

CHARACTERISTICS OF YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT IN LIEPAJA CITY

Pāvels Jurs

Liepājas Universitāte, Latvija

Alīda Samuseviča

Liepājas Universitāte, Latvija

Abstract. *Youth civic engagement is an essential precondition for the preservation of democratic values and the existence of civil society. The implementation of the competence approach in the education process in Latvia provides as one of the key priorities of pedagogical work – encourage students' civic engagement and personal responsibility, developing students' thinking and self-initiative, the skills to be accountable to the citizens of society with the development national, historical and civic consciousness and understanding of social processes, as well as to promote their social activity and persistent habits in dealing with their peers to share solving multi-level problems related to the future of the local community and sustainable development. The aim of the research is: on the bases of theoretical research of civic problems and the analysis of the results of the carried out survey (quantitative data processing), to identify expressions of civic engagement of young people (from 9 to 12 grade students) in Liepaja (Latvia) focusing on different categories: (I) self-esteem of civic participation; (II) the willingness of young people to take responsibility; (III) self-realization of youth civic participation (IV) level of awareness among young people; (V) interaction of families and students in the context of the formation of a responsible position. The survey results reflect: relatively high self-esteem of civic engagement of students; low political engagement and political system scores; the untapped potential of young people in the context of civic engagement at school and city level.*

Keywords: *Civic Competence, Civic Education, Civic Engagement, Civic Position, Students.*

Introduction

There is often debate in the society about what school should do; what education system should be like; what is the most effective pedagogical approaches and forms, etc. A public discourse about the desired quality of education is a necessity and, at the same time, an endless process. In addition to the socio-economic, political, cultural changes, the increasing role of information technologies in everyday life and the tendencies of globalization, the issue of preparing the future generation for the existing social reality, as well as thinking about future citizens, school and upbringing in the family, play a crucial role and is becoming more and more topical. A reform of the education system is also

being implemented in Latvia in order to achieve competences-based educational content and approach with the aim of: “A competent student who wants and is able to learn all his/her life, solve the real life challenges, create innovations, develop different personality traits, which help to form a happy and responsible personality” (Valsts Izglītības satura centrs, 2017: 5). The new curriculum concept “School 2030” (Skola, 2030) envisages that students should have a civic position with an active degree of civic engagement – a responsible citizen of the society, who is an active, who is aware of his/her actions and their consequences, thinking about the future of the local community and sustainable development. A similar approach is also highlighted in the research “*Four-Dimensional Education: The Competencies Learners Need to Succeed*”. The authors emphasize that today the aim of the school is to prepare students for life in a diverse world as an active and responsible citizens (Fadel, Trilling, & Bialik, 2015). Based on the need to develop and improve the civic competence of young people, purposeful implementation of the concept of civic education, it is possible to encourage young people's civic engagement. At the same time, it should be noted that the prerequisites of the formation of the youth civic engagement are mainly determined by the social environment in the widest context of this concept. Therefore the process of the formation and promotion of the young people's civic participation is very complex interaction between multifaceted psychological, educational and social set of factors (Jurs, 2015). It is very important to conduct empirical research to identify self-esteem of young people's civic engagement and its multiple manifestations.

The aim of the publication is, basing on theoretical study of the problem of citizenship and the analysis of the results of the organized survey (quantitative data processing), to identify the manifestations of civic participation in Liepaja (Latvia), students from the 9th to 12th grade in several criteria: (I) self-esteem of civic engagement; (II) the willingness of young people to take responsibility; (III) self-realization of youth civic engagement; (IV) level of awareness among young people; (V) interaction of young people, families and school in the context of the formation of a responsible position.

In order to achieve the aim of the publication, the following research methods were used in the study:

1. theoretical research methods – the diverse analysis of scientific and methodological literature of the youth civic engagement, civic education and civic competences;
2. empirical research methods – data mining methods: (surveys, using M. Rozenberg self-esteem scale (Rosenberg, 1965), unfinished sentence method); data processing and analysis methods (quantitative data processing with data mathematical statistical analysis and predictive analytics methods implemented through processing

program); graphical representation of data; qualitative data processing (content analysis, data coding, grouping and processing); quantitative and qualitative data interpretation.

