



WEBINAR

“Special needs education practices: Latvian example”

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Parent Education in Latvia

(with a special accent on education in transition)

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The state of matters

The general guideline follows the Latvian legislation (*Education Law* at <https://likumi.lv/ta/en/en/id/50759>), the official executor is the Ministry of education and science, schools, kindergartens in cooperation with NGO:

Latvia is a member of *European Agency for Special Needs and Inclusive Education* since 2004. Special needs education is an important component of the educational system in Latvia to provide *Education for all* by offering different ways, forms, pace to cover the field of education by offered possibilities to meet children peculiar needs.

Parents are considered important agents to introduce educational transitions; parent education is considered a significant sector in the education system to make it successfully function in favour of the children balanced physical, mental (emotional, intellectual) and social development. A special sector of the *National Centre for Education (NCE)* - a public administration institution directly subordinated to the Minister of Education and Science – develops educational programs for special needs education, also for parent education, and coordinates support system for learners with special needs (<https://visc.gov.lv/en/>).

The theoretical background of parent education: Science of parenting (synthesis of psychology, pedagogy, health care etc.) with accents on the respective age, needs, developmental peculiarities, specific parents' possibilities.

Adopted by the Ministry of education programs for parents of pre-school and school children, their preparation for schooling and assistance of learning and development for the period when the paradigm and the content of pre-school and school education is being changed in 2019-2020.

Program development and implementation takes place in *cooperation* with **researchers, educators** of universities, **multiple non-governmental organizations**.

Currently the core of the parent education in all possible forms introduce the new learner learning centered educational paradigm and appropriate transitions at all stages of education - the aims, content framework, strategies of using the supporting materials, assessment etc. These are *available on-line* and cover all components of a pedagogical process as well as learner special needs. Supporting materials are being constantly improved. The core (www.skola2030.lv):

- what *achievements should children reach* in seven mutually integrated areas,
- *guidelines of the educational content* for the period till 2030,
- *how to use the supporting materials* in family education and homeschooling to meet the child's needs and possibilities.

In general, parents improve their competencies in parenting science at organized activities (courses, parent schools ...), usually with accents on their children development, specific needs and possibilities:

- *Knowledge* - infant sleep, health-care at home, forms of discipline, language and learning, screen time, art and music for development, bilingualism, self-control, perception and judgements, morality, autism, homeschooling, other special items (on needs and development).
- *Analytical and applied techniques*, including how to compute and make use of the contribution of genetics to a trait, how to understand and compute correlations between inherited and acquired traits, how kids of different age can effectively learn self-conducted learning and behaviour, parenting in the post-industrial age of technologies.
- *Explore effective practices to follow or pull out ideas*: for behaviour and sleep training, discipline, assistance and/or support in learning, relations in families, communication and cooperation etc.
- *Develop their attitude to parenting*: responsibility, mutual relations, motives, supportive cooperation, children autonomy etc.

Examples of some special programs

Programs for parents who have just returned back to Latvia

After several years spent abroad children in these families need assistance to integrate into the communities in Latvia. The programs are added by shared experience and parent stories on-line to pull out ideas and help to find those parents who cope with the cultural differences, identify peculiarities of the environments, and integrate.

The dropouts' returning to school

According to the Central Statistical Bureau, about 10% of students dropped out of school in 2016: financial reasons, parental neglect, unattractive classes and school ... Parents also often lack the skills to engage in dialogue with their child who has learning or behavioral problems.

The National Education Quality Service is currently launching a major project to reduce early school leaving and school drop-out within six years. This is the first time such a package of documents and supporting materials for parents has been introduced in Latvia. The project, implemented with the support of the European Social Fund, is expected to involve 80% of the municipalities, covering 614 educational institutions.

Some examples of NGO activities

Non-governmental organizations and their activities – add to those of the government to provide different approaches, optional practices, convenient location, thematic etc.:

Charity marathon 2018

These add to the governmental activities to implement the legislation and attract financing from different sources, like projects and donation.

For instance, donations collected during a charity marathon 2018 is used to develop and implement a program for young parents in practical psychology and education in cooperation with Carine Previs Institute for children development, USA. The program offers the most advanced methods of education in family.

SOS Children Village (<https://www.sos-childrensvillages.org> › europe › latvia)

Special attention is paid to pedagogical education of guardians, foster families and adoptive parents

Different NGO develop programs and supporting activities to discuss, implement and manage parent education:

Education starts with the preparation period, prior to a child joining the family.

Programs and other activities are special, these accentuate the psychological aspects of orphans and children removed from the family. Programs are being developed:

- by scientists and practitioners of Latvia;
- adopted the most effective programs of other countries.

Special activities for teachers/trainers and parents are provided by the *Village* with branches in several regions of Latvia. *Classes are conducted by a couple of a*

well prepared trainer and an experienced foster or adoptive parent. For these purposes the program PRIDE has been developed, that is scientifically grounded and practiced in the USA by children's rights organizations, foster parents' associations, national resource centers, universities and colleges; it has been modified and adopted for Latvia (currently more than 25 countries use this program, the majority of them are in Europe).

Association of Family Schools (<http://www.bernulabklajiba.lv/about-us/>)

The Association unites several NGO of Latvia, like *Latvian Child Welfare Network*, *Foundation Dardedze*, *Save the Children Latvia* and several other). *Homeschooling*, education at home to meet special needs, regulated by the legislation to guarantee education for all.

The association operates in close cooperation with the local schools or special educational institutions. These provide assistance in parent education to prepare for this very special case – *education of children with various diseases*. Special equipment is often needed; a program of parenting, education and care must be adopted by the local bodies or school.

Parents teach these children while evaluation is completed by teachers and school bodies. The majority of these children attend local compulsory schools.

Latvian Christian Alliance (<http://palidzibareniem.lv/>)

The motto - *a family for every child*. It started with assistance to orphans.

Currently the Alliance runs a parent training program to prepare them for care-giving to *Emotionally Traumatized Children* (KETBA); it is known in Latvia since 2016. This program has been a way for caregivers to understand the impact of trauma, care for and connect with children who have experienced trauma, and help them find their way to healing.

Parents' Association "Mommy's Club" (<https://maminuklubs.lv/vecaku-skola/>) **in cooperation with the TV**

Educational film "Children's emotional upbringing" for young parents will soon be launched.

10 tips on the basic principles of parenting have been produced by the TV and the Parents' Association "Mommy's Club". The film is dedicated to expectant parents and family support centers.

Digital School of Learning Management System 'Mykoob' (www.mykoob.lv) – online. Schools in Latvia use the digital school management system for communication with parents: answers to parent questions, comments, suggestions, problem solving etc. are provided by top specialists in the respective area.