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haridusuuringute ja õppekavaarenduse keskus

**A summary report of the research project
“Russian Child in Estonian General Education School”**

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INTRODUCTION

“Russian Child in Estonian General Education School”, a four-year (2008–2011) research project carried out by the Centre for Educational Research and Curriculum Development of the University of Tartu, aims to study the transition of Russian upper secondary schools to Estonian-medium instruction from the perspective of the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of target groups (students, teachers and school leaders). The objectives include offering a systematic review of the arguments related to different perspectives on the transition, and studying the perceptions of both the transition itself as well as its contexts. The project has been commissioned by the Estonian Ministry of Education and Research.

For the purpose of the project, the following surveys were carried out:

- **In 2008: Questionnaire surveys** among school leaders and school-leavers of Russian upper secondary schools in spring 2008 (questionnaires analysed: 45 and 546¹, respectively) and **focus group interviews** among students, teachers and school leaders in spring and autumn 2008 (a total of 48, 26 and 11 participants, respectively).
- **In 2009: Questionnaire surveys** among subject teachers and 11th graders of Russian upper secondary schools in spring 2009 (questionnaires analysed: 683 and 1132², respectively) and **collegial support groups** moderated by a co-worker of the project in autumn for the teachers of Russian-medium schools who already taught or planned to teach social studies in Estonian (two groups, a total of eight participants).
- **In 2010: Collegial support groups** for teachers of social studies (in spring) and history (in autumn) in spring and autumn 2010 (four groups, a total of 15 participants) and in the end of the

¹ The sample of the school-leavers of Russian-medium schools (a total of 545 questionnaires from 20 schools were analysed) was, compared to the population, over-represented by students who had been taught in Estonian (73%) and under-represented by students who had not had the experience of learning in Estonian (27%). For comparison, short questionnaires on the future plans were also filled in by 438 school-leavers from eleven Estonian-medium upper secondary schools that were located close to the Russian-medium schools involved in the survey.

² The survey was representative of the 11th graders and teachers of subjects potentially taught in Estonian (i.e. all subjects except Russian language/literature and foreign languages, but including Estonian language and literature) of the Russian-medium upper secondary schools in Estonia. Thus, most upper secondary school teachers from 40 schools, and all 11th graders of 38 schools, present at the time of the survey, were surveyed.

year 2010 and early 2011, **Q-methodological individual interviews**³ with the alumni of Russian-medium schools of 2007 and 2008 in Estonia and Latvia (a total of 42 participants).

- **In 2011:** A **collegial support group** for teachers of history in spring 2011 (three participants) and a **Delphi expert survey**⁴ from summer until the end of the year (14 participants) in order to identify opportunities and dangers that can emerge in the transition to Estonian-medium instruction, and to determine the possible development trends on the basis of the different ways of modifying the arrangements of the transition.

An overview of the reports and articles written during the course of the project is given on the website of the Centre for Educational Research and Curriculum Development of the University of Tartu (www.ut.ee/curriculum/projektid/Vene_opilane).

The summary report provides an overview of the main results of the research project. This report does not include the results of the alumni and the expert surveys which will be submitted as separate reports. Research articles relating to the project are to be published in the coming years as well.

The summary report was prepared with the help of Kaili Laansalu, a master’s student at the University of Tartu.

³ Findings of this study will be submitted as a separate report.

⁴ Findings of this study will be submitted as a separate report.

BACKGROUND: TRANSITION TO ESTONIAN-MEDIUM INSTRUCTION

Today, just like during the Soviet era, most of the children from Estonian- and Russian-speaking families in Estonia attend separate schools. According to the data of the Ministry of Education and Research, there were 463 general education (basic and upper secondary) schools for students whose mother tongue was Estonian, 62 schools for students whose mother tongue was Russian or some other language, and 36 general education schools with bilingual education in the academic year 2010/2011. Of all general education schools, 240 included the upper secondary level and 47 of these were Russian-medium municipal schools.

The number of basic and upper secondary schools that offer Russian-medium instruction is expected to further decrease in the coming years. However, although the number of schools aimed at Russian students and of children studying in these schools has decreased faster than that of Estonian-medium schools and their students (the number of students in schools that offer Russian-medium instruction has fallen from 36% at the time Estonia regained its independence to 19% today), the demand for Russian-medium schools among the Russian-speaking population of Estonia is not expected to disappear in the foreseeable future.

According to the law, as of the academic year 2011/2012, at least 60% of the minimum compulsory subjects should be taught in the Estonian language to all 10th graders, except in cases where an exception has been made by the decision of the Government of the Republic. This should mark the end of the transition of Russian-medium upper secondary schools to mainly Estonian-medium instruction.

Some schools began the transition to Estonian-medium instruction voluntarily already in the 1990-s. The first provision relating to the transition to Estonian-medium instruction was introduced with the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act in 1993 which foresaw such a transition in the year 2000. In 1997, however, the beginning date of compulsory transition was postponed until the academic year 2007/2008. In 2002, a new provision was added to the Basic Schools and Upper Secondary Schools Act, saying that instruction (exceeding 40%) in a language other than Estonian in upper secondary schools is possible on a proposal of the school board and the local government and with the permission of the Government of the Republic. However, no clear criteria under which such permission is granted have been defined.

Unlike in Latvia, where Latvian-medium instruction – in addition to the same rule that 60% of instruction in upper secondary schools must be in Latvian – is to a certain extent compulsory also in basic schools, there is no general requirement for Estonian-medium instruction in Estonian basic schools. However, in order to support the students’ knowledge of Estonian and prepare them for upper secondary and vocational schools where the language of instruction would be mostly Estonian, several Russian-medium basic schools teach one or more subjects (often the less language-centred subjects such as art, music and physical education) also in Estonian.

In addition, the state has supported the implementation of language immersion programmes, methodically following the Canadian example, in basic schools. Language immersion in Estonia exists in mainly two forms – the so-called early and late language immersion. In the first case, language immersion begins in kindergarten or the first grade, while in the second case language immersion begins in the sixth grade (see e.g. Asser 2003, Garus 2006). By the academic year 2009/2010, 30 schools had joined one or both of these programmes (Juurak 2010). In the same academic year, about a fifth (nearly 4000) of students studying in basic schools that offer Russian-medium instruction participated in these programmes or some other form of in-depth learning of Estonian (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011).

According to both the state and stakeholders, the transition is necessary in order to improve the knowledge of the official language among non-Estonians, to facilitate their integration into Estonian society and to increase their ability to compete in the educational and labour market. In addition, the ambition is to increase the internal coherence of the education system and to save financial resources (teaching materials, teacher training). Also, the state’s education policy and the national curriculum for upper secondary schools rather favour larger upper secondary schools which enable students to choose between different fields of study – in some parts of Estonia, this consideration also supports the merging of Estonian- and Russian-medium upper secondary schools.

At the societal level, the views regarding the transition clearly divide the Estonian- and Russian-speaking populations according to various surveys – among Estonians, the support for transition is almost unanimous, whereas the views of the Russian population regarding the transition vary.