Promoting young people's civic engagement through civic education and civic competence

There is an educational transformation all over the world, because traditional educational approach does not always contribute to the development of necessary competences in the real environment in order to establish a knowledge-based society and achieve sustainable development at local, regional, national and international levels (Kraker, Lansu, & Dam-Mieras, 2007).

Analysis of theoretical literature reveals interpretations of educational approaches and civic competences and civic education based on diverse competences. For example, new ideas and a new product are created through competence-based education (Rivenbark & Jacobson, 2014), at the same time, it's important to be aware of the competency-based approach based on:

- intellectual, emotional and physiological needs of the student;
- universal value system;
- socially responsible attitude;
- independent learning;
- stimulation of independent thinking;
- promotion of academic and professional achievements;
- application of information technologies;
- student as co-organizer of study process;
- quality education service offer;
- the process and result-oriented student, student`s, families`, teacher's versatile cooperation and mutual trust;
- professional competence of teachers;
- providing equal, socially equitable opportunities for all students;
- individual responsibility (Sánchez & Ruiz, 2008).

The introduction of a competency-based learning approach is a time-consuming, multi-level model that requires the involvement of various industry professionals in content development, in order for the new education system to be of a holistic nature, covering the content of education from the kindergarten to the university (Blackburn, Porto, & Thompson, 2016). At the same time, it should be noted that the term “competence” should be applied and used in a pragmatic and contextual way depending on the user context, because there is no absolute truth about the use of the term “competence” (Lassnigg, 2015). One of the competency dimensions that promotes young people's sense of belonging, responsibility, civic

engagement and capacity is civic competence, which can be ensured in the conceptual framework of civic education, with the result of promoting civic participation of young people. Civic education plays a crucial role in fostering civil society and fostering civic engagement at local, regional, national and international levels.

The concept of civic education consists of knowledge of oneself, others, rights and obligations, and the application of knowledge in a particular activity, which is geared towards civic responsibility, taking on co-responsibility. The implementation of civic education consists of a holistically social approach: on the individual level – within the family – within the local society – within the national level – on the regional level – on the global level (Quisumbing, 2002). Within the framework of four cycles of learning and teaching provides: (I) conceptual level – knowledge (for themselves, others, behavior, culture, history, country, etc.); (II) active level of activities – skills (decision making, effective communication, active non-violence; (III) understanding (about yourself and others, concepts, motives, key issues and processes); (IV) evaluation – reflection of experience, acceptance, respect, evaluation of experience (UNESCO, 2002).

The civic education that is carried out within the framework of civic upbringing, forms the civic competence of youth, promotes the support for democratic values and directly promotes civic engagement (Galston, 2004) and increases the social capital (Heggart, 2015) as well as promotes the capacity of democracy (Martens & Gainous, 2012). The elements of civic competence are formed by civic knowledge, civic skills (Abs & Veldhuis, 2006), the use of knowledge, practical activities (Brammer et al., 2013) and attitude (European Commission, 2007). Civic competence promotes civic engagement of students in the long term (Hoskins, Villalba, & Saisana, 2015). Thus giving young people the opportunity to be self-confident and, in the long run, promote the growth of civil society. Civic participation can be characterized as the motivated engagement of an individual within the framework of the available resources that is directed towards political, social and economic processes within the local, regional, national and international level in order to solve common challenges that exist within the society in a democratic way, to influence the existing social order, to improve the quality of life thus implementing the individuals civic position (Jurs & Samuseviča, 2016).

Self-esteem of youth civic engagement – data analysis

The research sample consists of 825 respondents, 9th – 12th grade students that is 38.35 % of the total number of students in Liepaja (total number of students in the 9th – 12th grade group: 2151 students), which ensures the reliability and

validity of the study. The average age of respondents is 16 years; the characteristics of respondents' age and gender are described in Figure No. 1.

