 years old pupil.

Selection of classes participating in the survey was made on the base of school size. If there were more than 2 classes with pupils' age 17/18 in school that is smaller than 600 pupils, then 2 classes were selected occasionally. If there were just 2 or 1 such class then all of them participated in survey. If there were more than 4 classes with pupils age 17/18 in school over 600 pupils then 4 classes were selected. If there are just 4 or less such classes then all of them participated in survey. However if there were in selected classes pupil with other age they also were invited to take part in the survey.

The questionnaire consists of core part, which is the same for all participating countries and nationally-dependent part reflecting particularities of national educational systems. Totally Latvian version of questionnaire consists of 68 questions organized in 7 sections:

- Previous programme and transition to the current programme (6 questions),
- Particularities of current VET programme (11 questions),
- Knowledge gained (10 questions),
- About yourself and your career (12 questions),
- Skills and abilities gained (6 questions),
- ICT (6 questions),
- You and your family (17 questions).

In the questionnaire there were closed, partial open and open-ended questions. Majority of them were closed-type and require from participant only selection of the most appropriate answer from proposed. Essential number of questions was content dependent (specializing) and

these questions were asked to answer only in the case of particular option selection on previous question(s).

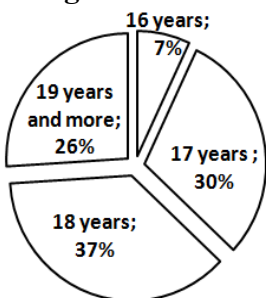
3. RESPONSE RATE AND SOME SOCIO-BIOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Survey was made in May-June 2011 when 82 IVET schools were invited to participate in the survey from which 179 classes have to participate according to sampling described in section 2.

Really in survey participated 72 schools (88% of invited), 169 classes (94% of supposed), 3038 pupils (80% of supposed). In participating classes 3775 pupils are registered, 3105 of them (82%) were presented during survey. 67 pupils from presented (2%) decline to fill questionnaire, so 3038 filled questionnaires were collected and handled. A distribution of ages of participants is shown in

Figure 1. After filtering for 17-18 year old pupils and including only questionnaires where more than 50 percent of the questions were answered 1888 questionnaires were considered. All data following in the paper are based only on information derived from these 1888 questionnaires.

Figure 1. Distributions of ages of participants



Pupils enrolled to approximately 200 VET programs were presented in the survey, from them (Table 1) percentage of boys and girls approximately corresponds to ratio of population enrolled to IVET in Latvia at all (60% of boys and 40% of girls). Majority of respondents (83%) are enrolled into programmes combining both vocational and secondary education giving ability for further education in high schools or universities, from them industry-oriented programmes (in

further tables just “industry”) and service-oriented programmes (in further tables just “service”) were presented almost equally. Different places of pupils’ living are presented in the survey also almost equally – by about one third of IVET students live in big cities or their suburbs (in further tables just “cities”), in towns or small villages (in further tables just “towns”) and in country villages or farms (in further tables just “farms”).

Table 1. Brief summary of participants’ socio-biographic characteristic (%).

Female	Male	Service-related	Industry-related	big cities or their suburbs	towns or small villages	country villages or farms	Living on family’s present income			
							comfortably	Could cope	difficult	Very difficult
46	54	51	49	37	31	32	31	45	19	5

Quite important characteristic influencing majority of considered issues was pupil’s satisfaction on living conditions - whether that they are living comfortably on present family’s income or just could cope on present family’s income or found it difficult or found it very difficult.

4. SOME OBSERVATIONS

As a convention in this paper, every time it is mentioned that characteristics are different from each other, it is always a statistically significant difference (chi-square tests less than 0,05). Due to the relatively large size of the Latvian sample only substantive differences of 5 percent points or above are described in this paper.

The following issues are considered: a) transition to VET; b) level of satisfaction of programme and school; c) characteristics of study behaviour and acquired knowledge; d) future career aspirations and self-assessment; e) acquired skills and abilities. These issues are considered taking in mind such characteristics of pupil as gender, programme enrolled, current grades, pupils’ and their parents’ country of origin, pupils’ place of living and family’s present income. Analyze was made in intention to find what are the strongest and what are the weakest factors influencing on decision making, present attitude, future plans etc. Majority of questions

analyzed propose to rank given expression using a scale from 1="Not at all" to 5="Very". In the text below we consider aspects ranked by "1" and "2" as weakest, by-turn ranked by "4" and "5" as strongest.

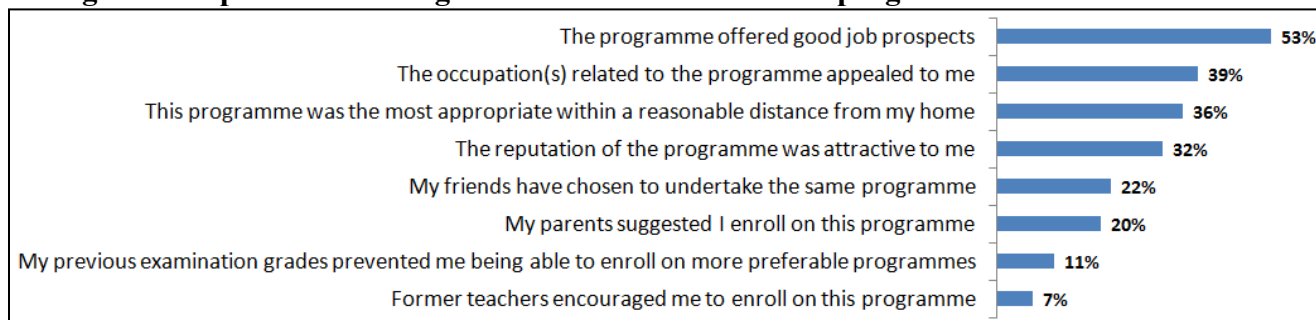
4.1. Transition to VET

The decision on a programme and the affiliated occupation depends on motivational factors like intrinsic or extrinsic motives. For this reason we asked the pupils which aspects influenced the decision for a certain programme and what were the main reasons for choosing the programme?

4.1.1. Aspects influenced the decision for a certain programme

Figure 2 shows percentage of respondents considering particular aspect as influencing their decision very or quite.

Figure 2. Aspects influencing the decision for the current programme



The examination of certain socio-demographic characteristics shows that parents' suggestion is more important for girls than for boys (Table 2). The same is for the reputation of programme (Table 3).

Table 2. Pupils stated that parents suggested enrol to the programme (%).

		grades			parents born						
		good	merit	fair	both in Latvia	in one Latvia	in both in other EU country	in both in non-EU country			
female	male	13	19	24	18	26	29	21			

Table 3. Pupils mentioning reputation of programme and distance from home (%).

The reputation of the programme was attractive to me					This programme was the most appropriate within a reasonable distance from my home		
female	male	good grades	merit grades	fair grades	cities	towns	farms
34	29	48	32	25	32	40	38

With lower grades pupils more often stated that previous examination grades prevented them being able to enrol on more preferable programmes (Table 4).

Table 4. Pupils mentioning job prospects and previous grades (%).

The programme offered good job prospects							My previous examination grades prevented me being able to enrol on more preferable programmes		
grades			living on family's present income				grades		
good	merit	fair	comfortably	coping	difficult	very difficult	good	merit	fair
55	56	46	54	56	45	54	6	10	17

Parents' suggestions were more important to pupils with lower grades (Table 2). However, regarding to reputation of the programme (Table 3) the picture is reversed. The same tendency (while less expressive) is for the factor that programme offers good job prospects (Table 4) - 46 percent of pupils with fair grades vs. about 56 percent of pupils with merit and good grades.

