STUDENT`S PERCEIVED ROLE IN SCHOOL REALITY

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Abstract

Low satisfaction with school expressed by Estonian students has inspired the author to ask what is the influence of everyday school conditions upon young people's world of experiences. The author concentrates on the question how students perceive the school institution's attitude to them and discusses about educational effects of these attitudes. Theoretical background of the approach is in existential phenomenology and its conception of man whose being actualises through different situations. Connected with that the part of the question mentioned above is: How cares the forming person about his or her being in school situations? The students' reflections how they are valuated by school were studied using semi-structured open questions. The research was focusing to the questions how is own meaning to the school perceived and how does school notice student as a subject. The answers were analyzed by phenomenological experience-studying method. The research results showed that school attitudes to students instrumentally and superficially.
It was found that students perceive that the school sees them first of all as role fulfillers and that they cannot trust school in problems connected with them as human beings. Students, however, perceive that they have a certain amount of opportunities to change school as well.
Key words: *school reality, school experiences, situational self-concept, spirituality, habitus.*

Introduction

Who am I, why do I have to go there, why do I have to do these things? Where in life will I need it? What am I good for, what am I able to do? These are the typical questions that emerge in the school context of young persons with developing and changing identities. The child becomes a grown-up in the course of many multilevel processes of experiences. According to the spirit of the ideas of enlightenment, man becomes man within the wider school context, including its meaning and reflections among other contexts. The interpretations of the experiencer may not be adequately corresponding to facts, but they constitute a reality for him/her, and they have their own influences and consequences (Uhle, 1997).

The problem of meaning, which is under attention in post-modern discourses, has made both researchers and practitioners more interested than earlier in the holistic influence of school everyday on young persons' world of experiences. At recent years post-soviet little Estonia that joined European Union, has tackled from time to time in open educational debates the question, whether our children are happy at school, whether they are satisfied with school. This question becomes magnified by the big drop-out from school and poor coping (Veisson & Ruus, 2007) as well as Estonia's ranking in UNESCO's studies of children's well-

being. Namely, Estonian children compared to other European countries are least satisfied with school and rank according to other indicators of well-being (www.york.ac.uk/inst/cdw/childEU.pdf, Eesti Inimarengu Aruanne 2009).

Habitus – mind models about what is one's place and responsibility in institutions and in the society in general – which develops during long school years, can be seen as a mental resource of the society or the cause of its damage. This indicates how humane is the society or how much are other person's fate and feelings worth in communication, institutional work culture, or decisions made.

Man as a Being that Actualises in Situations. Questions Inspired by Existential Phenomenological Approach to Man

As follows we will focus on the question, how Estonian students perceive the attitude of school as an institution toward them and will discuss its educational impact. The interpretation of students' school experiences is based on existential phenomenological approach to man, that connects Husserl's phenomenology (formation of the contents of the mind in processes of experiences) and Heidegger's existentialism (to understand man through actualisation of one's existence as being here (Dasein) (Heidegger, 2000). In the framework of this approach man is understood as a being that has consciousness, that actualises in multilevel relationships, and whose existential question is to take care of one's being. Caring (Sorge) according to Heidegger is man's main way to relate to everything, thus *being here* (Dasein) is by its nature an ontologically actualising care (ebenda). To the extent that human existence actualises in relations, caring (Sorge) reflects what kind of relations these are. Caring can take an endless number of forms, including indifference, being through other persons (das Man in Heidegger's definition), or withdrawal.

Researchers of impacts of school reality have reason to ask the following fundamental question: how does a developing young person take in the school reality care for one's being? Towards what one directs the intentions concerning questions of the self? In a post-modern complicated identity formation process, one can presume that magnified have the needs for orientation, closeness, acknowledgement, autonomy; narcissist vulnerability – thus, prevalent are self-related problems (Ziehe, 1991; Uusikylä, 2006). A society that values experiences magnifies the need for thrill, feeling the lack of something, insecurity. Many possibilities are experienced as missed opportunities (ebenda). Thus, school education should focus more than before – when family erosion processes and value nihilism was not talked about – on self and identity formation when taking into account young people's world. We proceed with an assumption that the numerous and controversial number of expectations to contemporary school in terms of qualifications, which are considered necessary – like using cultural technologies, following norms, environmental awareness, health awareness, media education, global awareness, etc. (Tenorth, 2001) – can give real results only when we do not only value currently actual skills, but the holistic personality and spirituality – which was considered to be the highest human capability among educational benefits by Max Scheler.