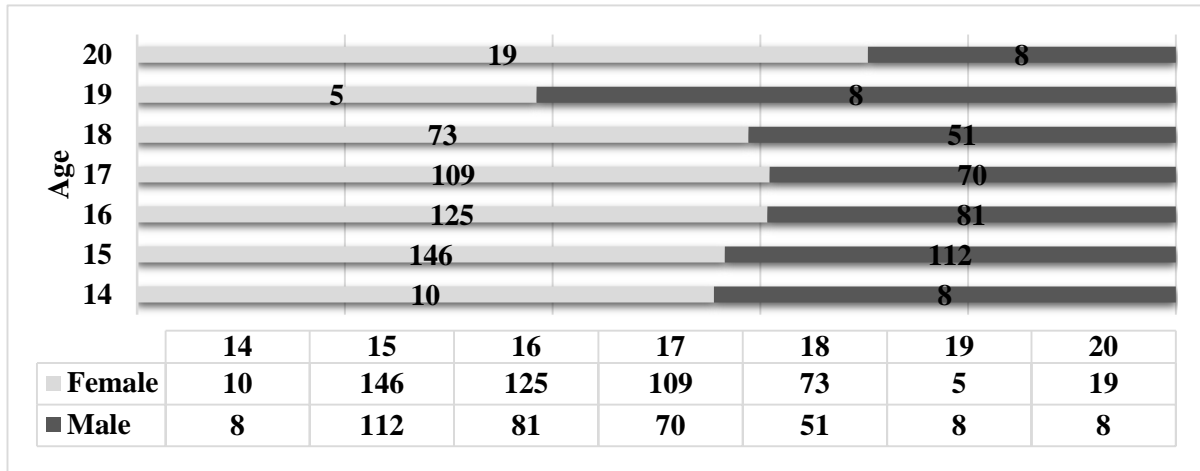


Figure 1. Respondents' characteristics: gender and age (n=825)

Research data gain confirmation ability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) and the results of the study are valid because they demonstrate accuracy. The survey was carried out in all comprehensive schools of Liepaja (Latvia).