Friends' advice (Table 5) is more important for pupils born in other than Latvia EU countries rather than born in non-EU countries whereas even less for pupils born in Latvia.

Table 5. Pupils that mentioned related occupation and friends' suggestions (%)

The occupation(s) related to the programme appealed to me	My friends have chosen to undertake the same programme
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living on family's present income				born in			parents born				socio-economic status (SES)		
comfortably	coping	difficult	very difficult	Latvia	other EU	non-EU	both in Latvia	one in Latvia	both in other EU country	both in non-EU country	below average	average	above average
43	37	35	43	21	66	42	19	28	38	25	26	18	17

The influence of parents on pupils' decisions (Table 2) is stronger when both parents were born in other than Latvia EU country whereas the weakest dependence on parents is when both of parents were born in Latvia.

The same is related to influencing of friends advice (Table 5) – for 38 percent of pupils whose both parents were born in other than Latvia EU country friends' advice are quite or very important comparing to 19 percent of pupils whose both parents were born in Latvia.

It is predictable that distance from home to school (Table 3) is more important to pupils from towns or small cities and from country villages or farms than for pupils from big cities or their suburbs.

It is hardly expected that for pupils whose families find it difficult to live on present income the aspect that the programme offers good job prospects (Table 4) is less important than for those whose families coping on present income.

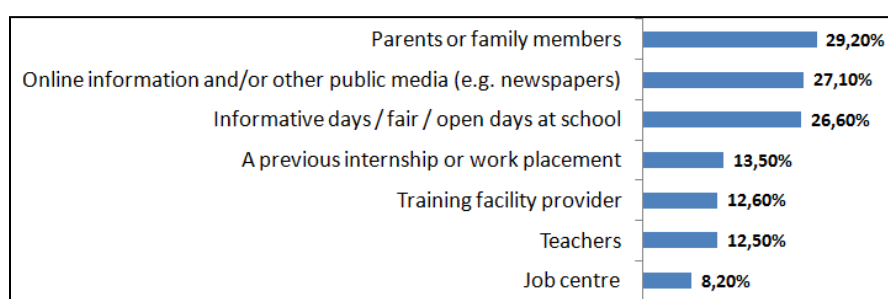
It is also surprising that occupation related to enrolled programme (Table 5) is more important for pupils from families living either comfortably or very difficult than for families from middle layers - coping or filling difficulties living on present incomes.

Including the index of socio-economic status (in further tables just "SES") it shows that the aspect that friends have chosen the same programme (Table 5) is more important to pupils from families with socio-economic backgrounds below average (in further tables just "below") than for average and above average (in further tables just "above").

4.1.2. Information sources used

In addition to important aspects we were interested in the information sources pupils use when deciding on a certain programme. To get a better understanding about the sources of information used before entering the VET system we asked the pupils how important different sources were when they were deciding on their current vocational programme. Answers are presented in (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Information sources influencing the decision for the current programme



Review of information sources influencing the decision for current programme shows that girls more often define their parents (**Table 6**) as an important source of information than boys.

Table 6. Pupils pointed information sources as influencing their decision (%).

Parents or family members		Informative days / fair / open days at school. Online information and/or other public media (e.g. newspapers)						Job centre			
female	male	femal le	mal e	grades			service	industry	born in		
				good	merit	fair			Latvia	Other EU	Non-EU
33	26	33	22	36	27	21	30	22	8	39	0

Moreover, sources like informative days, fairs, open days in school as well as online information and other public media, e.g. newspapers are more important for female than for male

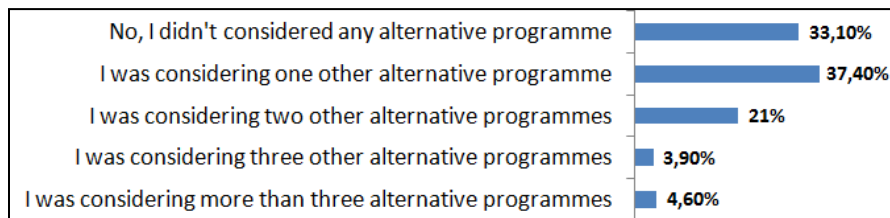
pupils. Regarding the last set of information sources it is necessary to point out that they were more important for pupils enrolled in programmes related to service than for pupils enrolled in programmes related to industry. The better the pupils' grades the more often they have mentioned this source of information as being important for their decision (**Table 6**).

Despite the fact that job centres are a less important source of information in general (**Figure 3**) for pupils born in other than Latvia country it was second most important source of information.

4.1.3. Alternatives

The pupils were also asked whether they considered any alternative programme when they were selecting their current programme (Figure 4).

Figure 4. Alternation during the decision for the current programme.



Pupils born in Latvia less often stated that they didn't considered any alternative programme than pupils born in other EU country while more than a half of pupils born in non-EU countries have not considered an alternative programme (Table 7). Also pupils from country villages or farms less often considered any alternatives compared to pupils from any other place of living.

Table 7. Alternation during the decision for the current programme (%).

No, I didn't considered any alternative programme	I was considering one other alternative programme
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born in						living on family's present income				living on family's present income			
Latvia	other EU	non-EU	cities	towns	farms	comfortably	copying	difficult	very difficult	comfortably	copying	difficult	very difficult
33	39	53	30	32	38	37	31	34	28	34	41	39	30

Further the income status of the family also affects the process of programme consideration. Between pupils not considering any alternatives most (37 %) represent families living comfortably while pupils who find it very difficult to live on present income just in 28 percent of cases didn't consider something else. At the same time pupils from families except of living comfortably more often consider one additional alternative programme when selected programme to which they are enrolled currently.

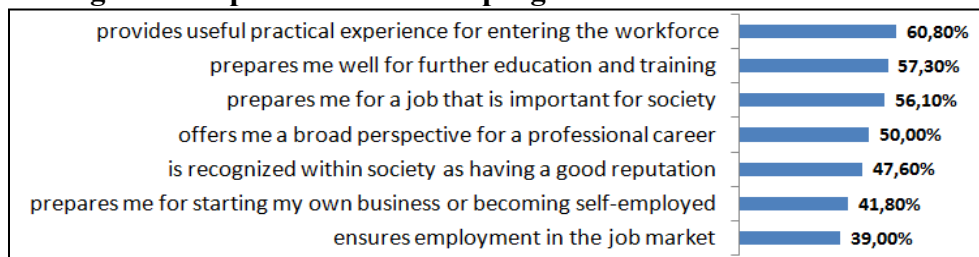
4.2. Level of satisfaction of programme and school

Since the pupils gained a reasonable amount of experience within their programme at the time of the survey we were interested in learning more about their view on the programme.

4.2.1. Pupils view on their programme

The research objective was to find which factors (Figure 5) the most influence to satisfaction of present programme and school.

Figure 5. Pupils' view on their programme



It is quite unexpected that more than half of the pupils (56 %) believe that their programme prepares them for a job that is important for society.