According to the Finnish existential phenomenological classic Lauri Rauhala spirituality is a structural quality that regulates personality characteristics; it exists as a possibility for everybody, but actualises only on a certain level of development. Rauhala sees consciousness hierarchically, with spirituality as its highest level, which is a name to a self-conscious and meaning experiencing activity of understanding (Rauhala, 1992). Individual experiences that were lived through on a psychic level transcend into inter-subjective meanings on the mental level; here one forms abstract and ideal level meanings, and reflects and analyses experiences that are related to ones self (ebenda; Wilenius, 1999). Jan Ehrnrooth has said that man doesn't become a man through feelings, wishes, consciousness, memory, but through

ones relation to these as one's inner dimensions (Wilenius, 1999). Spirituality has simultaneously strength to create both, general humanity and individuality. According to Rauhala abilities to abstract and generalise alone do not ensure a high ethic level of cultural capital in societies. Spirituality enables to form individual value orientations, which put other meanings too into hierarchies and enable individual higher level states, like ethic and aesthetic experiences, love, creativity, balance, sense of humour, happiness, etc. According to Max Scheler higher values open in man only after reaching a certain developmental level (Rauhala, 1992). Spirituality can in this context be interpreted as enlightened care (Sorge) (Kuurme, 2004). Rauhala interprets Scheler: spirituality has a meaning that uncovers the existing, since in mental level experiences one is able to distance from the empirical reality and to achieve freedom from their conditionality (Rauhala, 1992). A self that has become conscious of oneself does not allow everyday life to shape him/her any more, but shapes it him/herself, without harming oneself or the others.

Self-definition and autonomy have been classical educational ideals. Education has in time slowly acquired an ability to achieve balance in everyday life and one's states; education means maturity, morality, through what man becomes one's own creation (Hoffmann, 1997). Hereby there is a reason to stop on nowadays especially required key qualification – responsibility. Responsibility as an inner state can be considered to be a deeper coherence of self with the phenomena of reality (environment, other people, events, etc.). Responsibility is thus such an expression of existential care (Sorge), where through something concrete man's self and deeper connectedness with the world becomes actualised: a piece of reality becomes part of the self. A precondition of responsibility is developed spirituality. The opposite of responsibility would be alienation.

How does the road to spirituality and responsibility go? According to the existential phenomenological approach a person starts to exist in situations. Situation components are not just external everyday relations, but also experiencer's own consciousness, horizon of experiences. Situation is part of man, whose thought stereotypes and tuning give colour to it. Formation of meanings depends additionally to real everyday relations on the level of spirituality and intentions that have already actualised in the consciousness. Being in the world (in-der-Welt-Sein) and care can be seen as a relationship of influence, a symbolic circle, where the rhythm of the world relation appears to be receiving and giving. This could be expressed through an Estonian poetess Doris Kareva's double verse: world is an answer, child is a question. Only through asking or opening our mind we receive experiences, through which we create our relationship to the phenomena of the reality. The world too – society with its structures and hierarchies – asks and wants something from us. Thus we form a symbolic circle, where we tie our being with the world, while trying to answer these questions. Martin Buber directs our attention on the tight and close relation of words *respond* and *responsibility* in different languages (Antwort – Verantwortung; respond-responsibility, otvet – otvetstvennost, vastaus – vastuu) (Buber, 1983).