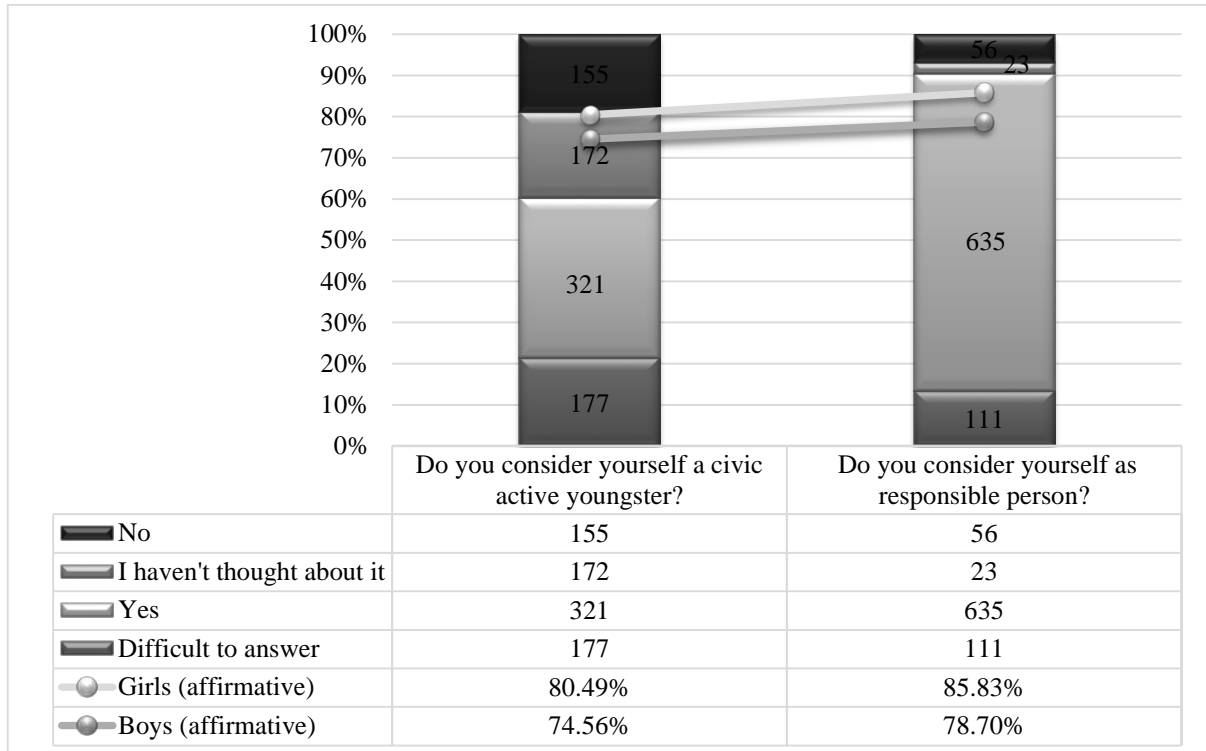


Figure 2. Self-assessment of students' responsibility and civic engagement

Analysis of the study data in Figure 2 shows that:

- 321 (38.91 %) respondents consider themselves as civic active, from them 207 (42.51 %) girls and 114 (33.73 %) boys;
- 155 (18.79 %) respondents consider themselves as civic inactive youth, from them 71 (14.58 %) girls and 84 (24.85 %) boys;
- 635 (76.97 %) respondents consider themselves as responsible, from them 394 (80.9 %) girls and 241 (71.3 %) boys;
- 56 (6.79 %) respondents consider themselves as irresponsible, from them 34 (6.98 %) girls and 22 (6.51 %) boys.

Having identified the willingness of young people to take responsibility and the choices that characterize their responsibilities (Figure 3), it should be noted that in their mutual interaction with teachers, friends and peers, respondents share their experience and discuss the importance of being a responsible citizen:

- 451 (54.67 %) respondent has discussed with teachers how important it is to be a responsible citizen, respectively 374 (45.33 %) respondents has not done it;
- 259 (31.39 %) respondent has discussed with friends how important it is to be a responsible citizen, respectively 566 (68.61 %) respondents has not done it;
- 329 (39.88 %) respondent has discussed with parents how important it is to be a responsible citizen, respectively 496 (60.12 %) respondents has not done it.