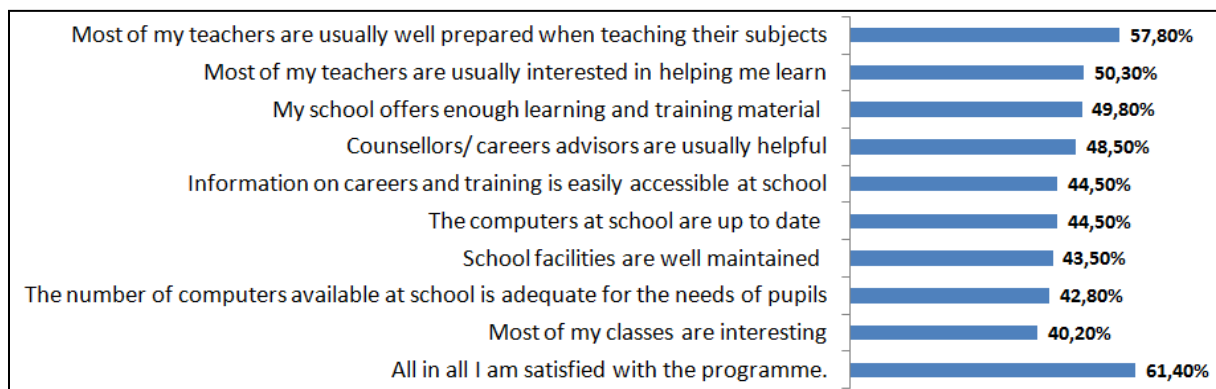
Female pupils' evaluations of enrolled programme are sufficiently higher than male pupils' (differences from 5 to 9 percents) in almost all proposed for consideration aspects except of employment in the job market where their visions coincide. Pupils from service sector appreciate their programme more than from industry sector absolutely by all aspects (differences from 7 till 9 percents).

The level of agreement that programme ensures employment in the job market is dependent also on socio-economic background - the lower the value of SES index the lower the evaluation of this aspect (49 percent in families above average level, 40 percent in families with average level and 36 percent in families with socio-economic level below the average).

4.2.2. Satisfaction of school, facilities, teachers and programme in general

Pupils were also asked how satisfied they are with their school facilities, teachers, computer equipment and with their programme in general (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Pupils' satisfaction with school



Satisfaction with the programme (Table 8)) is higher for female pupils and for pupils in service-oriented programmes rather than for industry-oriented.

Nearly 40 percent state that most of the attended classes are interesting; meanwhile female pupils agree in a greater extent than male. Pupils with higher grades also agree with it more often than pupils with merit and fair grades.

Further, a higher proportion of pupils who were not born in Latvia evaluate most of their classes as interesting compared to pupils who were born in Latvia and the level of agreement is also higher for those pupils from families with a higher SES than for pupils from families with a lower SES.

Table 8. Pupils satisfied by their programme and classes. (%).

Satisfaction with the programme				Attended classes are interesting									
female	male	service	industry	female	male	grades			born in Latvia		SES		
						good	merit	fair	yes	no	higher	lower	
67	57	65	58	44	37	53	42	32	39	49	43	34	

More than half of the pupils (58 %) agree with the statement that most of their teachers are usually well prepared when teaching their subjects. Results in Table 9 show that female pupils agree to a greater extent to this statement than male pupils as well as pupils living in country villages or farms compared to pupils from towns or small cities and big cities or their suburbs. The same applies to socio-economic background – the higher the level the higher the appreciation of teachers’ preparedness.

Table 9. Pupils considering that teachers are well prepared (%).

female	male	cities	towns	farms	SES		
					below	average	above
62%	55%	53%	59%	62%	54%	59%	66%

Half of the pupils agree that most of their teachers are usually interested in helping them to learn; meanwhile (Table 10) female pupils feel it stronger than male. Further pupils with higher grades more often appreciate teacher's readiness to help. Even more differences become visible when the country of origin of the pupils is taken into account.

Table 10. Pupils considering that teachers are helping to learn (%).

female	male	grades			born in			SES			country-side	big cities and their suburb
		good	merit	fair	Latvia	other EU	non-EU	above	average and below	and		
55	46	60	52	44	50	13	72	60	50		53	47

Majority of pupils born in non-EU countries are satisfied by learning and training material provided by schools while only half of Latvia born pupils whereas pupils born in other than Latvia EU country are satisfied much lesser (Table 11). The perception of this aspect also is influenced by the place of pupil's living. Pupils from the countryside are more satisfied with learning and training materials than pupils from big cities and their suburbs.

It is necessary to stress also that pupils from the countryside agree to a greater extent to the statement that most of their teachers are usually interested in helping them learn (Table 10) comparing with big cities' and their suburbs' pupils as well as pupils from families of good socio-economic background appreciate teachers' readiness more comparing with average and below average SES.

Table 11. Pupils satisfied by their schools learning materials and facilities (%).

Schools offer enough learning and training material							School facilities are well maintained					
country-side	big cities and their suburbs	pupil born in			both parents born in		both parents born in		farms	rest of a country	female	male
		Latvia	other EU	non-EU	other EU	non-EU countries	Latvia	non-EU countries				
53	45	50	22	73	69	39	42	73	48	42	47	41

To the perception that schools offer enough learning and training material influence also countries of parents' origins. Pupils from families where both parents were born in other than Latvia EU country agree to a much greater extent to this statement than pupils from families where both parents were born in non-EU countries (Table 11). However with the statement that school facilities are well maintained pupils of Latvia-born parents agree less than pupils of non-EU countries' parents. Differences regarding this perception can also be detected between pupils from country villages and farms comparing of such consideration by pupils from the rest of a country (big cities, their suburbs, towns and small cities). As for almost all of the considered aspects agreement with this statement from female pupils is higher than from male (Table 11).

Female pupils also agree on a higher extend that computers at schools (Table 12) are up to date; however regarding the statement that "The number of computers available at school is adequate for the needs of pupils" both female and male pupils were solid (43 percent of both female and male pupils agree with it). Herewith pupils from families with average and below average socio-economical background agree in lesser extend that number of computers at school and their conditions is enough comparing with families with above-average SES.

Table 12. Pupils satisfied by computers and information regarding career (%).

Computers at schools are up to date		Number of computers available at school is adequate for the needs of pupils			Availability of information regarding careers and further training at schools			
female	male	socio-economic background			living on family's present income			
		below	average	above	comfortably	coping	difficult	very difficult
49	40	43	41	53	43	38	38	47

As the main aim of the project is to understand factors influencing pupils' decision regarding educational path it is quite important to evaluate availability of information regarding careers and further training at schools. Overall 45 percent of respondents agree that such information is easily accessible at schools. However it is interesting that pupils from opposite sides of family's income scale (both living comfortably on present income and finding it very difficult) evaluate accessibility of such information higher than from families on middle of a scale.

4.3. Characteristics of study behaviour and acquired knowledge

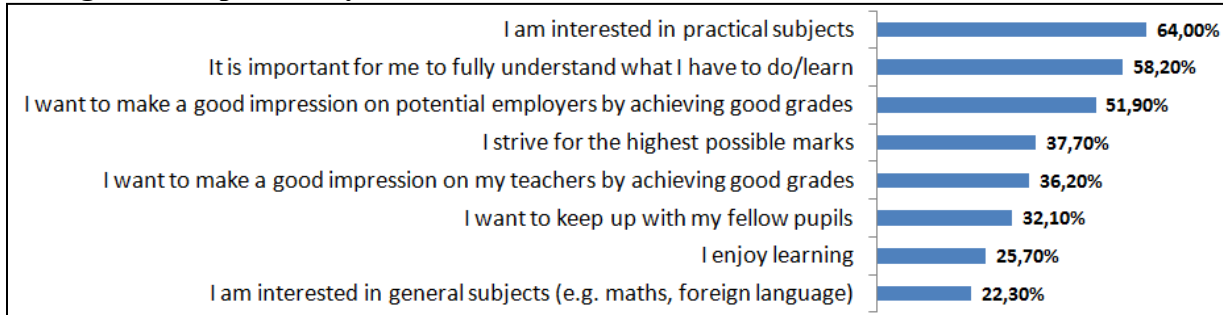
In addition to general attitudes and assessments about the programme and the school facilities we were also interested in an examination of the learning concepts and the study behaviour of the pupils. The research objective was to find which factors the most reflect to progress of pupils learning and skills.