EXPERIENCING

World is an answer

Child is a question

How do I hear world's questions?
(wisdom)

World is an answer

Child is a question
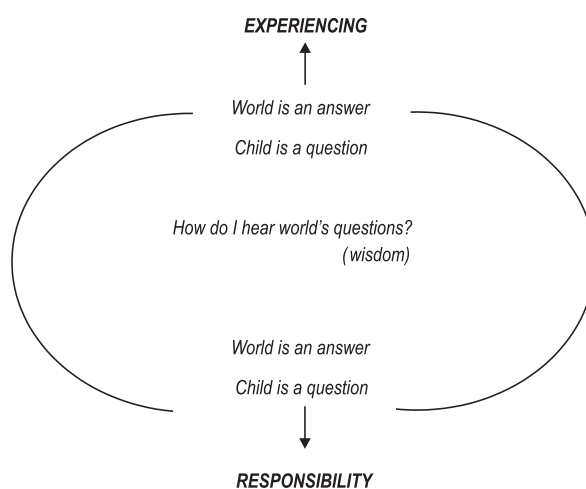
RESPONSIBILITY

How do we hear and respond (thus also to take responsibility), how do we create a reality that corresponds to it both in us as well as around us? Children's responses to the questions of the world are their choices, attitudes, behaviour, caring or indifference, activity or inactivity, etc. These are the building blocks for the young people in their identity formation task. Wisdom acquired through education can be found from here: how do I hear questions of the world and what questions does it make me to respond. Responsibility as an expression of existential care (Sorge) is born here too. A threatened self in a state of defence, or a narcissist self focused on one's own problems, perceives school circumstances apparently differently than a self that is sure about one's value – since it is involved in self-defence and self-validation. According to this, one also perceives one's area of responsibility.

Situation can be seen as an existential relation: what one cares about, what one is ready to take responsibility for, how one sees him/herself in the situation. One of the central qualities of spirituality – becoming aware of oneself, self-definition, and dignity – matures predominantly in everyday school situations, where one spends a great deal of one's time. These become a filter, which determine how one hears the questions of the world and interprets the facts of personality-related life.

Wisdom and responsibility born from it are the timeless core questions of education. According to Skolimowski responsibility is part of our moral equipment, inability to take responsibility, however, destroys in man the status of man (Skolimowski, 1987).

The Impact of School's Symbolic Life on Students' Self-concept

School with its demands and order is as if a question presented to young people, answering to which is part of their educational processes. This leads us to the problem set of the current presentation: how one experiences and perceives oneself in terms of the school's view? How does the school as a place of education address the young person? How does school take care of him/her? As a response to school's question one can consider among other things young person's developing self-concept (how am I like?) and identity (who am I?).

In societal everyday consciousness schools are institutions, where one receives education. Open discourses about Estonian school focus predominantly not on education, but on positioning youth in school and on questions about the school network: school violence, ranks, charts, fulfilling school duty, exams, lack of teachers, etc. Through media mediation the system deals with itself.

Several educational sociological approaches to school's impact have referred to the dehumanising influence of the modernist school. When taking into account personality development, school acts inversely to the official goals of the state curricula, alienating from the original educational tasks (Hentig, 1996; Rinne & Salmi, 1999; Tenorth, 2001, Besley 2007). Psychologist of creativity Kari Uusikylä sees external pressure of societally prevalent values on school. The main criterion is effectiveness. Student has become raw material of what one polishes off the useless; what is left is a skilful person, an expert in one's area. Such narrow view rules from school's goals out education, creativity, humanity and social skills, which would join together in higher level morality (Uusikylä, 2006). Being in the role of the student rather reduces than promotes man in man, this because of the mechanical criteria set on students (Kuurme, 2004). After re-independence one of the central concepts in Estonian educational discourses was humanising the school and one of the expectations set to school was to become an environment that develops all human skills – something that was hindered by the Soviet ideology. Later these expectations were qualified to be naive idealism. The current situation is a general discontent with educational system's poor functioning, with one characteristic being academic fundamentalism – considering measurable knowledge the only value (Aarna, 2005). The formation of a society of competition and success needed a selec-

tion criterion: formal knowledge and its measurement that was prevalent from earlier times fitted well for that purpose.