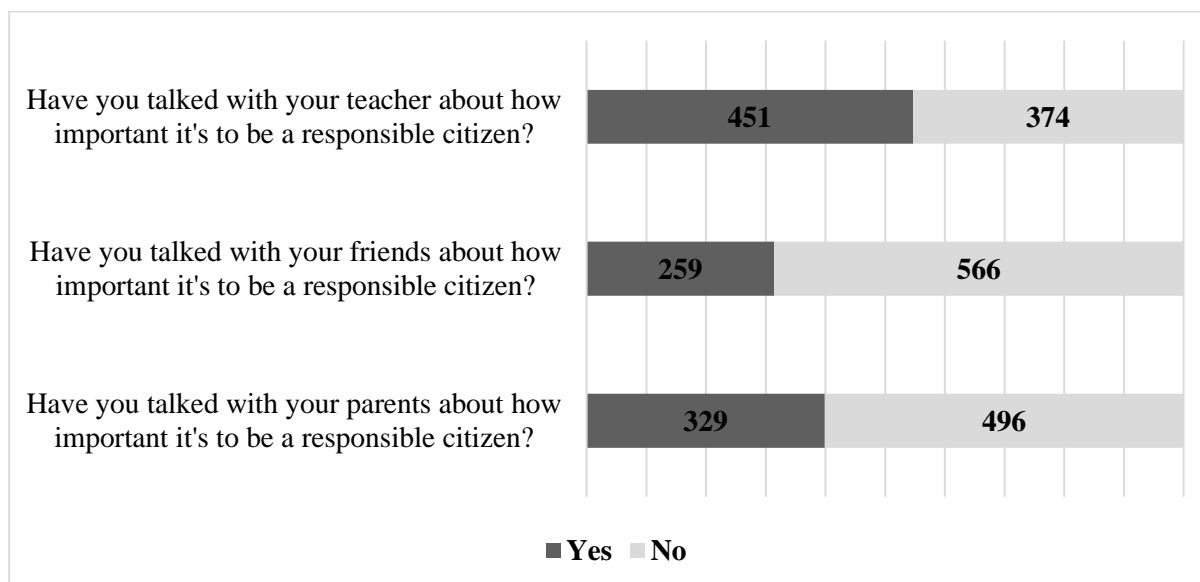


Figure 3. Student' talks with teachers, friends and parents about civic responsibility

Volunteering is one of the manifestations of civic engagement. As the study data confirms – 351 (42.55 %) respondents are volunteering, in turn 315 (38.18 %) respondents are not volunteering.