4.3.1. Study behaviour

For the most important goals (Figure 7)

Figure 7 there are not big differences between girls' and boys' considerations with the exception of understanding what to do/learn - this goal is slightly more important for female than for male pupils (Table 13).

Figure 7. Pupils' study behaviour.



More than each third pupil strives for the highest possible marks and for female pupils it is more important than for male.

Table 13. Influence of gender and grades to study behaviour (%).

It is important for me to fully understand what to	I strive for the highest possible marks	I want to keep up	I enjoy learning	I am interested in

do/learn										with my fellow pupils				general subjects (e.g. maths, foreign language)	
female	male	grades			female	male	grades			female	male	female	male	female	male
		good	merit	fair			good	merit	fair						
65	53	81	61	43	43	33	66	39	21	35	30	31	21	25	20

Almost one third confesses that they want to keep up with their fellow pupils while female pupils state this more often than male.

Despite the fact that female pupils seem to enjoy learning more than male (Table 13) the overall rate of pupils who like to learn is very low (just one of four). Even worse is the situation with general subjects. Also despite the overall picture that female pupils are a bit more interested in general subjects (e.g. maths, foreign language) than male (Table 13) this factor is the least important for VET students – actually a bit more than one of five pupils expresses some interest in general subject.

It shows that pupils with higher grades state a higher motivation for all the listed aspects than pupils with merit grades, e.g. regarding striving for the highest possible marks, importance of understanding what to do/learn and so on.

4.3.2. Practical training

In an additional question the pupils were asked how they rate the proportion of practical training within their current programme (Table 14)

Table 14. Pupils' rates of the amount of practical training within programme (%).

Overall (total) rating					Average				Good				
Poo	Fai	Avera	Goo	Excelle	grades		born in		femal	mal	grades	born in	

r	r	ge	d	nt		good	merit	fair	Latvia	other EU	non-EU	e	e	good or merit	fair	Latvia	other EU	non-EU
2,8	5,6	26,6	59,1	6,0	20	25	32	26	56	30	64	55	62	55	60	4	38	

In Latvia, most of the pupils rate the proportion of practical training as good or average, when good rates came more often from female than male pupils. Meanwhile just 6 percent state the amount as fair and only 3 percent rate the proportion of practical training as poor without big differences in female and male opinions. On the other hand with total coincide of male and female considerations just 6 percent of pupils evaluate the amount of practical training as excellent.

Pupils with good or merit grades more often evaluated amount of practical training as good than pupils with fair grades, whereas percentage of pupils evaluated amount of practical training as average are higher between pupils with fair grades comparing to pupils with merit and good grades.

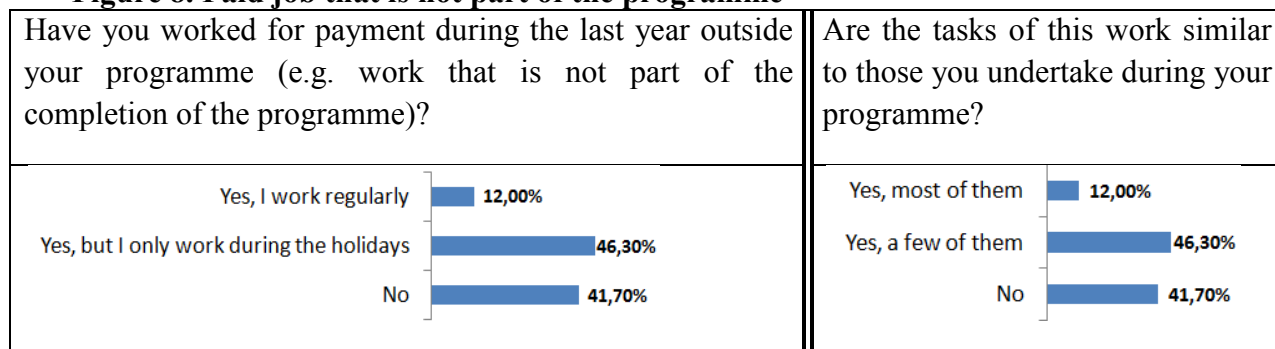
The result shows that the evaluation of the appropriateness of the practical training highly depends on the country of pupils' origin: majority of pupils born in Latvia consider the amount of practical training as good and each fourth as average, whereas more than a half of pupils born in other than Latvia EU country rate it just as average and each fourth as fair and only small 4 percent consider it as good. The differences in the percentages of pupils born in non-EU countries rating the amount of practical training as average or good are smaller (30 % and 38 % respectively) whereas percentage of pupils rating such amount as excellent is much higher for pupils from non-EU countries (19 %) rather than born in Latvia (6 %) or other EU country (9 %).

Despite the representatives of all socio-economic groups most often rate the amount of practical training as good, it is interesting that between respondents evaluated this state as average the greater percentage are among pupils from families coping on present income (30 %) and the lower percentage are among pupils from families living comfortable (22 %), whereas the better the living conditions the higher the percentage of good rates (from 54 percent for families that find very difficult to live on present income till 63 percent for families living comfortably).

4.3.3. Activities outside the programme

We were also interested in the activities of pupils outside the programme. Do they hold down a paid job which is not part of the programme (left part of Figure 8)?

Figure 8. Paid job that is not part of the programme



Much more than a half of the pupils (58 %) hold another job during the last year outside their programme. However just each fifth of them declares that he/she works regularly, while another four from five answer that they worked for payment but only during the holidays. More male pupils hold down a paid job outside the programme than female pupils. This is true both for regular work (Table 15) and for working only during the holidays (Table 16). The number of non-working pupils (Table 15) is much higher in service-related programmes than on industry-related. Meanwhile non-working pupils from parents born in other than Latvia EU countries are much scarce than in any other cases.

Table 15. Working and non-working pupils (%).

Have a paid job		Have regular work			Non-working pupils			
female	male	female	male	parents born	service	industry	parents born	SES

				both in Latvia	one in Latvia	both in other EU	both in non- EU			both in Latvia	one in Latvia	both in other EU	both in non- EU	below average	above	
48	66	9	14	11	17	8	5	47	32	42	48	23	45	38	42	54

Majority of pupils whose both parents were born in other than Latvia EU countries have just occasional work during holidays (Table 16)) while more children of Latvia-born parents' have regular work comparing to children of abroad-born parents (Table 15).

Table 16. Pupils working only during the holidays (%).

female	male	parents born						SES		
		both Latvia	in Latvia	one in Latvia	in country	both in other EU	both in non-EU country	below	average	above
39	52	46	36	69	49	50	46	37		

The socio-economic status almost does not influence the aspect of regular work, however it affects if the pupils work occasionally or don't work at all. The lower SES the more often pupils are working during their holidays (Table 16). In turn, the higher SES the more often pupils do not work at all outside their programme (Table 15).

Considering how this work (outside the programme) is similar to those pupils undertake during their programme (right part of Figure 8) it is interesting (Table 17) that partial similarity is more often for industry-related programmes while more working pupils in service sector are occupied with some tasks other than in their programme comparing with working pupils from industry-related programmes.