Aside from the language immersion programmes that are based on sound methodology, there are no clearly defined requirements for Estonian-medium instruction (e.g. for the use of language in the classroom). The official position has been that a teacher should use Estonian as much as possible and switch to Russian only when the former is not enough to ensure students’ understanding: “In the

classroom, the teacher uses the Estonian language and the teaching materials should also be in Estonian. However, quite understandably, it is not forbidden to assist students, if necessary, in Russian and, if possible, to ensure the use of teaching materials in both Estonian and Russian languages at home and in the school library. Nevertheless, in providing teacher training and preparing teaching materials, effort is made to avoid translation from one language to another – classes will be structured based on the Estonian language. /.../ The aim of the transition is the introduction of the Estonian-medium instruction; therefore, bilingual lessons are not the solution.” (Ministry of Education and Research, 2011)

As one of the reasons behind the transition is the attempt to cut back on the cost of teaching materials, learning materials covering the entire curriculum have not been sought for the Russian-speaking students. Dictionaries for different subjects have been published, but there is a rather limited amount of special support materials (e.g. customised textbooks, worksheets) and these have been published for those subjects which were expected to be taught in Estonian in the first order, i.e. already during the transition period 2007 through 2010 (Estonian literature, social studies, Estonian history, music, and geography). With the help of additional materials (e.g. customised worksheets) and special learning and teaching techniques, the teachers themselves are expected to make sure that students understand the teaching materials that have been designed for Estonian-medium schools.

What follows is a summary of the perceptions, experiences and attitudes of the target groups studied within the project “Russian Child in Estonian General Education School” regarding the transition to Estonian-medium instruction: 1. relationship of students and teachers to the state and society, language skills and language use; 2. assessments of educational changes of different areas and, more specifically, of the transition to Estonian-medium instruction; and 3. students’ personal experiences.

An overview of related surveys and the number of participants in the surveys has been given in section 1 of the present summary report. In Estonian, these are available at www.ut.ee/curriculum/projektid/Vene_opilane.

A SELECTION OF THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

1. Relationship to the state and society

1.1. Trust

The introduction and success of educational changes depend on both the trustworthiness of different information sources and spokespersons as well as the trust between the actors themselves. The surveys carried out among the teachers and 11th graders of Russian-medium upper secondary schools (2009) which, among other things, asked to evaluate the trustworthiness of 20 different persons or institutions in educational issues, show that teachers tended to have more trust in people related to school (school leaders, support staff and other teachers) and researchers and less trust in politicians, officials and entrepreneurs. The students’ opinions were quite similar to those of teachers; however, they had significantly more trust in parents than in people related to school; also, they trusted Russian-language television channels (see Figure 1)⁵ as much as they trusted people related to school.

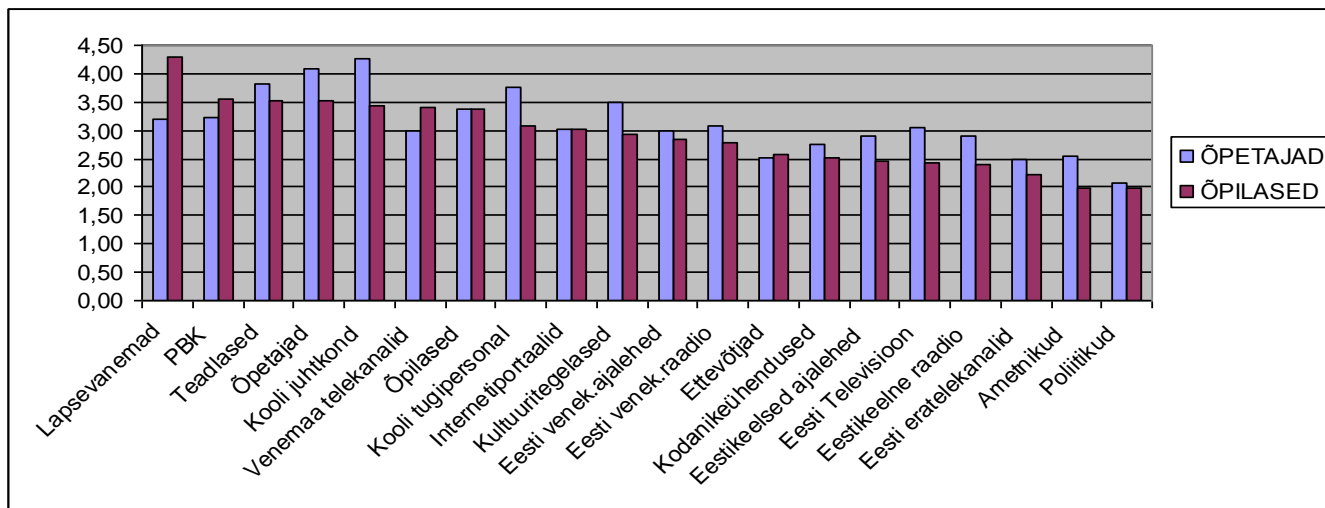


Figure 1: Opinions of students and teachers regarding the trustworthiness of persons and institutions in educational issues (2009)

From left to right (blue – teachers; lilac/purple – students):

1. Parents – 2. PBK (a Russian-language TV channel produced partly in Russia, partly in the Baltic states)
3. Scientists – 4. Teachers – 5. School leaders – 6. Russian TV channels
7. Students – 8. School’s support staff – 9. Internet portals – 10. Cultural personalities
11. Estonian Russian-language newspapers – 12. Estonian Russian-language radio channels
13. Entrepreneurs – 14. Non-governmental organisations – 15. Estonian-language newspapers
16. Estonian Public Television – 17. Estonian-language radio channels – 18. Estonian private TV channels
19. Civil servants – 20. Politicians

⁵ Masso and Kello 2010: 36ff., 63ff., 69.

The opinions of students with different background characteristics were not as divided as those of teachers. There were, however, some differences between the students in terms of the Estonian-language media, which was more trustworthy among girls and less trustworthy among young people whose fathers were highly educated.⁶ Among teachers, the Russian-language media was more trusted by those who did not teach and were not planning to teach in Estonian, by 56-year-olds and by older teachers; people related to school were most often trusted by teachers who were more than 48 years old. There were more people who trusted the Estonian-language media “elsewhere in Estonia”, that is, among teachers who worked outside of Tallinn and Northeast Estonia – that is, as expected, rather among teachers who had Estonian citizenship and better knowledge of Estonian (see section 1.3.1 below) as well as those who followed more the Estonian-language mass media (section 1.5).⁷ (At the same time, following and trusting the Estonian-language mass media were associated with the teachers’ age less than following and trusting the Russian-language media; see also section 1.5 below.)

1.2. Students’ future plans

We asked the school-leavers of 2008 and 11th graders of 2009 several questions about their future plans in order to determine their relationship to Estonia. First, we asked all the respondents to choose from a list of options the ones which best described their future plans for the next two years.⁸ Second, we asked the respondents of 2008 where they would like to live in ten years.⁹ In 2009, instead of the aforementioned question, we asked the respondents whether they would like to leave Estonia permanently.¹⁰ For comparison, in 2008 we asked the school-leavers of Estonian-medium upper secondary schools to complete questionnaires regarding their future plans (438 respondents from 11 schools).

⁶ For background variables associated with students’ opinions on trust, see Masso and Kello 2010 p. 64 Table 2.

⁷ For background variables associated with teachers’ opinions on trust, see Masso and Kello 2010 p. 37 Table 2.

⁸ Response options (wording slightly varies in questionnaires): *go to the Estonian Defence Forces; continue studies in Estonia; continue studies in Russia* [this option was only present in the questionnaires for the students of Russian-medium schools]; *continue studies in another country; travel around the world; find a job in Estonia; find a job in Russia* [an option for the students of Russian-medium schools]; *find a job in another country*. The respondents were asked to choose one most appropriate response or many appropriate responses.

⁹ Response options: *in the same area as today; elsewhere in Estonia; elsewhere in the European Union; in Russia; abroad (neither in Estonia nor in Russia nor in the European Union)*. The respondents were asked to choose one most appropriate response.

¹⁰ Response options: *definitely not; don’t know, perhaps someday; for a while, but not for ever; yes, I would like to leave Estonia permanently*. The respondents were asked to choose one most appropriate response.