The real goal of the school in contemporary world of institutions, that is supported by a mechanical approach to man, is not a person developed in versatile ways and with a holistic self-definition. School is a place for socialising, where the motive is a symbolic scale of an accepted person. The criteria of normality are appointed by school's institutional frames and ways of acting – how one relates to them. Students are diagnosed as unable to develop or suffering from studying difficulties, forward are brought the gifted and the giftless, the diligent and the lazy, the smart and the dumb. School means for some a place, where one creates and elaborates the identity, for others a place where identity should be protected. A negative self-definition, week self-feeling and helplessness are the results of studying, which take place through everyday situations of the school (Antikainen, Rinne, Koski, 2000, Paechter 2007).

Wexler calls what is happening at school a symbolic economics of identities. Student's central aspiration is to become someone or to receive an identity. School as a certain way of life based on cultural canons produces students' approaches about, who they are and what are they like as learners. Students' qualities and resources receive a value according to what kind of identities offered by the school can be achieved through them (Wexler, 1992). Symbolic interactionism theory claims that approaches to self develop in the course of reflexive inner cognising, where a person views oneself as an object through the generalised view of the Other (is placed outside oneself). The generalised Other is the internally shared culture of the group, whose member the individual has become. Thus, human self-awareness is to a large extent a sign of wider social and cultural forces. The inter-subjective world is an unavoidable precondition of the subjective world, or in other words, a subject can be born only in an inter-subjective social world (Siljander, 2002). School as a societal institution is exactly this generalised Other. E. Higgins sees adaptation with the environment as the central motive that forms self-concept. A person collects and maintains such information concerning the self, which allows him/her to adapt with it, cope and achieve goals (Kukkonen, 2003).

School has in its use a strong symbolic system – evaluation, which is directed toward student's value in relation to school's imagined ideal student. Evaluation concerns also student's background, gender, ethnicity, hierarchies that have formed in the society (Antikainen, Rinne, Koski, 2000). The identities that school offers have a tendency to form by themselves. Beliefs about normal identities create behavioural models and expectations. Goffman argues that when a person acquires an identity offered by school's symbolic order, one acquires also the symbolic organisation that was used in creating the identity. The constructed social realities in human worlds of experiences are real and have real results (ebenda). Thus, institution recreates itself (and the society) in man's inner reality. Basil Bernstein, who took into use the term *invisible pedagogies,* sees that school influences students in two ways: through an instrumental and an expressive system. The instrumental system exchanges knowledge, facts and performance, which is necessary for getting knowledge and skills. Through the expressive system school tries to change students' behaviour and personality development by using its typical procedures and sanctions. This can be understood also as a starting point of values, which creates inner solidarity and generally accepted attitudes. Bernstein finds that the instrumental system has a dominating position in influencing students, since results and performance are clearly more important than values and goals. This can in some young persons bring along alienation and make them give up the effort (Bernstein, 1977).

Too little democracy, too little possibilities to choose and express oneself, too many mechanical prescriptions and silent acceptance of everything will shape the future attitudes of citizens. Education in interactionist educational theory is seen as a communicative act, which is based on dialogue, where the educated should have the right to be an equal partner. Thus, have the right to ask and be listened. To what extent school through its symbolic organisation

of life and its obligating communication with students gives room to that, if the criteria of normality are prescribed and cannot be discussed?

Institutions' role in young persons' self-concept, however, should not be considered fatal and final. We are only dealing with context specific self-concepts. According to Hinklei and Andersen human memory system includes many different self-representations that constitute a complex network of knowledge; this means that the self-concept is best understood as a set of different self-concepts. A situational self-definition is only one part of the whole – of all the approaches that are concerned with the self (Kukkonen, 2003).

Methodology of Research

As follows we will view Estonian students' perceptions about how the school sees them. We see this study as a monitoring research and we want to show how children have perceived their position at school. The questions have asked from different views to support this aim.