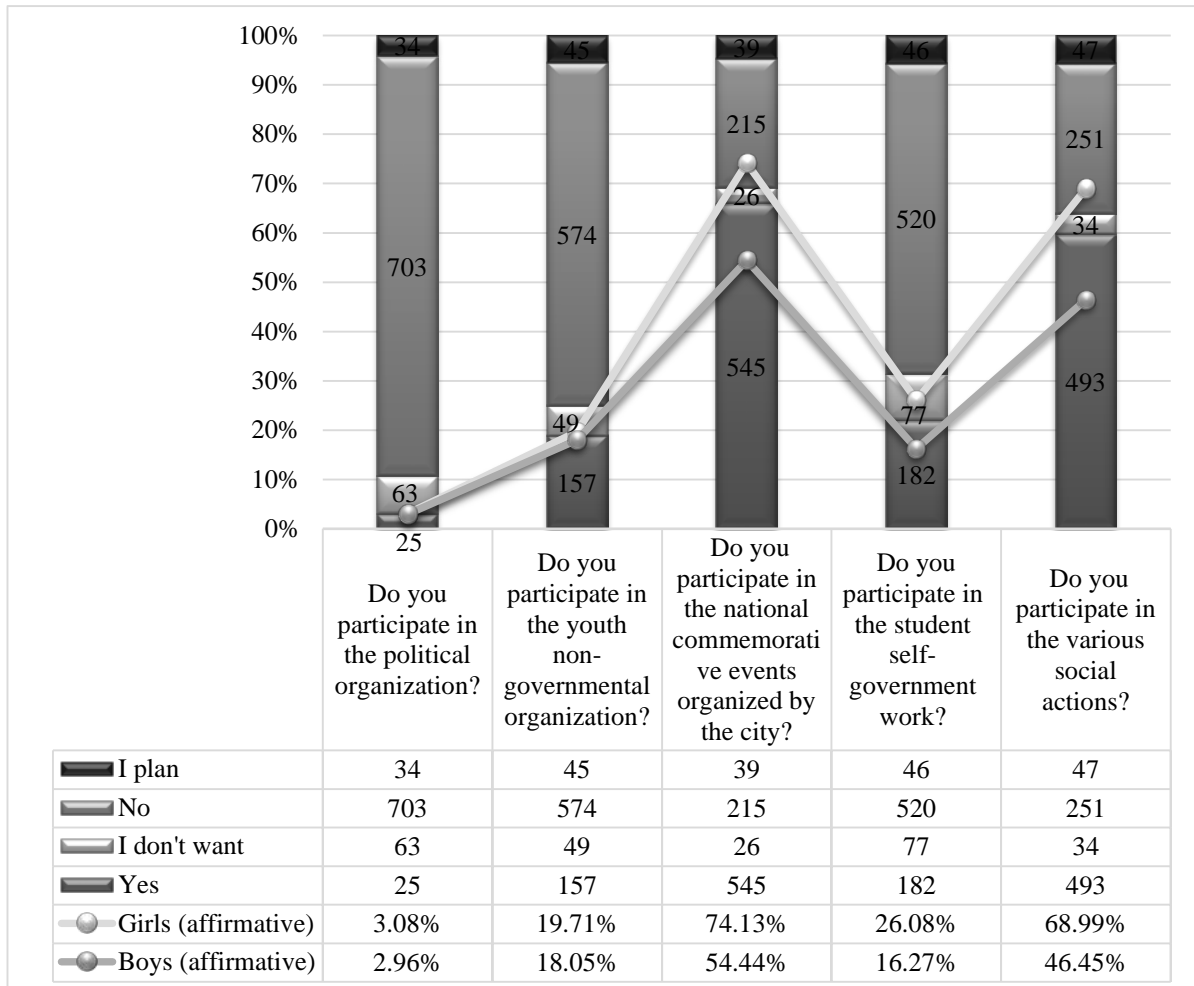


Figure 4. Student' Civic Engagement Expressions

Assessing students' civic engagement in areas such as: participation of young people in the work of school students` self-government, participation in social actions, participation in non-governmental youth and political organizations (Figure 4), it should be noted that:

- 493 (59.76 %) respondents participate in various social actions, while 251 (30.42 %) respondents don't participate;
- 182 (22.06 %) respondents participate in the work of self-government, while 520 (63.03 %) respondents don't participate;
- 545 (66.06 %) respondents participate in state memorial events organized by the city of Liepaja, while 215 (26.06 %) respondents don't participate;

- 157 (19.03 %) respondents participate in non-governmental youth organizations, while 574 (69.58 %) respondents don't participate;
- 25 (3.03 %) respondents participate in political organizations, while 703 (85.21 %) respondents don't participate.

Analysing self-esteem of the youth political trust system (Figure 5) and the students' confidence in the management of the City Council of Liepaja and the Latvian government, it can be noted that:

- 271 (32.85 %) respondents consider themselves as politically active young people, but 554 (67.15 %) students consider themselves as politically inactive;
- the Latvian government is trusted by 208 (25.21 %) respondents, but 617 (74.79 %) respondents don't trust;
- 495 (60 %) respondents trust the management of Liepaja City Council, but 330 (40 %) respondents don't trust;
- 182 (22.06 %) respondents believe that the political system in Latvia works well, while 643 (77.94 %) respondents believe that the functioning of the political system in Latvia doesn't work well.