Both the school-leavers of 2008 and 11th graders of 2009 preferred to continue their studies in Estonia in the *next few years*: in 2008, this option was desirable in 85% of the respondents of Estonian-medium schools and in 75% of the respondents of Russian-medium schools (the sample was, compared to the population, over-represented by students who had had the experience of learning in Estonian); in 2009, this option was desirable in 61% of the 11th graders (representative sample). Based on correlations of the responses, it can be said that about a quarter of the school-leavers of Russian-medium schools surveyed in 2008 wanted to go abroad either for work or study. In 2009, the second place belonged to a university somewhere in the West (in a country other than Estonia or Russia, 45%); a job in the West or in Estonia ended up in the third and fourth place, respectively (35-36%).¹¹

On the other hand, questions concerning *long-term future* indicated that there were quite many young people in Russian-medium schools who did not consider connecting their lives to Estonia to be important in the long run: in spring 2009, we asked the respondents whether they would like to leave Estonia permanently; 40% of the 11th graders answered “yes”. In addition, there was almost the same amount (36%) of those who could not answer the question (“*don’t know, perhaps someday*”). The option of leaving Estonia temporarily seemed attractive to 19% of the respondents, whereas 6% of the respondents did not want to leave Estonia at all.¹²

For comparison, 48% of the students surveyed in spring 2008 wanted to live elsewhere in the European Union in ten years, whereas one-third of the respondents could well see themselves living in Estonia. On the other hand, more than two-thirds of the graduates of Estonian-medium schools saw themselves living in Estonia in ten years and only 17% elsewhere in the European Union.¹³

If we look at the associations with background variables then, on the one hand, there is the link between better social and linguistic capital and the desire to leave Estonia and, on the other hand, between poorer knowledge of Estonian and/or living in Northeast Estonia and the desire to remain in Estonia. Thus, in 2009 the wish to continue studies in some other country was most often expressed by those students who had studied four or more subjects in Estonian in upper secondary school (however, the survey of 2009 revealed that the experience of learning in Estonian in basic school was associated with both the desire to remain in Estonia and the desire to leave Estonia).¹⁴ In 2008, a

¹¹ For opinions on other options and the preference ordering of the options, see Masso 2009 p. 43 Figure 14 and Masso and Kello 2010 p. 65 Figure 3.

¹² Masso and Kello 2010 p. 66 Figure 4.

¹³ Masso 2009 p. 44 Figure 15.

¹⁴ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 66 Table 3.

similar association could be observed for the level of education of students’ parents: children whose parents were highly educated associated their future with Estonia less frequently.

In the survey of 2009, students living in Tallinn envisioned their future in Estonia more frequently than students living in Northeast Estonia and elsewhere in Estonia (the difference of the proportion of those who wanted to stay in Estonia from those who wanted to go abroad in these groups was -12 and +9 and +7%, respectively).¹⁵ Furthermore, in the survey of 2008, too, young people living in Northeast Estonia associated their future with Estonia more frequently. In 2008, however, the strongest association appeared between the desire to remain in Estonia and the relatively poor knowledge of Estonian: young people with poor or moderate Estonian language skills (who often considered their knowledge of English to be also relatively weak) associated their future with Estonia more frequently. Therefore, it might be the case that young people living in Northeast Estonia have smaller ambitions and less hope in finding further education or work opportunities in Estonia with their existing Russian language skills. (Of the sample of 2009, 23% wanted to study and 11% to work in Russia and there were somewhat more Russian citizens among them (a 10% difference); no associations between the location of the school and the plans of going to Russia were found.)

Thus, the survey results reported seem to support the assumption that the relationship to Estonia depends less on social and linguistic-cultural contacts and more on ambitions and linguistic and social capital – the greater the latter, the greater the readiness to leave. On the one hand, alienation from the Estonian society may be exacerbated by linguistic and cultural contacts (comparison, collisions). On the other hand, previous studies have also shown that the educational level of parents is associated with their expectations for their children’s future, including the support for going abroad. For example, in 2007 about a quarter of Estonian-Russian parents with high or secondary education, but less than one-fifth of Estonian-Russian parents with basic education wanted their children to leave the country permanently and head for the West (Proos and Pettai 2007).

1.3. Language skills and language use

1.3.1. The Estonian language

In spring 2009, 33% of the teachers of Russian-medium upper secondary schools in Estonia

¹⁵ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 66 Table 3.

(including the teachers of Estonian language and literature, but with the exception of the teachers of other foreign languages and Russian) said they knew Estonian very well, whereas 23% of them “understood, spoke and wrote a little”.¹⁶ Nearly half the teachers used the Estonian language on a daily basis.¹⁷

In spring 2009, 11th graders gave a lower assessment of their knowledge of Estonian than did teachers (“know very well” in only 16%). The option “understand, speak and write a little” was most often chosen by students (47%).¹⁸ One-fifth of the students used Estonian “regularly, on a daily basis”.¹⁹

Among teachers, the knowledge of Estonian was, as expected, most often associated with teaching in Estonian, as well as the location of the school (Tallinn, Northeast Estonia or other parts of Estonia), age and citizenship²⁰; among students, the knowledge of Estonian was associated with citizenship, academic performance and sex – young women with Estonian citizenship and higher academic performance also gave a higher assessment of their knowledge of Estonian.²¹ Also, girls used the Estonian language more often.²² The students’ assessment of their knowledge of Estonian was not associated with their experience of Estonian-medium instruction in basic school. Possibly, students with such an experience were more critical in terms of their language skills – this assumption is also confirmed by the fact that students who had attended language immersion classes gave a significantly higher assessment of the sufficiency of their Estonian *for studying in Estonian* than did other students.²³ (Nearly one-third (31%) of the 11th graders of 2009 considered their knowledge of Estonian acquired in basic school to be sufficient for Estonian-medium instruction; about the same proportion (34%) of students considered their language skills to be partly sufficient and partly inadequate.²⁴)

That the description of the knowledge of Estonian was dependent on the possibilities of using the language seems to be confirmed by the fact that it was not the assessments of students of their language skills that varied from region to region, but rather the descriptions of the frequency of

¹⁶ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 8 Table 1.

¹⁷ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 9 Table 3.

¹⁸ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 38 Table 1.

¹⁹ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 40 Table 4.

²⁰ Masso and Kello 2010: 9.

²¹ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 38 Table 2; for 2008 cf. Masso 2009: 8-9.

²² Masso, Kello 2010: 40; cf. Masso 2009: 11. We asked the school-leavers of 2008 to assess the frequency of the various contexts of language use (including school, leisure activities, etc.); see (including the associations with background variables and the use of Russian language) Masso 2009: 10-11.

²³ Masso and Kello 2010: 39.

²⁴ See (including the associations with background variables) Masso and Kello 2010: 42-43.

language use.²⁵ The differences were as expected: the Estonian language was used regularly and on a daily basis by 14% of respondents living in Northeast Estonia, 24% of respondents living in Tallinn and 33% of respondents living elsewhere in Estonia.²⁶ Of course, since in the survey the response options were not clearly defined, “using Estonian” could mean active interaction as well as the use of media, reading labels, etc. However, the impact of immediate communication possibilities that depend on the place of residence on other ways of using the language is demonstrated by both the latter differences and the more active consumption of the Estonian-language media by the students and teachers in “other parts of Estonia” (see section 1.5 below). On the other hand, the impact of the region on the students’ language skills does not seem to be unidimensional – separate analyses have shown that location of the school was indeed statistically significant in explaining the results of national final examinations (2010 examinations in the subject ‘Estonian language’) by leavers of Russian-medium schools when considered separately, but in a multidimensional model, school-level variables proved to be more significant.²⁷

1.3.2. Other languages

As far as the other languages were concerned, students gave a higher assessment of their knowledge than did teachers – in spring 2009, 58% of the students said they knew (“understand and speak a little” according to their own assessment) two foreign languages (mostly English and Estonian) and 26% of the students knew three or more foreign languages²⁸, whereas for teachers, the figures were slightly lower – 37% and 12%, respectively. Students tended to consider their knowledge of language to be more active and teachers more passive (18% of 11th graders knew English very well according to their own assessment, whereas for teachers, the figure was 8%).