Students' school experiences were studied by using a semi-structured interview in 2003 in the 11th grades of 8 Estonian schools (altogether 144 students) and in 2007-2008 in the 8th and 11th grades of 3 Estonian schools (110 students). The 3 schools mentioned last represent three different school types: a typical high school in the country, a paid elite school for the wealthy, a free alternative school created by the initiative of citizens. Thus, the aim was to find, whether schools that are based on different concepts have influence on students' self perception. In larger scale both studies have aimed as a versatile observation of school experience. In this case, we focus on certain questions there students are asked to describe how they perceive school attitude about them.

Students discussed and interpreted freely written texts by taking question suggested by researchers as the bases. Results were analysed with the phenomenological method in order to get closer to young persons' world of experiences.

We analysed students' responses to four questions: from a survey conducted in 2003, we would stop on the following questions: 1.Who are you for the school? 2. What are your chances to change school life? From the survey conducted in 2007-2008, we chose questions: 1.When do you feel you are important and relevant for the school? 2. Describe a situation, when you felt that your wishes and needs were taken into account by the school. These questions were involved in a wider study of school experiences.

The collected texts were analysed with qualitative content analyses and with methods of phenomenological experience studies. The texts were categorised according to the different meanings they contained, based on participants' realm of experiences. Students' interpretations were "translated" into the language of the researcher and interpreted in scientific terms as subcategories. The responses were divided into bigger categories and thus related to the question set of the researcher and to the theoretical approach. (c.f. Metsämuuronen, 2006). Presented below are the more general tendencies that emerged after working through the research material. The examples in the text originate from students of different schools.

Estonian Students' Perception about How the School Sees Them

I for school? The definitions students gave, allowed classification into three groups: 1) I am ordinary and meaningless, 2) I am more than ordinary, 3) I am a challenge for the school.

As ordinary evaluated oneself in different definitions more than half of the students questioned. Many experienced that their meaning in the eyes of school was idle and non-existent. Examples from the texts of different students:

I am one of the gray mass. I am an empty spot, an occasional object, whom the curriculum has been directed to. I do not have a role and I do not mean anything. I am a little link in a long chain. I am nobody as a person, if I left, no one would notice it. I am a prisoner in prison. When I am absent I am an absentee. I am a moving head-money for the school. I am an ordinary student, a few threes on the certificate. I am a little screw in the big machinery, whose work wouldn't stop without me.

One experiences oneself as an object or part of a machinery, how ordinary one is, becomes determined by grades. Students see themselves in the eyes of school as fulfillers of the curriculum, as units that correspond to average criteria. Used was the Soviet time term *gray mass.* In the spirit of market economy students saw themselves as an opportunity for the school to earn head-money. One perceived to be replaceable, an instrument for keeping the school going.

More than average considered oneself to be a fifth of the students (26 out of 144). It appeared when analysing the questions that students are special in the eyes of school because of the following qualities: 1) improving school's reputation through being academically successful, 2) organising something, 3) being a problematic student, 4) due to personality and human qualities.

One's meaning as an individuality was perceived by 11 students out of 144. Some examples from texts:

I mean joy for the school. I am part of a big family, together we are force. I am an active doer, individuality and think independently, through my activity I would like to do something for the school. I am a good student for the teachers, since I take them as persons. Every student is important for the school.

One fifth of young people saw themselves as developing people, as a challenge for the school, someone for whom the schools work. Some examples from texts:

I am a young person, who wishes to study. I am a student, who needs to acquire a proper education. School tries to help me, so that I would cope in future. I am the transformer of future. But there were also opinions such as: *I am raw material for the school, which one shapes into production.*

The production metaphor appears in contemporary educational discourse when talking about the student a lot. A number of students feel themselves at school as clients.

Possibilities to change school life in the eyes of students. To what extent students perceive that they are the co-creators of school life and school atmosphere, this too can become *habitus* when having in mind their future awareness of responsibility. As a realist in one's life, one calculates through one's possibilities and makes conclusions, whether it pays off in terms of ones (secure) existence.