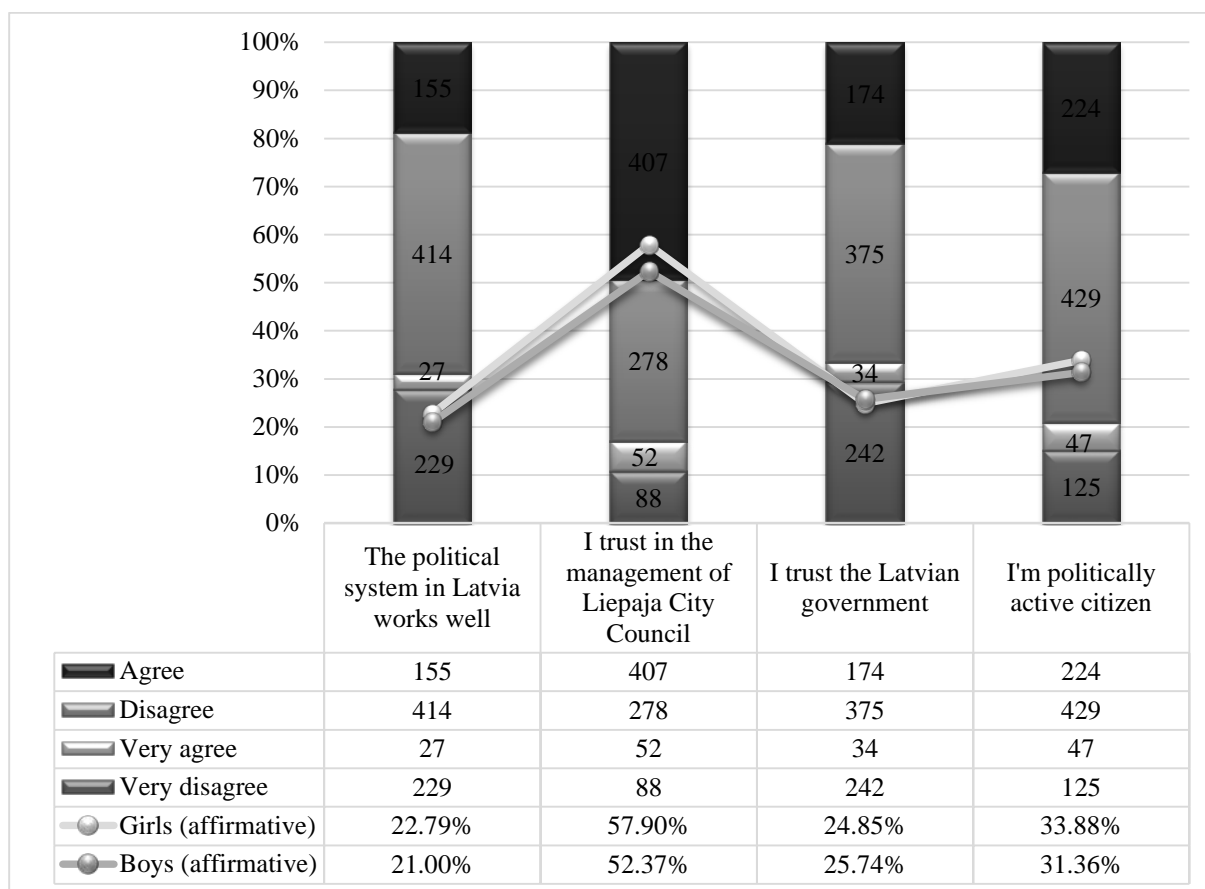


Figure 5. Self-assessment of the students' trust in the political system

Within the framework of the survey respondents were able to write independently, at their own discretion, what they feel responsible in completing the sentence “I feel responsible for ...”. An analysis of survey results reveals that young people are ready to take responsibility:

- for themselves – 367 (44.48 %) respondents, from them 223 (45.79 %) girls and 144 (42.6 %) boys;
- for country – 72 (8.73 %) respondents, from them 44 (9.03 %) girls and 28 (8.28 %) boys;
- for action – 70 (8.48 %) respondents, from them 51 (10.47 %) girls and 19 (5.62 %) boys.

In turn, 27 (3.27 %) respondents could not finish the sentence “I feel responsible for ...”, from them 8 (1.64 %) girls and 19 (5.62 %) boys.

Conclusions

1. The introduction of competency-based curriculum demands a high degree of professional mastery of teachers, providing a holistic approach in the pedagogical process, considering every student's individuality, intellectual, emotional and physiological needs, as well as individual responsibility and the promotion of independent learning – understanding the challenges of the social environment and the trends of a particular age.
2. Recognizing the needs of the student, the challenges of the social environment, the core values of democracy and the content of civic education, promoting civic competence at school can ensure active youth civic engagement, thus contributing to the long-term development of a civic and self-organized society.
3. An analysis of the results of the survey show respondents reveals the high self-esteem of young people's civic engagement and responsibility which significantly affects the individual's civic position, however, in practice young people's responsibilities and civic engagement show low levels of civic activity – as a result, there are significant contradictions between the self-esteem of young people and the model of civic behavior, demonstrating their willingness to take responsibility. At the same time, it should be noted that the low level of young people's confidence in political power may lead to a demotivation attitude in context of civic engagement long-term development.