Most often, students gave namely English the highest assessment compared to teachers: while about one-fifth of the teachers described their knowledge of English as “understand, speak and write a little”, 63% of the students said the same about their language skills.²⁹

The knowledge of English of both students and teachers was associated with the knowledge of Estonian: those who were good at one language were probably good at the other language as well. For example, the students of language immersion classes gave a higher assessment of their

²⁵ *Regularly, on a daily basis; occasionally; in exceptional cases; not at all.*

²⁶ Masso and Kello 2010: 40.

²⁷ Anu Masso and Maie Soll, draft article “Geographies of Educational Change in Estonia”.

²⁸ Masso, Kello 2010: 38

²⁹ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 8 Table 1 and p. 38 Table 1.

knowledge of English – possibly, the greater attention paid to languages by language immersion schools has paid off.

Just as the knowledge of Estonian, the knowledge of English was associated with the students’ academic performance; however, unlike the Estonian language, the knowledge of English was also associated with the location of the school and parents’ level of education.³⁰ (True, the better knowledge of English among the students of Tallinn could also be explained by the orientation of the class – the number of language immersion classes in Tallinn is significantly higher than in other regions.)

The students’ knowledge of English was definitely supported by the more frequent use of the language when compared to teachers: unlike teachers, the students used English to a similar extent as Estonian, with a difference of only a few percentage points in favour of English. Thus, while nearly a quarter of students used English on a daily basis, the same could be said for only about one-eighth of teachers. And while 81% of the teachers used Estonian occasionally or regularly and 42% of the teachers used English occasionally or regularly, the corresponding figures for students were 60% and 64%.³¹

1.4. The importance of the Estonian language

It can be said that, in general, the Russian-speaking population of Estonia values the knowledge of Estonian and recognises the importance of early learning (e.g. Vetik 2010). Also, 71% of the respondents (2009) considered the knowledge of Estonian “for them personally” to be rather or very important – however, the number of those who emphasised the importance of other foreign languages was nearly one-fifth (95%) higher than the number of those who emphasised the importance of Estonian.³² The students’ evaluations also confirmed the fact that the importance of the Estonian language depended on the need and opportunity to use the language in everyday life: while in Northeast Estonia and Tallinn, one-third of the respondents considered the Estonian language to be very important, almost half of the respondents in other parts of Estonia considered the Estonian language to be very important. Association with the sex of respondents turned out to be even stronger than association with the location – there were nearly half as many girls as boys who considered the

³⁰ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 38 Table 2.

³¹ Masso and Kello 2010: 8-9, 40

³² Questions *How important, for you personally, is knowing Estonian?* and *How important, for you personally, is knowing foreign languages (except Estonian)?* (Teachers were not asked these questions.) For results, see Masso and Kello 2010: 41.

Estonian language to be important (cf. above: a similar difference was observed for the knowledge and use of the Estonian language).³³

The fact that many students attached more importance to English and less importance to Estonian was also confirmed by their preferences regarding an ideal upper secondary school. An ideal upper secondary school where most of the 11th graders would “definitely” have liked to study if they had the choice was either a school where studies were conducted in Russian (38%) or a school focusing on in-depth teaching of English (40%) rather than Estonian. An equal number of respondents would “maybe” have chosen either of the two options. (By contrast, only one-fifth of the students would “definitely” have preferred and three-fifths of the students would “maybe” have preferred the school as it was in 2009: a Russian-medium upper secondary school where two to three subjects were taught in Estonian. Less than 10% of the respondents would have liked to attend a school where more than half of the subjects were taught in Estonian.)³⁴

1.5. Media use

The media-use habits of students and teachers with regard to the Russian-language media were similar to the general picture, according to which the Russian-speaking population of Estonia mainly consumes Russian-language media, including a relatively high number of television channels (for example, according to the Monitoring of Attaining of Estonian Integration Strategy, 90% of the respondents watched the Baltic Russian-language TV channel PBK (a popular TV channel among Estonian Russians, mixture of content produced in Russian Federation, Latvia and Estonia), as well as RTR (Russian public TV channel produced in Russian Federation) and other Russian television channels every day or several times a week and 30% of the respondents watched Estonian national channels³⁵).

In spring 2009, 80% of the 11th graders admitted to watching PBK and Russian television channels every day or a couple of times a week; more than 90% of them used Russian-language Internet and more than 70% English-language Internet. Of the Estonian-language media, the students used the Estonian-language Internet most frequently – almost every day or a couple of times a week by a little more than a fifth of the respondents; one-tenth of the students watched Estonian Public TV

³³ For associations with background variables, see Masso and Kello 2010 p. 41 Table 6.

³⁴ For school preferences, see Masso and Kello 2010 p. 61 Figure 12; for the association between school preferences and background variables, see *ibid.* Table 7.

³⁵ Vetik 2010.

channels as often (according to their own assessment).

Apparently at the expense of the Internet, teachers watched Russian-language television channels a little more than did students (more than 80%); at the same time, they also consumed Estonian-language media more than the average for students and the Russian-speaking population, both in terms of television and radio as well as the Internet and print media (for the opinions on the reliability of different media channels, cf. above). For example, two-fifths of the teachers watched Estonian national channels almost every day or a couple of times a week, whereas more than two-fifths used Estonian-language Internet and about one-third read Estonian-language newspapers.³⁶

Quite understandably, teachers who taught in Estonian or were planning to teach in Estonian in the future were the ones who lived in an information field that, most of all, was governed by the Estonian language. Also, the consumption of Estonian-language media was associated with the teacher’s citizenship; however, unlike the Russian-language media, the consumption of Estonian-language media was not associated with age (Russian-language media was more often consumed by respondents who were more than 56 years old). Associations also appeared between everyday communication and media space: the teachers in South-Estonia and other parts of Estonia consumed Estonian-language media 10% more than others and the teachers in Northeast Estonia consumed the Estonian-language media 15% less than others; in Tallinn and its vicinity, there was almost an equal proportion of those who consumed Estonian-language media and those who did not.³⁷

The consumption of Estonian-language media by students was also associated with the location of the school – the Estonian-language media channels were more seldom used by young people in Northeast Estonia and more often by young people in other parts of Estonia. Also, the consumption of Estonian-language media by students in upper secondary school was associated with the number of subjects taught in Estonian and the orientation of the basic school³⁸ – probably as a result of the greater diversity of the contexts of language use and learning tasks, as well as the better knowledge of Estonian (not necessarily based on one’s own assessment, cf. above).

³⁶ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 34 Figure 1 and p. 62 Figure 1.

³⁷ Masso and Kello 2010: 35-36.

³⁸ Masso and Kello 2010: 63.