In students' writings one could distinguish three groups of meanings: 1) I cannot influence the school, 2) there are possibilities to influence, and 3) I do not wish to influence school life.

67 students out of 144 claimed that there are no possibilities to influence the school, 49 found that there are some, and 28 argued that they do not wish to change anything at school.

Students think that school cannot be influenced mainly because students' position and space for making decisions about the system is very limited.

I am just a student, who listens to me? My voice in this mass in heard by no one. I cannot influence anything alone. I am a round zero, what can I do alone. I am not bold enough, to create scandals. There is lack of time and big risks for responsibility.

On the other hand teachers are seen as obstacles.

Teachers suppress us, although the students' government would like to change things. Power belongs to the teacher. One has to submit to school's rules; if you do not follow them, you are not welcome to school any more.

One third of the students still see one's role in influencing school life; however, this only together with others, mainly through student government.

When one gets a good idea, we have accomplished a lot together. We as students have all rights, using them depend on us. Our school offers many opportunities, since no one prohibits us organising events.

In order to do something in school, collectiveness and solidarity is presumed. Especially student government activists see their big chances to influence. Possibilities are seen in areas where one can organise events and make school life more colourful, but not in the system itself.

One fifth of the respondents do not wish to change anything. Some think that everything is fine anyways; others do not respect the school enough to put their energy there. Examples:

I only want to finish school and start independent life. I am not interested in what happens to this school. I will not give my time to school. If I wished, I could give a lot to school, but why to make an effort; I only do what is necessary to me. I do, what I am forced to do, the rest of my life is outside school.

Such answers were mostly given by boys. Here one can notice self-centeredness and individualism. School as a life environment is alien and official, it is outside one's interests, it is used to the extent one can receive from here, and one does as minimal as possible. Students have adapted skilfully, but have simultaneously alienated from what is going on here. Students also mention lack of self-trust.

To the following two questions responses were collected in 2007-2008 from three Estonian schools, altogether from 110 students from grades 8 and 11.

<u>When am I important and relevant for the school?</u> Students' responses indicated that more than half of them (57 students out of 110) feel they are important when they achieve something. Through achievements they become differentiated from the *gray mass*. This accomplishment has to be something good, proud and big, something that doesn't even have a name (19 students out of 57).

When I have achieved something that everybody feels proud of. When I have accomplished something great. When I have accomplished something great for myself.

When being more concrete this good and big includes acknowledgement, both in good study results as well as in the fact that others notice him/her. One is important for the school when he/she sticks out with something, for 7 young persons being important for the school meant being better than others.

I feel I am important, when my good results in some subjects are brought out. When I am praised and receive a better grade than others. When I know a certain answer that others do not know. Apparently I am important when I am a good student and receive praise and good grades. When I receive a prize in front of the whole school.

Accomplishments included also sport competitions for the school, victories and prizes at quizzes and Olympiads. The relative importance of accomplishments among other responses was especially high among the wealthy contingent of the paid Rocca al Mare private

school (24 students of 39), but also high in a small town state-gymnasium (30 out of 57).

13 young persons found that they are important for the school all the time, the majority of them (8) were studying in a paid private school. Thee same amount of youngsters found that they never feel themselves important at school. The majority of them (11) were from a state-gymnasium of a small town.

> I do not feel I am important, I am one of the grey mass. I do not feel I am important, I am a little part of the big whole. Such a feeling never appears.

At the same time 19 young people felt they are important or relevant when they can help others, organise something, or can perform in front of others.

> I like to help others and this is important for me. When I can do something good for the school.

A few students mentioned that they are important when they are chosen somewhere, when they are listened and asked advice, trusted, and taken into account. When they can make a joke and make a good mood for others. A student from Pärnu Small Free School wrote: *One doesn't have to feel important and relevant at school.*

School's institutional side has turned to the young people. The majority perceives their importance in the eyes of school not on the bases of one's value as a person, but as according to the narrow criteria accepted by the institution. One can strongly feel the influence of the competition environment – sticking out, being better than others, since otherwise I am invisible, being only a material. Young people perceive that school sees them in their student role mainly as a producer of results. Nevertheless, one can also notice motives of human solidarity: working for the good of school events and peers is important for quite many. We do not know what those young people think, who feel that they are important for the school, but for some students such a feeling is present.