Table 17. Similarity of tasks within and outside the programme (%).

Tasks are partially similar		Tasks differ		Tasks completely similar			
service	industry	service	industry	living on family's present income			
				comfortably	coping	difficult	very difficult

36	47	45	31	22	20	17	11
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Family's financial conditions influence also the similarity of work within and outside programme. The more comfortably families are living on present incomes the more often pupils during their outside work are involved to the same tasks that they have within programme.

4.4. Future career aspirations and self-assessment

Another goal of the research study was to measure the pupils' perceptions about their life goals and their future possibilities for employment, career building, and mobility.

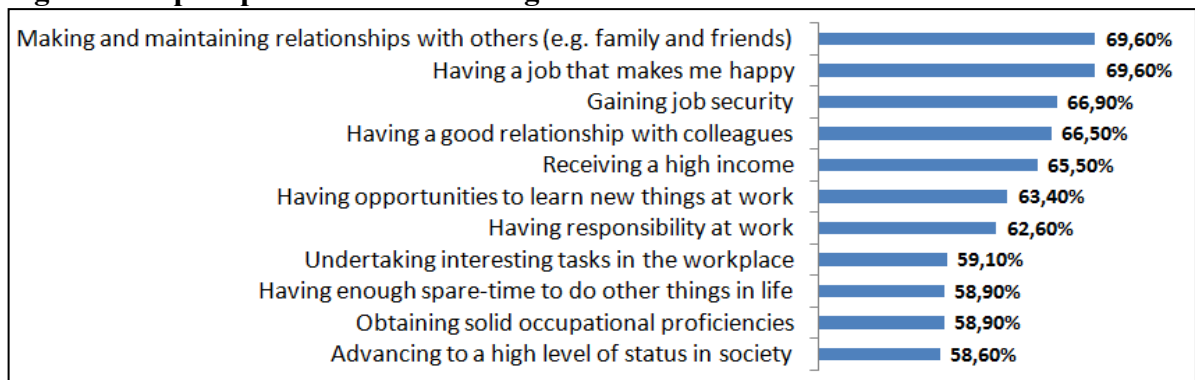
4.4.1. Professional and life goal

Absolutely all considered aspects

Figure 9) are more important for women than for man. For instance, obtaining solid occupational proficiencies

Table 18), having a job that makes one happy and having a good relationship with colleagues (Table 19).

Figure 9. Pupils' professional and life goals.



Also absolutely all considered aspects are more important for service-sector programme's pupils rather than for industry-sector's. For instance, last two described aspects – “having a job that makes one happy” and “having a good relationship with colleagues” (Table 19). The same is related also to making and maintaining relationships with others (e.g. family and friends) (Table 20).

Table 18. Pupil’s professional and life goals (%).

Obtaining solid occupational proficiencies					Undertaking interesting tasks in the workplace						Having enough spare-time to do other things in life		
female	male	SES			city	town	farm	SES			SES		
		below	average	above				below	average	above	below	average	above
63	56	57	60	69	63	58	56	56	61	66	54	60	69

Desire of “undertaking interesting tasks in the workplace” slightly depends on place of pupil’s living – for inhabitants of big cities or their suburbs it is more important than for pupils from towns or small cities and pupils from country villages or farms (Table 18).

Table 19. Pupil’s professional and life goals (%) – continuation.

Having a job that makes me happy							Having a good relationship with colleagues							
female	male	service	industry	SES			female	male	service	industry	born in			
				below	average	above					Latvia	other EU	non-EU	
74	66	73	65	69	72	79	69	64	71	63	67	34	81	

Country of pupil’s origin influences essentially on pupils attitude to having a good relationship with colleagues (Table 19)– just one of three pupils born in other than Latvia EU country decides that it is quite or very important, while so consider two of three pupils born in Latvia and even 81% of pupils born in non-EU country. Almost the same proportion are in consideration of advancing to a high level of status in society (Table 20).

Table 20. Pupil’s professional and life goals (%) – ending.

Advancing to a high level of status in society				Making and maintaining relationships with others (e.g. family and friends)			
born in		living on family’s present income		service		industry	

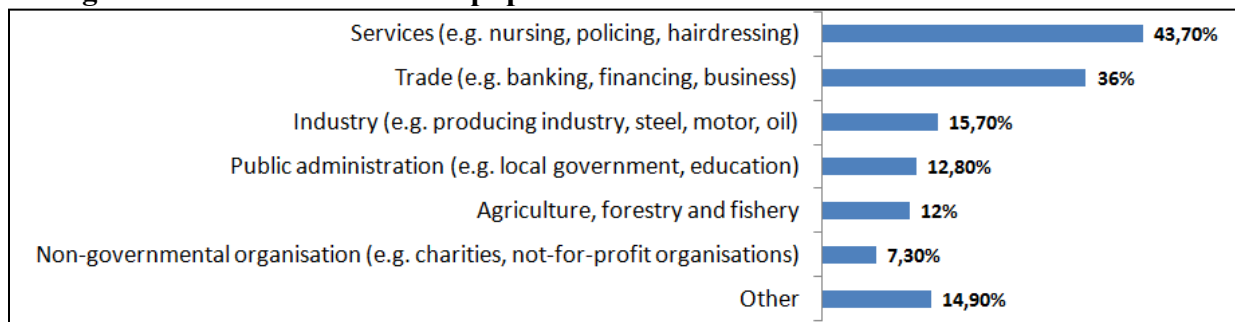
Latvia	other EU	non-EU	comfortably	coping	difficult	Very difficult		
59	41	94	63	56	56	64	73	67

4.4.2. Preferred sector to work

When pupils were asked about the sector in which they would like to work in, the answer option “service sector (e.g. nursing, policing, hairdressing)” was quoted the most following with voting for trade (e.g. banking, financing, business). Other considered sectors are far away from two leaders (

Figure 10).

Figure 10. Sector in which the pupils like to work in the future.



For male pupils the sector of trade is the most quoted (33%), however female pupils’ willingness to work there is even stronger – 40% (Table 21).

Table 21. Preference of trade and agriculture (%)

Trade (e.g. banking, financing, business)					Agriculture, forestry and fishery				
female	male	city	town	farm	female	male	city	town	farm
40	33	42	36	29	5	18	7	10	20

For male pupils after trade (33%) and service (30%) third the most popular sector is industry (e.g. producing industry, steel, motor, oil). While 26% of the male pupils quoted that they would like to work in this sector only 4% of the female pupils stated that they strive towards working in the industry sector (Table 22) - this sector is the least popular between female pupils. Almost the same attitude is for agriculture, forestry and fishery (Table 21).

Table 22. Preference of industry and service (%).

Industry (e.g. producing industry, steel, motor, oil)					Services (e.g. nursing, policing, hairdressing)								
female	male	grades			female	male	born in			living on family's present income			
		good	merit	Fair			Latvia	other EU	non-EU	comfortably	copin g	difficu lt	very difficult
4	26	11	15	22	60	30	45	14	32	39	44	52	49

Opposite than attitudes for industry are perception of non-governmental organizations (e.g. charities, not-for-profit organizations) – with 10% this sector is fourth by popularity for female and with just 5% the least by popularity between male pupils (Table 23).

Table 23. Other options (%).