2. General conceptions regarding the transition to Estonian-medium instruction

2.1. The overall assessment of educational changes in different areas

The majority of teachers surveyed in 2009 found the educational changes which had taken place in Estonia during the past two decades to be (rather) saddening (58%) and rather or too fast (66%). Only about one-fifth of them found the educational changes to be pleasing and slightly more than a quarter of them considered the speed of changes to be adequate.³⁹ Statistically, the opinions were associated with both the consumption of Estonian-language media as well as teaching in Estonian; the assessment of the tonality of the changes was also associated with the teacher’s citizenship.⁴⁰ The educational changes that spontaneously came to their mind⁴¹, i.e. that were taken into consideration while expressing the described opinions, were most often related to the changes in the curriculum/distribution of classes and the content of studies, or were in some other way related to the Estonianisation of the education system, whether in terms of the transition to Estonian-medium instruction/language immersion or the language requirements imposed on teachers.⁴²

Students had a slightly more positive attitude towards the changes (saddening – 41%, fast – 56%), but for obvious reasons (a different perspective and a rather indirect experience of the changes), they chose neutral response options more often.⁴³ Among students, optimism and satisfaction with the speed of educational changes was more often expressed by female respondents (who often do tend to express more positive assessments) and – reflecting perhaps their school’s readiness for changes – by students who studied more subjects in Estonian in basic and upper secondary school and who felt better informed about the transition to Estonian-medium instruction; also, respondents who had Estonian citizenship were more often pleased with the changes.⁴⁴

In a separate section, we asked respondents to give either positive or negative *assessments of changes in more specific predetermined areas of education*. Here, teachers assessed most positively those changes which were related to their own work and teaching – the teachers’ teaching

³⁹ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 12 Figure 2. Statistically significant associations between these two variables – the tonality and speed of the changes – give grounds for believing (association coefficient Cramer’s $V=.204$) that the teachers of Russian-medium schools in Estonia can be divided into two distinguishable groups – those who are rather “unconfident” and those who are rather confident about educational changes and transition to Estonian-medium instruction.

⁴⁰ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 13 Table 1.

⁴¹ *Since gaining independence, Estonia has made various changes to its education system. Please indicate 3 areas that come to your mind first regarding the changes.* We did not ask students such an open question.

⁴² Masso and Kello 2010:10-11.

⁴³ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 44 Figure 1.

⁴⁴ Masso and Kello 2010: 44-45.

competencies, school climate and teachers’ working conditions. Most of all – and almost unanimously –, the teachers expressed criticism of specific and generic changes that had recently occurred or were about to happen – separation of basic schools and upper secondary schools, transition to Estonian-medium instruction, the number of Russian-medium schools. They were also quite critical of circumstances that were related to the education policy and more dependant on factors external to their schools – remuneration and workload (although, since the latter depends much on the subject taught and the size of the school, there were relatively many conflicting assessments regarding the workload).⁴⁵

Teachers’ attitudes towards the educational changes of different areas⁴⁶ were statistically significantly related to their specialty and the location of the school. Negative assessments were more often given by the teachers of mathematics and sciences and the teachers in Northeast Estonia – the latter had a slightly more pessimistic attitude towards work-related changes, including the overall atmosphere at school. More positive assessments were given by music, arts, crafts and physical education teachers. The knowledge of Estonian was not significantly associated with these assessments, but to a certain extent, the consumption of media had a part to play here as well: work-related changes were 10% more often considered as positive by teachers who consumed Estonian-language media on a daily basis; on the other hand, changes that were related to students were 10% more often considered as positive by teachers who consumed more Russian-language media. The quality and availability of education received more criticism from teachers who had more responsibilities in school in addition to their daily teaching job (such as leading the class, participating in creative or innovative activities, supervising students’ practical work, being a member of a trade union, etc. – the list included a total of ten different additional activities).⁴⁷

On the basis of the assessments given to changes that had taken place in different areas, the cluster analysis of the results of the teachers’ survey⁴⁸ placed 23% of the respondents in the group of “optimists”. The teachers of this group were fairly evenly distributed in different parts of Estonia, but

⁴⁵ Masso and Kello 2010: 14; for students, see p. 46-47.

⁴⁶ The 20 different realms of educational changes have been grouped as follows: the overall quality and availability of education (includes variables *quality and availability of basic, upper secondary, vocational and higher education*), related to teachers (*in-service training and further education, teachers’ workload, remuneration, ability to teach subjects in a creative way, conditions for learning in school, overall atmosphere at school*), related to students (*students’ workload, motivation to learn, abilities and learning skills*), reforms and other external factors (*parental interest and support, curriculum and the content and diversity of subjects taught, transition to Estonian-medium instruction in upper secondary school, separation of basic schools and upper secondary schools, the number of students in Russian-medium schools, the number of Russian-medium schools*).

⁴⁷ Masso and Kello 2010: 15-16.

⁴⁸ Masso and Kello 2010b.

on average they were better integrated into Estonian society (consumed more often Estonian-language media and had more trust in social institutions, such as officials and politicians), and the number of music, arts, crafts and physical education teachers among them was above average. (The teachers among "optimists" who taught in Estonian tended to be more satisfied with it and were also satisfied with the collegial support in preparing lessons. Also, their attitude towards the language immersion programs in basic school was above average.)⁴⁹

In conclusion, the results demonstrated the rather sceptical views of teachers on changes that had taken and were about to take place in education, quite irrespective of socio-demographic or cultural background. Among respondents, however, there were some groups of people who had better adapted to the changes, knew Estonian better, were more involved with the Estonian society (through both citizenship and the subjects taught) and, possibly, had already started teaching in Estonian. It can be said that both for students and teachers the Estonian-medium instruction was often the most significant or at least the most predominant educational change and that the experience of or readiness for Estonian-medium instruction affected also the assessments of educational changes in general.⁵⁰

2.2. Attitudes towards transition to Estonian-medium instruction

As already said, transition to Estonian-medium instruction was the change that received most criticism from both students and teachers. Attitudes towards Estonian-medium instruction were also most clearly associated with attitudes towards other areas of educational changes.⁵¹

For teachers, the attitude towards the transition was most clearly associated with their specialty.⁵² Of teachers who already in 2009 taught (or had previously taught) in Estonian, an equal proportion considered teaching their subject in Estonian to be justified or partly justified (36% each), whereas 28% of them considered it to be rather or completely unjustified.⁵³ These assessments were associated with teachers' specialty (most clearly), sex and citizenship (Russian citizens and male teachers expressed most criticism). While nine out of ten teachers of Estonian language and literature considered teaching their subject in Estonian to be justified, only one-third of the teachers of social

⁴⁹ For other groups, see *ibid.* (2010b) p. 63ff.

⁵⁰ See also Masso and Kello 2010b: 58-60.

⁵¹ See also Masso and Kello 2010b: 58-60.

⁵² Masso and Kello 2010 p. 15 Table 2.

⁵³ Masso and Kello 2010: 25.

studies, mathematics and sciences were of the same opinion.⁵⁴

The students’ *overall assessment of the transition to Estonian-medium instruction* was also associated with the assessments of the availability and quality of education (for basic, upper secondary, vocational and higher education) – therefore, it can be said that while being content with the current and expected educational experiences, they tended to have a more positive attitude towards the transition to Estonian-medium instruction as well, and vice versa.⁵⁵ The students’ *assessments of the justification of teaching specific subject(s) in Estonian* represented almost the same proportion as the assessments given by teachers.⁵⁶ For students, the assessments were most clearly associated with sex (girls had again a more positive attitude) and the place of residence (outside of Tallinn and Northeast Estonia, Estonian-medium instruction was 12% more often considered to be justified and there were 13% more of those teachers who thought that the number of subjects taught in Estonian could be even greater).⁵⁷

The attitudes towards the transition to Estonian-medium instruction and assessments of the possible outcomes or consequences were, of course, dependent on *the extent of Estonian-medium instruction*. Various studies of the project show that favouring of Estonian-medium instruction meant favouring of teaching *some* subjects in Estonian – believing it to support the linguistic and cultural integration of students – rather than being satisfied with the plan which foresaw the instruction of at least 60% of the lessons in Estonian. (For students’ preferences regarding upper secondary schools, cf. above 1.4.⁵⁸) Also, in 2009 nearly half (47%) of the teachers considered the number of subjects taught in Estonian to be sufficient; one-fifth of them felt that the number of subjects taught in Estonian could be smaller, whereas one-tenth found that the number could be greater and one-tenth could not answer the question unambiguously. Here, too, the reactions of students were similar to those of teachers, although slightly more (15%) students found that the number of subjects taught in Estonian could be greater and slightly less (44%) students considered the number to be sufficient.⁵⁹

Support for reinforcing the measures – especially teaching Estonian as a separate subject – that would change the current situation to a lesser extent (compared to more radical changes such as Estonian-medium instruction or the merging of schools) also became evident from the *assessments of*

⁵⁴ Masso and Kello 2010: 27.