References

- Abs, J., & Veldhuis, R. (2006). *Indicators on Active Citizenship for Democracy - the social, cultural and economic domain*. Paper by order of the Council of Europe for the CRELL-Network on Active Citizenship for Democracy at the European Commission's Joint Research Center in Ispra.
- Blackburn, R., Porto, S., & Thompson, J. (2016). Competency-based education and the relationship to digital badge. In: Muilenburg, L. Y., Berge, Z. L. (Eds.) *Digital Badges in Education: Trends, Issues, and Cases* (pp. 30-38). New York: Routledge.
- Brammer, L., Dumlao, R., Falk, A., Hollander, E., Knutson, E., Poehnert, J., Politano, A., & Werner, V. (2013). *Core competencies in civic engagement*. Massachusetts: Centre for Engaged Democracy, Merrimack College.
- European Commission. (2007). *Key Competences for Lifelong Learning – A European Framework*. Belgium. Retrieved from:
<https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/youth-in-action-keycomp-en.pdf>
- Fadel, C., Trilling, B., & Bialik, M. (2015). *Four-Dimensional Education: The Competencies Learners Need to Succeed*. Boston: The Centre for Curriculum Redesign.
- Galston, W. (2004). Civic Education and Political Participation. In: *Political Science & Politics Journal* (pp. 263-266). Issue 2, Washington: American Political Science Association.
- Heggart, K. (2015). Social capital and civics and citizenship: Developing a framework for activist education. *Educational Research, Volume 25, Issue 3*, 276-290.
- Hoskins, B., Villalba, C., & Saisana, M. (2012). *The 2011 Civic Competence Composite Indicator (CCCI-2). Measuring Young People's Civic Competence across Europe based on the IEA International Citizenship and Civic Education study*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.
- Jurs, P. (2015). Analysis of Theoretical Aspects of the Formation, Precondition and Promotion of Youth Civic Engagement. *Humanities and Social Sciences Review, Volume 04, Number 03*, 61–74.
- Jurs, P., & Samuseviča, A. (2017). *Liepājas 9. – 12. klašu skolēnu pilsoniskā attieksme. Pētījuma rezultāti*. Liepāja: Grafika.lv.
- Kraker, J., Lansu, A., & Dam-Mieras, R. (2007). Competences and competence-based learning for sustainable development. In: Kraker, J., Lansu, A., Dam-Mieras, R. (Eds.) *Crossing Boundaries. Innovative learning for sustainable development in higher education* (pp. 103-114). Frankfurt: Verlag für Akademische Schriften.
- Lassnigg, L. (2015). *Competence-based education and educational effectiveness. A critical review of the research literature on outcome-oriented policy making in education*. Vienna: Institute for Advanced Studies.
- Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Martens, A., & Gainous, J. (2012). Civic Education and Democratic Capacity: How Do Teachers Teach and What Works? In: *Social Science Quarterly*, Volume 94, Number 4, 956-976.
- Quisumbing, L. (2002). *Citizenship Education for Better World Societies: A Holistic Approach*. Paper presented at the 8th UNESCO – Asia Pacific Network for International Education and Values Education International Conference. Bangkok. Retrieved from:
<http://www.humiliationstudies.org/documents/QuisumbingCitizenship.pdf>

- Rivenbark, W. C., & Jacobson, W. S. (2014). Three Principles of Competency-Based Learning: Mission, Mission, Mission. In: *Journal of Public Affairs Education, Volume 20, Number 2*, 181-192.
- Rosenberg, M. (1965). *Society and the adolescent self-image*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Sánchez, A. V., & Ruiz, M. P. (2008). *Competence – based learning. A proposal for the assessment of generic competences*. Bilbao: University of Deusto.
- Valsts Izglītības satura centrs. (2017). *Izglītība mūsdienīgai lietpratībai: mācību satura un pieejas apraksts*. Rīga. Retrieved from: <https://domaundari.lv/cepure/Macibu%20satura%20un%20pieejas%20apraksts.pdf>