Public administration (e.g. local government, education)			Non-governmental organisation (e.g. charities, not-for-profit organisations)					
city	town	farm	female	male	living on family's present income			
					comfortably	copin g	difficult	Very difficult
15	13	9	10	5	5	8	12	5

With regard to the service sector (Table 22), pupils who are born in Latvia more often chose this sector rather than born in a non-EU country and pupils born in other than Latvia EU country.

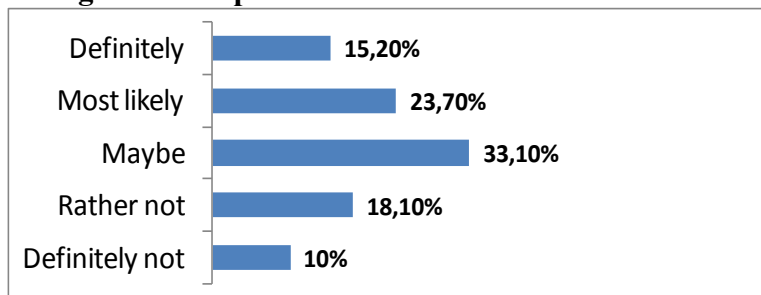
Pupils from big cities or their suburbs more often than pupils from towns or small cities and even more often than pupils from country villages or farms strive towards trade (Table 21).). The same is concerning the sector of public administration (Table 23) whereas for agriculture,

forestry and fishery the situation is opposite – just 7% of big cities inhabitants are thinking to be involved in this sector, while 10% of pupils from towns or small cities and whole 20% of pupils from country villages or farms are going to be occupied there.

4.4.3. Perception of further education

We also asked the pupils whether they consider continuing schooling or participating in further education after they have finished their current vocational programme. In Latvia, in total, 39% of the pupils strive towards continuing their education while 33% are still not sure (Figure 11). Figure 11

Figure 11. Pupil's intention to continue education.



The higher the achieved grades the stronger the willingness to continue education (Table 24 and Table 25).

Table 24. Pupils considering continue education most likely (%).

female	male	grades			service	Industry	city	town	farm	SES		
		good	merit	fair						below	average	above
27	21	30	24	17	27	19	30	22	18	19	24	34

Table 25. Pupils considering continue education definitely (%).

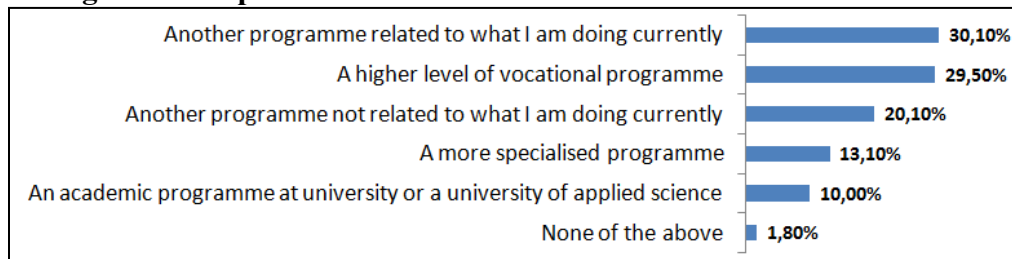
female	male	grades			Service	Industry	city	town	farm	SES		
		good	merit	fair						below	below	below
19	12	40	16	11	16	11	18	16	12	13	17	24

Also pupils from the service sector are aiming for further education more than those from industry sector (43 % vs. 30 %). More often pupils from big cities or their suburbs desire to continue their education (48 %) than from towns or small cities (38 %) who in turn are more willingness to continued education than pupils from country villages or farms (30 %). Even more differences regarding this attitude can be found in the different socio economic groups. The percentage of pupils who are willing to continue education is much higher in families with SES above average (58 %) than in those with an average (41 %) or below (just 31 %).

4.4.4. Possible pathways

Pupils can choose from a variety of options when it comes to further education. Therefore, we were interested what qualification pupils would choose if they would continue learning (Figure 12).

Figure 12. Pupils' choice of further education.



The preferences for the different pathways (Table 26) differ between male and female pupils. While male pupils more often consider another programme related to what they are doing currently female pupils are the most interested in higher level of vocational programme (that not sufficiently differs from male opinion - 31 % vs. 28 %) and in another programme not related to what they are doing currently.

Table 26. Pupil's preferences for the different pathways (%).

Another programme		A more specialised programme	A higher level of vocational programme
related to what is doing	not related		

currently																
female	male	service	industry	female	male	born in			living on family's present income		SES			grades		
						Latvia	other EU	non-EU	very difficult	other cases	below	average	above	good	merit	fair
27	33	24	33	23	17	12	56	41	25	13	27	31	40	43	31	19

The level of achieved grades essentially influences just the preference of higher level of vocational programme – as higher grades as more often pupils prefer this option.

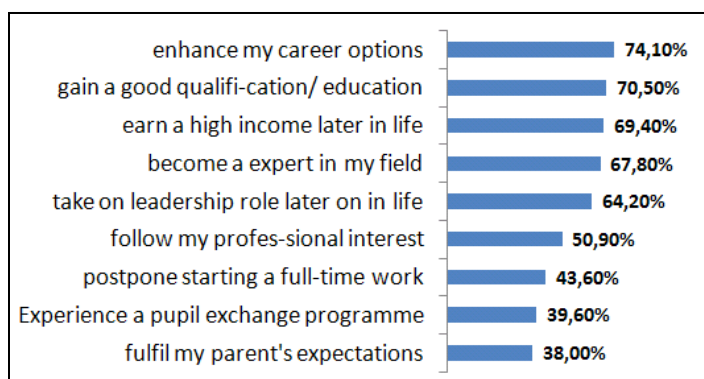
Pupils from industry sector more often than from service sectors desire to perfect themselves in already chosen area whereas pupils born in other than Latvia EU country or non-EU country more often than pupils born in Latvia prefer more specialised programme. This type of continuing education is stated more often by pupils from families with financial difficulties than from any of the other groups. A higher level of vocational programme is more attractive to pupils from families with socio-economic status above average than for those with an SES which is average or below average.

4.4.5. Further education as enabler

The pupils were also supposed to report their opinion about further education (e.g. advanced training or studying). The opinion was inquired with several questions highlighting different attitudes and goals

Figure 13).

Figure 13. Pupils' opinion regarding what further education enables them to.



With the statement that further education enables them to fulfil their parent's expectations (Table 27) agree more male pupils than female, however for the rest of the considered factors female pupils agree with more than male, e.g. “to gain good qualification/education” (Table 28), “to enhance career options” (Table 29), “to experience a pupil exchange programme” (Table 27).). However the most essential difference is regarding professional interest (Table 30).

Table 27. Pupils considering exchange programmes and parent’s expectations (%).

Experience a pupil exchange programme				Fulfil my parent's expectations							
female	male	service	industry	female	male	service	industry	parents born			
								both in Latvia	one in Latvia	both in other EU country	both in non-EU country
44	35	44	36	32	43	37	43	36	46	52	50

Pupils with higher grades more often agree almost with all considered statements compared to pupils with lower grades, e.g. percentage of pupils agreed that further education enables them to follow their professional interest (Table 30); that further education enables to gain a good qualification/education (Table 21) and so on. The single exception is regarding consideration that further education enables pupils to earn a high income later in life (Table 21). Here there are no differences between visions of pupils with good and merit grade, however they are higher than regarding pupils with fair grades.

Table 28. Pupils considering good qualification and high income (%).