⁵⁵ Masso and Kello 2010: 46.

⁵⁶ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 52 Figure 5.

⁵⁷ Masso and Kello 2010: 54.

⁵⁸ In retrospect, the majority (2/3) of respondents surveyed in spring 2008 would also not have wanted to learn more subjects in Estonian in addition to the relatively small amount (two to four) of subjects they had learned in Estonian.

⁵⁹ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 52 Figure 5.

different target groups *regarding the measures that support the Estonian language acquisition*.⁶⁰ For example, teachers, assessing a variety of measures based on how well those measures could support the students’ knowledge of Estonian, supported starting the instruction of Estonian as early as possible (85%), carrying out extracurricular activities in Estonian (82%), using Estonian-language teaching materials to the greatest extent possible (77%) or beginning Estonian-medium instruction at the upper secondary level (64%); slightly less support was shown for language immersion that was introduced in different levels or earlier onset of Estonian-medium instruction (46-57%); the least popular was “Estonian-medium kindergarten” (37%).⁶¹ The 11th graders, too, believed that teaching Estonian as a separate subject would be a more important factor in supporting the Estonian language acquisition (91% in basic school, 88% in upper secondary school, 78% in kindergarten) – Estonian-medium instruction was accepted rather in the form of individual subjects in upper secondary school (67%) or basic school (63%).⁶² The most radical changes were considered to be the least effective in supporting the knowledge of Estonian: half of the subjects in Estonian in basic school (36%), half of the subjects in Estonian in upper secondary school (26%), majority of the subjects in Estonian in basic school (19%), majority of the subjects in Estonian in upper secondary school (17%), an additional year in upper secondary school (7%).⁶³

⁶⁰ See Masso and Kello 2010: 30-31, 59-60. A similar tendency occurred in the assessments of school leaders (2008) regarding the relevance of various measures as the supporters of the transition: “Assess the following measures as prerequisites for the transition to Estonian-medium instruction in upper secondary schools” and “Assess the following measures – do they support, rather support, rather do not support or do not support at all the transition to Estonian-medium instruction?” (see Jakobson 2009: 17-20, see *ibid.* 21-22). In assessing the six arguments given for “Assess the following measures as prerequisites for the transition to Estonian-medium instruction in upper secondary schools”, most of the school leaders (40-41) supported extracurricular activities in basic school, the use of Estonian-language teaching materials in basic school to the greatest extent possible, and beginning Estonian-medium instruction in kindergarten. The number of those who questioned the necessity of teaching subjects in Estonian from the first school level was the greatest (14). (Jakobson 2009: 18). See also section 3.2 below.

⁶¹ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 30 Figure 10.

⁶² Masso and Kello 2010 p. 59 Figure 11.

⁶³ *Ibid.* A list of measures that we asked to assess was different for students and teachers. Teachers assessed the following measures (in order of proportion of assessments “rather necessary” and “very necessary”): *the onset of Estonian-medium instruction in kindergarten; extracurricular activities in Estonian in basic school (e.g. courses, workshops, research projects, after-school groups, language camps); the use of Estonian-language teaching materials to the greatest extent possible in almost all subjects of basic school (e.g. videos, educational texts); Estonian-medium instruction at the third school level; language immersion in kindergarten; language immersion at the third school level; Estonian-medium instruction at the second school level; language immersion at the second school level; language immersion at the first school level; Estonian-medium instruction at the first school level; Estonian-medium kindergarten*. The students assessed the following measures (also in order of preference): *Estonian language classes in basic school; Estonian language classes in upper secondary school; teaching Estonian in kindergarten; Estonian-medium kindergarten; some Estonian-language subjects in upper secondary school; some Estonian-language subjects in basic school; extracurricular activities in Estonian (e.g. courses, workshops, research projects, after-school groups, language camps); half of the subjects in Estonian in basic school; half of the subjects in Estonian in upper secondary school; majority of the subjects in Estonian in basic school; majority of the subjects in Estonian in upper secondary school; an additional year in Russian-medium upper secondary school*. Therefore, it is difficult to compare the assessments given by students and teachers regarding

Among teachers, such assessments could result from either a sceptical attitude towards teaching subjects in another language or just a pragmatic attitude – introducing measures to existing ways of teaching is easier than changing the language of instruction as a whole.⁶⁴ Such assessments could also result from the fact that most of the teachers had had some sort of personal contact with the measures that received more support. The latter is, indeed, confirmed by the fact that although there was no significant variation in the assessments by background characteristics, the teachers who had taught subjects in Estonian were 15% more often convinced of the necessity of Estonian-medium instruction and somewhat more often convinced of the effectiveness of beginning with the Estonian-medium instruction already in kindergarten (cf. above 2.1). On the other hand, teachers who did not have the experience of teaching in Estonian and were not planning to teach in Estonian in the future were 17% less often convinced of the necessity of Estonian-medium instruction. Those teachers who were planning to start teaching in Estonian in the future were, in turn, more often pessimistic about beginning with the Estonian-medium instruction already in kindergarten. The teachers in Northeast Estonia were also significantly more often pessimistic about the said measure (a 13% difference when compared to others). The teachers in Tallinn were more often optimistic about teaching Estonian in kindergarten (a 10% difference when compared to others).⁶⁵

Students who had experienced Estonian-medium instruction were also more often convinced of its effectiveness in supporting the knowledge of Estonian⁶⁶: those who had studied four or more subjects in Estonian in basic school were mostly in favour of Estonian-medium instruction (2/3 compared to an average of 40%). On the other hand, those who had studied two or more subjects in Estonian in upper secondary school were 10% less often in favour of Estonian-medium instruction.⁶⁷

some of the measures. For example, students, unlike teachers, did not have “language immersion in kindergarten” and “Estonian-medium kindergarten” as separate options; they could only assess the measure “Estonian-medium kindergarten”. (“Language immersion in kindergarten” was supported by 57% of the teachers and “Estonian-medium kindergarten” by 37% of the teachers, whereas among students “Estonian-medium kindergarten” was supported by 69% of the respondents.) It is, however, possible that the somewhat greater support shown by the students for Estonian-medium kindergarten reflects less concern about the mother tongue of the students (such differences of assessments were also indicated by the qualitative surveys of the project).

⁶⁴ Cf. Jakobson 2009: 17-22.

⁶⁵ Masso and Kello 2010: 30-31.

⁶⁶ A similar association was observed for the students’ preferences regarding upper secondary schools: those who had studied four or more subjects in Estonian in basic school and/or five or more subjects in Estonian in upper secondary school (half of them compared to an average of one-third) considered an upper secondary school with Estonian-medium instruction more often to be an acceptable choice – Masso and Kello 2010: 61-62.

⁶⁷ Masso and Kello 2010: 60.