When does school take into account my wishes and needs? According to student writings most often (32 cases) when school meets students' suggestions about the organisational side of the studies, when students are allowed to leave for certain reasons (travels, doctor, competitions), when allowed to retake the test, or when the test is postponed on students' request. Compliance was especially felt in terms of flexibility in studies (17 out of 39) and by students of the private school.

> I wasn't able to do the test in time, I was given a second chance. When I went to a literature camp during the school time, teachers met my wish. When a certain test is postponed due to students' wish. Teachers make tests so that they are not on the same day.

Second, named where (by 11 students) solving everyday problems, repair works of the canteen, being allowed to the gym, flexible lunch breaks. Only a few felt that school takes into account their ideas and opinions (6 students, mainly from the free school).

> In case of one theme they wanted everybody's opinion, I could express my opinion. In art lessons I can make a picture of whatever I want. When I am somewhere in a jury, but I also feel otherwise that I am taken into account.

Only four students out of 110 named that when possible or most of the time every students opinion is taken into account. In contrast, 26 students mentioned that they don't remember such a situation or their opinions are never taken into account, the majority of them small town state gymnasium students. Consideration was felt by a few exchange students, when they were able to make an individual curriculum, when they were appointed a stipend. Three youngsters found that they don't have special wishes and needs, which the school

should take into account.

It should be noted, what wishes and needs are communicated by young people to school at all. According to the present study students restrict their appeals predominantly to several compromises with organising studies. Obligatory performance has to be done, and school has been flexible. Some have achieved a situation where they have no needs for the school. Considering ideas-opinions were reminded only by a few.

Discussion

How does school communicate to students in their own opinions? The current study shows that mainly as individuals with roles such as: whether and how something is done, what one is entitled to do. Estonian media too reflects most often the concept: school duty. School is ready made and final, the young person, however, has the task to change oneself constantly according to the demands of the school or then deceive these rules. If we try to conclude now, how students take care of their being at school, then being as a holistic person is not included for most of them. It appears to be shadowed. At school one takes care of the institutional self, in order to not hurt the shadowed side. The institutional self appears to be poor and trivial in its needs and perceives any flexibility in school's frame conditions as compliant with one's needs. One can conclude from here that school lacks a conscious educational care about this shadow side, because one cannot access it. A wide range of educational tasks, that society delegates to school, might not affect young people and remain but superficial reproaching. In reality school makes young people to compete with each other, values being better than others, makes to wish for approval and praise. It becomes an external labelling, which has little to do with real spirituality. One doesn't trust school in problems related to self and others and school doesn't seem to be interested in student's individuality and mental development. Students of private schools compared to state school students perceived that school takes into account their individuality and needs to a much larger extent.

Nevertheless, there were students, who perceived themselves as developing persons, whom the school takes into account, and who have a chance to influence what happens at school. One can presume that they are the elite students, who are in good record, because of their accomplishments and have been able to have a dialogue. Quite many young people still have a wish to contribute, do, organise, and also help others.

According to Bernstein schools instrumental system prevail clearly over the expressive side in students' experiences. One can conclude here that a school, that is oriented to performance and external results, has simultaneously left the young person alone. Thus, left the student with his/her own luck, without influencing the values. One can choose here among many options: to welcome this freedom and alienate totally from the institutional self (students who are not interested in school and whose life is elsewhere belong here), to identify oneself with the institutional self as a whole (by considering oneself average, ordinary, one among the mass) or to try to support other components with this institutional self by taking school seriously (acquirers of education, activists, helpers). Those who choose the first or the third choice face responsibility. The first need to cope themselves, the third have to find a purpose for what is happening, since it's their life. The second can leave responsibility in the care of the institution, whether now or later in life.