Gain a good qualification/ education										Earn a high income later in life		
female	male	grades			service	industry	born in			grades		
		good	merit	fair			Latvia	other EU	non-EU	good	merit	fair
75	67	85	73	52	72	65	71	68	25	73	74	56

Except of fulfilling parent’s expectations where industry sector students agree more than pupils from the service sector (Table 27) all other considered aspects of further education are more appreciated by service sector students. For instance, “becomes an expert in my field” (Table 30), “gain a good qualification/education” (Table 28), “experience a pupil exchange programme” (Table 21) and “enhance my career options” (Table 29). The highest difference in service and industry sectors students’ opinions is regarding the ability of further education to follow pupil’s professional interest (Table 30). Here 56 percent of service sector students consider it as further education’s enabler while just 44 percent of industry sector students share this opinion.

Table 29. Pupils considering career options and starting of full-time work (%).

Enhance my career options							Postpone starting a full-time work						
female	male	Service	Industry	born in			city	town	farm	living on family’s present income			
				Latvia	other EU	non-EU				comfortably	coping	difficult	very difficult
78	70	78	68	75	46	35	49	40	41	49	43	39	33

A higher proportion of pupils who were born in Latvia agree with the statement that further education enables them to gain a good qualification/education (Table 28) comparing to pupils who were born in another EU country and even more compared to pupils who were born in a non-EU country. Almost the same proportion can be detected for the opinion that further education enables oneself to enhance career options (Table 29). While fulfilling of parent’s

expectations is more important to pupils with parents both born in other than Latvia EU country, pupils with parents both born in Latvia much less agree to this statement (Table 27).

Table 30. Pupils considering professional interest and become an expert (%).

Follow my professional interest										Become an expert in my field	
female	male	grades			service	industry	city	town	farm	service	industry
		good	merit	fair							
58	44	73	52	34	56	44	57	48	48	71	65

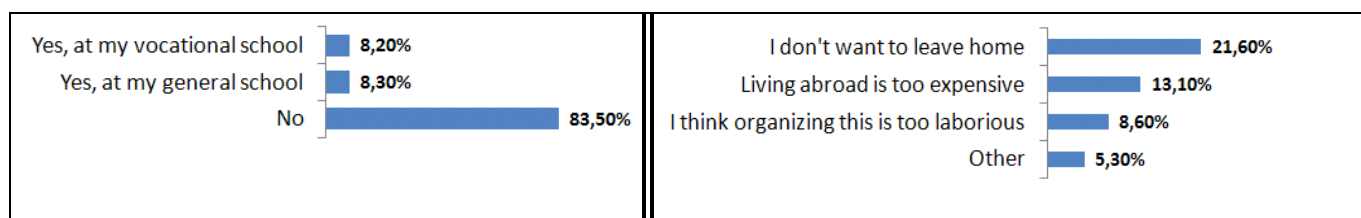
All aspects of further education are slightly more important for inhabitants of big cities or their suburbs than for pupils living in towns, small cities, country villages or farms. It is especially true for following pupil’s professional interests (Table 30) and the ability to postpone starting of full-time work (Table 29). Agreement regarding ability to postpone starting of full-time work is also higher for pupils from families living comfortably than for pupils from families finding it very difficult to live on present income with almost linear distribution for intermediary cases (Table 29).

4.4.6. International exchange

In today’s society cross-cultural competencies become more and more important. Pupils in the vocational education system may also benefit from the personal development prospects abroad. To gain more information about the perspectives of the pupils regarding a stay abroad we asked whether they have ever participated in an international exchange programme for pupils (left part of Figure 14) and if not, we further asked why they did not participate (right part of Figure 14).

Figure 14. Pupils’ participation in an international exchange.

Participation in an international exchange	Reasons not to participate in international exchange
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As could be seen from Table 31 the majority of pupils in Latvia have never participated in an exchange programme for pupils – 79 percent of female and whole 89 percent of male pupils. For vocational schools there is no big difference in participation rates between girls and boys. However females stated more often that they have participated at an exchange programme at their general school than their male counterparts (11 % vs. 5 %). Achieved grades do not influence on participation, however pupils from industry-related programmes participated in international exchange more often than from service sector. Pupils born in other than Latvia EU countries participated in international exchange more often than born in non-EU countries while pupils born in Latvia show the lowest percentage.

Table 31. Pupils participated in an international exchange at vocational or general schools (%).

female	male	service	industry	born in			parents born				SES		
				Latvia	other EU	non-EU	both in Latvia	one in Latvia	both in other EU country	both in non-EU country	below	average	above
21	11	6	12	15	84	31	13	20	36	20	20	13	10

Participation at international exchange programmes depends also on countries of parents' origin – 36 percent of pupils where both parents were born in other than Latvia EU country participated in an exchange while only 20 percent of pupils who's both parents were born in non-EU country or one of parents was born not in Latvia. For children of Latvia-born parents this rate is just 13 percent.

Again, while in vocational schools socio-economic conditions have no influence on participation at international exchange programmes, for general schools this is the case. The worse the socio-economic background the more often pupils participated in an exchange programme at the general school. For socio-economic conditions above average this percentage is just 3 percent while for average level it is 6 percent and for the level below average 12 percent.

When asking those pupils who were not interested in participating in an international exchange programmes about the reasons (right part of (Figure 14) the aspect which was quoted the most is that they don't want to leave home, however here is not visible influence of socio-biographic characteristic on consideration. Despite of the fact that just a bit more than 8 percent of pupils consider that organising of international exchange is too laborious, it is interesting that male pupils stated this more often than female as well as industry sector students more often than service sector (Table 32). Even more interesting is that pupils from extreme layers of society (both living comfortably and finding financial situation of families very difficult) agree less with this statement than pupils from middle layers.

Table 32. Pupils considering that organising of international exchange is too laborious (%).

female	male	service	industry	living on family's present income			
				comfortably	coping	difficult	very difficult
5	11	5	11	4	13	11	4

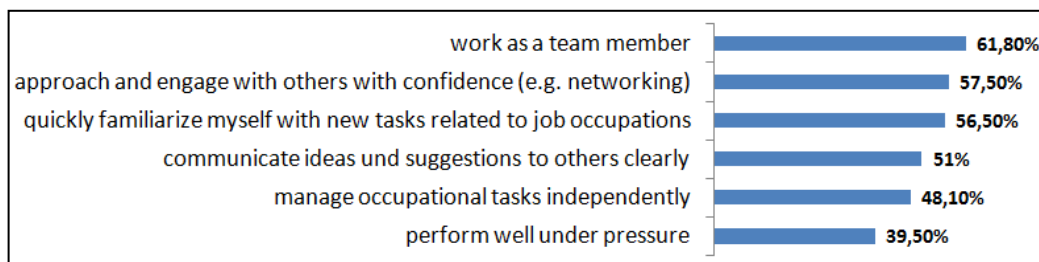
4.5. Acquired skills and abilities

In addition to their acquired knowledge pupils were asked about their acquired skills and abilities.

4.5.1. Soft skills

Pupils were asked to assess their current level of several soft skills relevant for the work sphere. Answers are presented in Figure 15.

Figure 15. Pupils' perception that acquired skills and abilities being able them to ...



Gender and the sector in which the pupils are undertaking their programme have an influence on the skills assessment. Female pupils assessed themselves higher by all of proposed soft skills than male, e.g. “manage occupational tasks independently” (Table 33), “approach and engage with others with confidence” (Table 36) and the highest difference is in assessment of ability to work as a team member (Table 36).