2.3. Assessments of the possible outcomes and consequences of the transition

When the possible outcomes and consequences of the transition were analysed, all surveys revealed concern about the students’ future, that is, for the decline of academic performance and national examination results. However, the respondents agreed that Estonian-medium instruction would improve the knowledge of Estonian among the graduates of Russian-medium schools and increase the number of university entrants. The proportion of relevant assessments varied to some extent by different target groups. For example, when compared to teachers, students (2009) were less concerned about the impact on learning outcomes and the knowledge of Russian, but were more pessimistic about Estonian-medium instruction as a way of reducing ethnic tensions and improving students’ knowledge of Estonian, whereas in 2008 fewer school-leavers considered interruption of studies or continuation of studies in vocational schools and abroad to be likely (see Table 1).⁶⁸

Table 1: The assessments of students and teachers regarding the possible consequences of Estonian-medium instruction (%)

	students 2009	students 2008	teachers 2009
<i>The number of students going abroad to study will increase</i>	77	53	75
<i>The knowledge of Estonian among graduates will improve</i>	74	72	84
<i>Enrolment in vocational schools will increase</i>	68	39	75
<i>Interruption of studies will become more frequent</i>	65	41	71
<i>Enrolment in Estonian universities will increase</i>	62	56	71
<i>National examination results will decline</i>	58	41	63
<i>Academic performance (subject knowledge) will weaken</i>	50	43	79
<i>The knowledge of Russian among graduates will decline</i>	45	38	71
<i>Tensions between Estonians and Russians will intensify</i>	44	28	35
<i>Academic performance (subject knowledge) will improve</i>	41	39	34
<i>The social activity of Russian young people will increase</i>	37	35	58
<i>National examination results will improve</i>	33	33	29
<i>Tensions between Estonians and Russians will weaken</i>	29	24	43
<i>Enrolment in Estonian-medium upper secondary schools will increase</i>	29	26	30

⁶⁸ Masso 2009: 40-42, Masso and Kello 2010: 27-28.

Several assessments given by the school leaders surveyed in 2008 (N=45) fell between the assessments of students and teachers (see Table 2).⁶⁹

Table 2: The assessments of school leaders regarding the possible consequences of Estonian-medium instruction (2008, absolute numbers)

	<i>Yes, this in particular + this as well</i>	<i>Rather not + definitely not</i>
<i>The knowledge of Estonian among graduates will improve</i>	43	2
<i>Enrolment in Estonian universities will increase</i>	35	10
<i>The social activity of Russian young people will increase</i>	31	14
<i>The knowledge of Russian among graduates will decline</i>	28	17
<i>Academic performance (subject knowledge) will weaken</i>	28	17
<i>Interruption of studies will become more frequent</i>	28	17
<i>Enrolment in vocational schools will increase</i>	25	19
<i>National examination results will decline</i>	25	20
<i>The number of students going abroad to study will increase</i>	24	21
<i>Tensions between Estonians and Russians will weaken</i>	24	21
<i>Enrolment in Estonian-medium upper secondary schools will increase</i>	16	29
<i>National examination results will improve</i>	9	35
<i>Academic performance (subject knowledge) will improve</i>	9	36
<i>Tensions between Estonians and Russians will intensify</i>	4	40

The most significant variation by background characteristics was observed for the attitudes of teachers (2009) towards negative consequences. The strongest differentiating factor was, again, teaching in Estonian, but this time the assessments tended to be negative rather than positive: teachers who taught in Estonian were more often pessimistic about the consequences, including the subject-related language skills. Only the teachers of mathematics and physics saw somewhat less negative consequences for the transition. Another differentiating factor was the location of the school: the teachers in Tallinn agreed more often than average with the fear that Estonian-medium instruction may result in increased tensions between Estonians and Russians. On the other hand, the teachers in Northeast Estonia were more often convinced of the positive impact of the transition on ethnic relations, the knowledge of Estonian and further educational opportunities in Estonian schools.⁷⁰

The greatest variation in the attitudes of students (2009) was observed for the question which was probably the most important for them – the question of whether Estonian-medium transition would have a positive impact on students’ subject knowledge and national examination results. Positive individual consequences were most often expected by students who received high grades

⁶⁹ Jakobson 2009: 12ff.

⁷⁰ Masso and Kello 2010: 28-29.

(mostly 4-s and 5-s); optimistic attitudes were somewhat more common in Tallinn as well. Possible positive social and individual consequences were also more often expected by young people who did not learn any subject in Estonian in basic school (2/3 compared to the average of 1/2); they were also 10% more convinced of the positive consequences for students’ subject knowledge.⁷¹

2.4. Assessments of the objectives and rationale of the transition

The abovementioned (in section 2.2) assessments of measures supporting Estonian language acquisition already showed that the target groups did not consider Estonian-medium instruction to be the most efficient method in terms of acquiring the knowledge of Estonian, even though they were quite convinced of the (somewhat) positive impact on the knowledge of Estonian of students who studied subjects in Estonian (section 2.3). Therefore, it can be assumed that even though the target groups agreed with one of the main reasons for the transition, according to which Estonian-medium instruction will improve students’ language skills, they considered it neither sufficiently adequate as a relevant measure nor effective in terms of the benefit-cost ratio. This interpretation is also supported by the results of focus group interviews carried out among students and teachers: the participants were well informed of the improved Estonian language skills, increased competitiveness among students and other such benefits of the transition, but they also had objections against all of them⁷² (cf. above 1.4).⁷³

As shown above (2.3), the target groups only partly agreed with the favourable impact of the transition on social cohesion and the cultural integration of students; also, students were less optimistic than adults about the increase of the social activity of young people and the reduction of ethnic tensions. Also, the assessments given by students regarding their personal experiences of the impact of Estonian-medium instruction showed more agreement with decreased interest in the Estonian culture and language (37 and 29%, respectively) than with increased interest in the Estonian culture and language (12 and 18%) as a result of Estonian-medium instruction⁷⁴ – therefore, studying individual subjects in Estonian may have no significant integrative impact.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Masso and Kello 2010: 57; for school-leavers of 2008, cf. Masso 2009: 41-42.

⁷² See e.g. Kello 2009: 17, 22-25.

⁷³ Cf. also Masso 2009: 41.

⁷⁴ Masso and Kello 2009 p. 58 Figure 10. Actually, three variables were strongly ($r \sim .7$) correlated – *decreased interest in the Estonian language, decreased interest in the Estonian culture, decreased interest in the subject*. Thus, a group of students who had a negative attitude towards Estonian-medium instruction or some personal negative experience stood out, among whom young people with poor academic performance were represented above the average (ibid.). By contrast, the survey carried out among the school-leavers of 2008 showed the opposite tendency (positive effects were

We asked the school leaders surveyed in spring 2008 to assess some of the *objectives of the transition to Estonian-medium instruction in upper secondary schools with regard to the state*.⁷⁶ The majority of school leaders agreed with (reply options “this in particular” or “this as well”) the objectives of increased competitiveness (40), better social cohesion (38) and optimal use of the state’s financial resources.⁷⁷ At the same time, half of the school leaders (23 out of 45) also agreed with the cultural assimilation of the Russian youth – possibly considering it to be one of the means of or prerequisites for achieving the goals related to competitiveness and social cohesion.⁷⁸ Only a quarter of the respondents believed that the state sought to improve the quality of education and strengthen social cohesion *without* cultural assimilation. Also, there was about one-fourth of those who agreed that the state was seeking to improve the quality of education among students whose mother tongue was Russian, as well as those who thought that the intention of the state was to either maintain Russian-medium upper secondary schools or abolish them (12 respondents agreed with each of the objectives). Therefore, it can be said that based on the assessments given to the state’s intentions, the school leaders were divided quite interestingly into different groups, and depending on other statements there was a variation in the attitudes of about half of the respondents due to their assessment of whether the state’s intention was to maintain or abolish Russian-medium upper

accepted more often than negative effects, although only about a third of the students agreed that their interest in the language and culture had increased as an impact of the Estonian-medium instruction). At the same time, association analyses of the results of the survey carried out in 2008 also confirmed that the experience of learning in Estonian (in basic school) to a greater extent supports the acceptance of positive effects (Masso 2009: 38-40).