In school age a young person has to do a lot of identity work. For that one needs a lot of personal means for identity formation. Cote calls this identity capital. School experiences too can be viewed as identity capital (Täht&Must, 2007). School, however, invites young people to define themselves mainly through roles. Perceiving oneself as a person taking roles has certainly its side effects – according to Bernstein in the form of *invisible pedagogies*. A person who identifies or relates strongly with the school role, acquires institutional coping

strategies and may alienate from the authentic self and its real needs. According to Hoffmann identity can create an opposite in where expected and desired behaviour is demanded: acting not as a liberator, conflict solver, but can create a feeling of captivity and close the person up (Hoffmann, 1997). The learner can also loose its mental wish for perfection, interest in the world around. Säljö claims that the communication models of the institutional nature of school create a need to talk, write and decide in a way that is expected. Good learning abilities mean capability to identify, what communication rules are valid in what situations (Säljö, 2003). One has learned coping in different context, but not mental perfection through learned study contents. This in case person's identity and self problems overshadow the meanings of the study content. This, however, starts to determine, *how one hears the questions of the world.* Protect oneself, adapt, look for shelter, be better than others, reconcile, and surrender. And do not take seriously what they are talking about, since they themselves live according to different rules.

It is also possible that students do not consider it proper to think well of school and their perception and the reality do not coincide. Negative attitudes about school as an institution of obligation have been cultivated actively by media. Thus, more research is needed on the group, who perceives that school takes them into account, cares about their opinion and who thinks that it is possible to do something about school. Why do they perceive more than others that there is room for self-actualisation?

Estonian students' strong discontent with school and school drop out indicate that not all in a young person can be reduced to social coping in different contexts, but there are also innate needs related to being an individuality and a holistic person. An attitude toward oneself as institutional role may become a filter of student's horizon of consciousness, which in later life can give value to both oneself and others. A society that has numerous ethic problems, like Estonia today, should take youth behaviour as an impulse for reminding also in a wider social context those human needs and dignity, which in case they are not taken into account make ill both people and the society.

Conclusions

- To sum it up students often feel themselves as units, whose role is to fulfil the pre-determined role at least on an average level. For school one trains values based on external criteria: good grades and results in sport In later study at school students also perceived themselves important from the base of the results what were important to the school institution. They also added that they sensed to be important when they had been fixed the reputation of the school.
- In first study one fifth of the youth perceived that they are valuable for the school, they are the ones for whose sake schools function and who have their own chances there. Later study affirms of deficit of this kind of youth. Just 13 students perceived their importance to school in it.
- Unfortunately the majority of students do not perceive that school sees their individual and human value, they are a changeable detail of a functioning mechanic system.
- In first study one third of youth perceived their opportunities to influence school life. These opportunities didn't touch learning process or school organizing and were just related on informal school life. In both study there were one group of youth who wanted to do something good to the school and to the other people. But there were also an indolent group where students didn't want to rely themselves to school at all and didn't want to change anything or didn't want to input their activeness to school.

- Wishes and needs of the students what were really counted at school were not related on any humanistic or personal needs, but were related on giving in various school demands.
- Young people never think that a wide range of human values that everybody possesses could be discussed within school too. School is a hard and demanding institution and loosening its frames in terms of obligations is the maximal thing to expect.
- At the same time in first study the majority (96 students) claims that life at school is in one's own hands and own responsibility. School has domesticated young people according to the rules of the system, but at the same time they have received an attitude that they are responsible for their own life and coping. Here one can see a typical attitude of a young person of postmodernist times, where responsibility for one's life cannot be delegated to someone else (Z. Bauman (1996) argues that responsibility returns from big systems to people). One's relations are predominantly in one's own hands, creating rules for one's life, but also better following of school rules, and more diligent learning. School itself is not a place for the young, but it has been made convenient enough so that one can find a niche in it. System is seen as something ready made, changing which is not even worth a discussion.

So, have young people heard the questions of the world, if we consider school to be their world? They do not have special questions about their own relationship with school, since one perceives to have a role at school. Needs that one expects to be considered are predominantly dictated by this role.

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