

from a multidisciplinary 'menu' at around fourteen years of age (eighteen is early enough for the kind of specialization that is useful in terms of the professions, for example) and hope that, guided by the Spirit which moves us all, they will succeed in allowing their creativity to emerge from the vortex of potential that they have immersed themselves in. Have faith in your children and in their ability to create a future worth seeing and I'm sure you'll receive the rewards we've all been seeking for so long!

And a word, finally, for the parents of these carriers of hope. Have you ever looked at a cloud in the sky and let your imagination do with it what it wills? After a while you might see a shape and then later that vague outline might resolve itself into a bird or an animal (a dragon perhaps). When I was a child my own mother would say to me: "Look at that cloud! Can you see a pirate ship in it?" At first, of course, I'd look at her as if she were a crazy woman, but soon I began to understand what she meant (or I thought I did). I was soon able to see her pirate ship (perhaps not the same ship and sometimes maybe not even in the same cloud) and later I was able to 'see' things for myself (and I still can). But the point of all this is that she taught me two things: everyone has basically the same imaginative faculty, and everyone is capable of using it.

The problem is getting us to use/apply it, which is where we are now. So, the next time you're out and about with your smaller offspring ladies and gentlemen, employ that feeling of community and togetherness which, still existing in Hungary today, bridges the gap between the generations, and persuade them to stare at a cloud for a few minutes before asking – if you can't see anything there for yourself: what do you see? Maybe they'll be able to tell you about the future – and one day maybe they'll even begin to make it happen.

ROBIN USHER



## LITHUANIA: THE CURRENT SITUATION OF PUPILS AND SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

The restoration of Lithuania's independence in 1990 mandated for intensive reforms in all spheres of life including education. The leading principles of transformation in education from autocratic and centralized, subject based system to democratic, child centered, flexible system are contained in General Conception of Lithuanian education (GC). In 1991 the Education Act (EA) adopted by the Lithuanian Parliament created the legal conditions to take practical steps and constituted conceptual grounds for the reform.

Aforementioned conditions influenced in certain level on pupil and school assessment. Until recent years the uniformed teaching and evaluation of pupils achievement was used for all grades (1 to 12). Assessment was expressed in marks (1 to 5), essentially norm-referenced. Marking was mainly a private matter of a teacher, based on subject specific, there was no aggregating of marks across the subjects. National examinations were set after the grade 9 and at the end of secondary school, all examinations were compulsory.

### *Current developments*

In the last five years revision of all subjects (especially social and humanities) curriculum and assessment system and development of new standards, targets and methods of evaluation is on stage due to: changing needs and demands of society; change of the general concept of education; development of new curriculum guidelines; development of new school graduation/examination system; changing role of a teacher in reformed school.

In the pre-school in one year course no marks are given to children and this course is not compulsory, but recommended. Some primary schools organize diagnostic test in the beginning of the first grade with recommendations for parents whether their children are prepared enough to enter primary school. Child starts first grade in year 6 or 7 (it depends on the decision of parents). In the new School Rules there is a recommendation for the teachers not to mark the first and second grade pupil, but to develop their own system of informing parents about child's achievement. Until recent years from the first grade pupils were marked and ranked in class order. Parents were used to have such kind of information and now a lot of work is to be done in persisting them not to resist against "primary without marks". marks in primary are considered by educators as one of child's demotivating items, labelling them for long years to be "failures". The decision to repeat a year is made by School Board after the recommendation of primary calls teacher with the agreement of parents. Earlier nobody used to ask the opinion of parents.

From the third grade the marking system starts, using a scale 1 to 10. Each school year is divided into three terms. The average mark is set at the end of each term from the marks of child's oral and written performance marks given to him during the term. At the end of school year the average year mark is given on the basis of term's marks. At the end of primary school a diagnostic test is administered, initiated voluntarily by the school.

New curriculum development stimulated renovation of assessment approaches. The main goals of learning until now were knowledge and skills. New projects of standards for all subjects are in creation now. They switch on the new aspects of pupils performance: problem solving; creativity; cooperation; behaviors, values.

The evaluation of these new aspects is problematic, because specific tools are required. These tools are not available yet, neither special banks of tests, nor diagnostic research, or information on international comparative study system. Today's assessment can be called intuitive and formal, despite of fragmental innovations and teachers training courses initiated by reform implementators – Ministry and Pedagogical Research institute. Visible changes of assessment can be prognosed with implementation of new examination system in independent testing center.

According to the Education Act (article 19) school children are obliged to learn until 16 years of age or can graduate from basic school (9 grades). The national basic school graduation examinations are organized. Lithuanian language essay and the test on mathematics is taken by every student (plus the native language of minorities if studied). In two years (planned from 1996) this system is to be changed and compulsory schooling will be 10 grades.

From 1993 upper secondary school students were given an opportunity to study subjects in a chosen level: B-basic, A-advanced, H-high. In 1994 for the first time national school leaving examinations were organized in three above mentioned levels. System of the levels is a transition from uniformed teaching and learning to differentiated profiled streaming. According to General Conception of education after the reform of upper secondary school, profiled programmes of study will be offered: liberal arts; natural science or technical, economical – commercial modules are prepared. All modules are planned with different subject curricula and syllabuses, and will be composed from flexible set of compulsory and optional subjects. Level B is prognosed to be fundamental for subjects in all profiles. National school leaving examinations are prepared by Ministry experts. There are three compulsory exams: Lithuanian language, mathematics, foreign language, (native language for minorities if studied), all written. One must choose to take additionally two more oral examinations – one from social, language, arts group, the other on from natural and exact sciences group.

#### *School evaluation*

School assessment and evaluation was mainly provisionally done by Ministry and local educational units inspectors. Changes of school to new quality and evaluation of current situation is initiated through a new system of school leaders accreditation and certification of teachers qualification categories.

The establishment of new type of schools – gymnasiums, youth schools is going under the documents of reform, schools are examined and evaluated by experts. Ministry gets information about each school from a new document – annual school summary report.

Lithuania is a member of IEA, participates in international studies (TIMSS, CIVIC) and information valuable got from this resource. The new English language examination implementation plan, prepared with a help of Council of Europe and the British Council, is of a great help.

*Problems to be solved*

The reform of education in Lithuania lasts for five years. The essential old and new problems to be solved in further reform implementation phase are seen already: a lack of human resources; a lack of financial resources; a lack of assessment tools; a lack of testing preparatory and executive center; a lack of new educational and didactic materials; lack of monitoring system on education; the resistance to reform from teacher trainers institutions; stereotypes and inertia of society. After we solve these, the new reform – with new problems – will be on stage already.

*Assessment in age and grade scale*

	AGE	GRADE				
UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL	18	12	L	L	LG	E
	17	11	L	L	LG	
	16	10	L	L	LG	
COMPULSORY SCHOOL	15	9	T	T	TG	B
	14	8	T	T	T	
	13	7	T	T	T	
	12	6	T	T	T	
	11	5	T	T	T	
	10	4	T	T	T	
PRIMARY SCHOOL	9	3	T	T	T	D
	8	2			I	
PRE-SCHOOL	6-7	1	D	I		



- I – “primary without marks”, parents are informed by teacher on child’s achievement.
- T – marks given after each term by primary class teacher or subject teachers (1–10).
- D – diagnostic test, voluntary given by the school.
- B – basic school graduation examinations, given by Ministry.
- G – examinations at the end of school year in gymnasiums, given by school (about 40 such schools out of 700 upper secondary schools in the country).
- E – upper secondary school leaving examinations, given by the Ministry.
- L – marks given after each term by subject teacher according to students chosen level.