Table 33. Pupils’ perception of managing occupational tasks independently (%).

female	male	Born in			Parents born				SES		
		Latvia	other EU	non-EU	both in Latvia	one in Latvia	both in other EU country	both in non-EU country	below	average	above
51	46	49	26	22	50	51	52	21	57	51	45

Pupils from service sector estimate themselves higher than from industry sector by all of proposed soft skills. Foremost it concerns to ability of networking, working as a team member (Table 36) and quick familiarization with new tasks related to job occupations (Table 34).

Table 34. Pupils’ perception of quick familiarize with new tasks related to job occupations (%).

grades			service	industry	born in			city	town	farm	SES		
good	merit	fair			Latvia	other EU	non-EU				below	average	above
70	59	45	61	53	57	55	45	61	56	53	66	58	51

As a rule it can be stated that the higher the achieved grades the higher pupils’ self-assessment in the case of acquired skills and abilities. For instance, regarding ability quickly familiarize with new tasks related to job occupations (Table 34). Even more these differences are regarding ability to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly (Table 35).

Table 35. Pupils' perception of communication ideas and suggestions to others clearly (%).

grades			service	industry	city	town	farm	living on family's present income			
good	merit	fair						comfortably	coping	difficult	very difficult
65	53	38	54	48	55	52	48	56	49	51	42

Ability to manage occupational tasks independently is more often stated by pupils born in Latvia than born in non-EU country while pupils born in other than Latvia EU country estimated it even lower (Table 33). The same tendency can be detected for quick familiarize with new tasks related to job occupations (Table 34) and ability to work as a team member (Table 36). It is interesting that self-assessment of the ability to manage occupational tasks independently depends also on the country of parents' origin (Table 33) –pupils whose both parents were born in non-EU country evaluate themselves much lesser than in any other cases.

Table 36. Pupils' perception of other skills and abilities (%).

Work as a team member							Approach and engage with others with confidence (e.g. networking)						
female	male	service	industry	born in			female	male	service	industry	city	town	farm
				Latvia	other EU	non-EU							
66	58	67	59	62	45	28	61	55	63	53	62	57	53

The smaller the size of municipality were pupils are living the lower pupils' self-assessment, e.g. ability to approach and engage with others with confidence (Table 36). Almost the same distribution is regarding ability quickly familiarize with new tasks related to job occupations (Table 34) and ability to communicate ideas and suggestions to others clearly (Table 35).

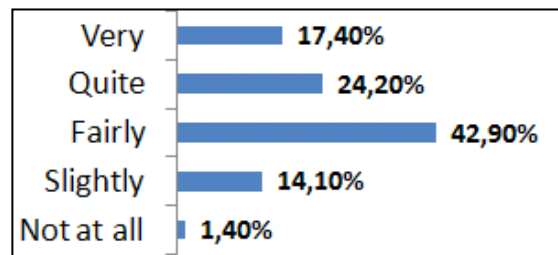
Further the income status of the family also affects the self-assessment of the pupils. Pupils from families with a difficult economic situation assess themselves less often skilled in certain abilities than pupils from families with a secure financial situation. For example, pupils who report to live comfortably on present income rate their skill to communicate ideas and suggestions to others higher than pupils who find it very difficult on present income (Table 35).

Index SES also influences on self-assessment – the better the socio-economic background the higher the perception of acquired skills. Particularly it is true for the ability to manage occupational tasks independently (Table 33). Even more differences can be detected regarding the ability to quickly familiarize one with new tasks related to job occupations (Table 34).

4.5.2. Current programme as abilities’ enabler

In addition to the self-assessment the pupils were also asked to what extend their current programme strengthens these abilities. Answers are presented in Figure16.

Figure 16. Pupils’ perceptions of development of soft skills by current programme



Pupils with higher grades appreciate their programme’s ability to develop necessary soft skills more –totally 56 percent of pupils with good grades consider that their current programme does it quite or very good, while the same opinion have totally percent of pupils with merit grades and just 29 percent of pupils with fair grades (Table 37).

Table 37. Pupils appreciated their programmes (%).

Quite											Very							
female	male	grades			born in			SES			female	male	grades			service	industry	
		good	merit	fair	Latvia	other EU	non-EU	below	average	above			good	merit	fair			
27	22	33	26	16	24	17	20	22	26	33	20	15	23	18	13	21	16	

There is a difference regarding the assessment of the programme between boys and girls. Male pupils more often assess that current programme fairly develop desired soft skills than female pupils (Table 38) and in turn female more often consider that the programme does it quite or very good (totally 47 % vs. 37 % - see Table 37). Service-oriented students more often than industry-oriented consider that their current programme helps them to develop necessary soft skills very well (Table 37).

Table 38. Pupils not appreciated their programmes (%).

Not at all			Slightly									Fairly								
born in			grades			born in			SES					grades			born in			
Latvia	other EU	non-EU	good	merit	fair	Latvia	other EU	non-EU	below	average	above	female	male	good	merit	fair	Latvia	other EU	non-EU	
1	9	15	10	12	19	14	46	6	18	12	5	40	46	34	42	50	43	28	41	

Pupils who were born in Latvia more often stated that the programme prepares them fairly or quite good (43 % and 24 % respectively) than did pupils who were born in other EU country (28 % and 17 % respectively). In contrast the percentage of pupils born in Latvia that have stated that their programme prepares them slightly is much less than for pupils those were born in other EU country (14 % vs. 46 %). Percentage of pupils who consider that their current programme does not help to train their soft skills at all is much higher between those born in non-EU countries comparing to those born in other than Latvia EU countries whereas such consideration have few if any pupils born in Latvia.

Socio-economic background also influences the assessment of programme's appropriateness to develop necessary soft skills. When pupils from families with SES below average more often than others consider that the programme slightly helps to develop these skills (Table 38), pupils from families with socio-economic status above average more often than others consider that the programme promotes the necessary soft skills quite well (Table 37).

Conclusions

The highest differences regarding gender were found in involvement into paid work that is not part of a programme. Half of female pupils have not paid work when only one of three male pupils are not involved into paid work that is not part of a programme.

The examination of certain factors shows that parents' suggestion is more important for girls than for boys for majority of cases. The influence of parents on pupils' decisions is stronger when both parents were born in other than Latvia EU country whereas the weakest dependence on parents is when both of parents were born in Latvia.

The most important information sources for pupils when choosing their programme were parents and family members, online information and other public media, e.g. newspapers, followed by informative days, fairs and open days at schools, whereas teachers' suggestions and job centres are least important for pupils when choosing the programme.

Friends' advice is more important for pupils born in other than Latvia EU countries rather than born in non-EU countries whereas least important for pupils born in Latvia.

In many cases there were not find sufficient (if any) differences between considerations of sector's representatives, however as in the survey participated pupils enrolled to approximately 200 VET programs and more detailed analysis could give more interesting and maybe unpredictable results.

Influence of currently achieved grades to pupils' suggestions is rather obvious in majority of cases and therefore this analysis does not give essential added value. The same is related to influencing of the place of pupil's living. As larger is size of pupil's living place as more ambitious they are.

However analysis of pupil's country of origin as well as country of origin of their parents shows even predictable but unexpectedly high difference in mentality between pupils born in Latvia, born in other EU country and born in non-EU country.

Analysis of influence of socio-economic background to pupil's considerations in majority of cases shows that as higher is social status of family as stronger pupils are motivated. However sometimes (e.g. regarding occupation related to enrolled programme) it was surprising that considerations of pupils from families representing opposite sides of society (either living comfortably or very difficult) coincide and sufficiently differ from considerations of pupils representing middle layers families.

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