⁷⁵ However, it is possible that such effects would be greater for larger-scale studies in Estonian when the school as a whole supports the latter (see previous footnote). For example, the analysis of the survey carried out among the school leavers of 2008 (Masso 2009: 40) showed that while the level of language proficiency was more significantly affected by characteristics at individual level, the school played a more significant role in the development of attitudes: 22% of the variability in the estimated negative consequences of Estonian-medium instruction, 46% of the variability in a positive consequence, and as much as 81% of the variability in the consequences of language capabilities could be explained by the difference of schools (but not their location in one or another region of Estonia). At the same time, young people who used the Estonian language at home, young people in Tallinn and South-Estonia who had experienced Estonian-medium instruction, and young people with better language skills were somewhat more positive about the linguistic and cultural consequences of Estonian-medium instruction (agreed with the increased interest in the Estonian language and culture, and increased courage to use the Estonian language) (Masso 2009: 39).

⁷⁶ *Increasing the competitiveness of the Russian youth in the educational and labour market, abolishment of the Russian-medium upper secondary school; improving the quality of education among students whose mother tongue is Russian; cultural assimilation of the Russian youth; optimal use of the state’s financial resources; revenge for the Soviet Russification; increasing social cohesion; maintaining the Russian-medium upper secondary school.*

⁷⁷ For an overview of the given assessments, see Jakobson 2009 p. 9 Figure 2. In the light of the survey among the alumni of Russian-medium schools (interviews at the end of 2010 and at the beginning of 2011), it appears that seeing and not seeing the economic arguments of the transition (de-emphasised in the public rhetoric) account for the distinction between school leaders and students – the alumni rather disagreed with the fact that the transition was undertaken for mainly economic reasons; in some cases, such a justification even surprised them.

⁷⁸ Out of 23 respondents who agreed with the objective of cultural assimilation, 19 also agreed with the statement that the state was seeking social cohesion and 17 agreed with the statement that the state was seeking to increase the competitiveness of the Russian youth in the educational and labour market (Jakobson 2009: 10).

secondary schools. Although the small size of the sample makes it difficult to assume which role could be played by the knowledge of Estonian of a particular school leader in the formation of trust, it can be said that the mother tongue of those who trusted the state was predominantly Estonian (9 out of 12 respondents, whereas the number of respondents whose mother tongue was Estonian was 11). School leaders whose mother tongue was Estonian, that is, who trusted the state, were also relatively dominant among respondents who were convinced of some of the positive consequences (e.g. the increase of the social activity of the Russian youth) which could not find unanimous support in the sample as a whole. By contrast, there was no variation by mother tongue with respect to expecting negative consequences.⁷⁹

⁷⁹ For description of different groups of respondents, see Jakobson 2009: 10-12 and 23-25 and Kello, Masso and Jakobson 2009.

3. Practices and experiences

3.1. Methodological practices and teaching approaches

Of learning activities used in an Estonian-language class, teachers (2009) rated the rather traditional or teacher-led learning activities as the most frequent (e.g. teacher-led conversation, learning subject-related language, understanding the meanings of words, working with textbooks and worksheets, reading texts). Less common were student-centred methods (discussions, giving presentations, role plays, etc.) and using audio-visual equipment (computer and Internet use by students, educational videos). The least common were such extracurricular activities which required more time and material resources (e.g. training visits, research work). Understandably, the learning activities were related to the subject being taught. For example, discussion- and language-oriented techniques such as correcting students’ spoken and written mistakes were most often used in teaching Estonian language and/or literature (occasionally or often in nine cases out of ten, but in only about half of the cases in the sciences). Language and literature classes were also dominated by work with texts and discussion-oriented techniques such as discussion in the classroom (10% more when compared to the sciences). Also, the teachers of history and social studies mentioned the use of discussion-oriented techniques (e.g. discussion in pairs or groups in nine cases out of ten, compared to two-thirds in the sciences) somewhat more often than others.⁸⁰

Of teaching materials, textbooks, methodological materials, special dictionaries and worksheets were most frequently used (nearly or more than 90% of teachers had used them in teaching in Estonian). Slightly less common were movies, educational videos, visual learning materials, workbooks, computer programs and collections of materials, the usability of which depends on the particular subject.⁸¹

Students, when compared to teachers, rated traditional learning activities such as taking notes during a lecture as being used more often and interactive, innovative and language-centred methods as being used less often.⁸²

Teachers’ focus groups (2008) suggest that there were different understandings of teaching in a second language – for example, there were doubts about whether the combination of Estonian and

⁸⁰ Masso and Kello 2010: 19.

⁸¹ Masso and Kello 2010: 20, 70-71.

⁸² Masso and Kello 2010: 49-50, 70-71.

Russian in an Estonian-language class (integrated subject and language teaching) is justified, necessary or even tolerable.⁸³

Teachers’ collegial support groups (2009–2011) confirmed the different methodological and paradigmatic starting points of teachers – the diversity of existing methodological repertoires and pedagogical imagination when starting teaching in a second language (the command of active learning techniques and the knowledge of language immersion methods *versus* a teacher-centred and purely frontal teaching method)⁸⁴ (cf. above).

In focus groups (2008), the participants pointed to the following methodological problems and issues, referring to teachers’ information needs⁸⁵:

- *how to motivate /persuade students who doubt the need for Estonian-medium instruction*
- *how to prevent or resolve conflicts with students with regard to the forced nature of Estonian-medium instruction*
- *how to react if students do not accept the decision of a teacher who used to teach in Russian to start teaching in Estonian*
- *how to react when students turn their attention to the teacher’s language skills; how to deal with a feeling of uncertainty about one’s own language skills*
- *how to allocate responsibility for the subject and the language (double responsibility of teachers)*
- *how to determine the balance between languages (whether or not to use Russian in the classroom)*
- *how to overcome the distance created between the teacher and the student as a result of using a foreign language (e.g. it is difficult to get to the soul of students or tell jokes in another language)*
- *how to explain important differences in terminology to students and/or familiarise them with Estonian terminology, if it differs significantly (also by differences in meaning) from the already familiar Russian terminology*
- *how to involve students with less confidence or poorer knowledge of Estonian (an observation that in classes where the language of instruction is other than the mother tongue of the learner, students’ participation is affected by the knowledge of the language rather than the knowledge of the subject)*
- *how to prevent students from becoming distracted as a result of difficulty in understanding*
- *how to react if students get tired as a result of too much focusing on understanding the language*
- *how to keep students from getting bored when some students need more time to express themselves*
- *how to avoid the replacement of subject learning with language learning*
- *how to reduce the additional burden placed on students in relation to the continuous need for translation*
- *how to teach according to syllabi which take into account only the time needed for communicating “pure information”*
- *how to manage within the limits of a 45-minute class*
- *how to assess the learning outcomes of a student in case it is obvious or possible that their performance is affected by their language skills*

⁸³ Kello 2009: 36-37.

⁸⁴ Ugur and Raudvassar 2011.

⁸⁵ Kello 2009: 31-32.

- *what considerations should be taken into account when recommending students to choose either Estonian- or Russian-medium national examination*⁸⁶
- *the issue that the suitability of different subjects for teaching in Estonian is different*
- *the issue that the language and style of available Estonian-language textbooks is complex/illogical for even Estonians; the issue that the (additional) learning materials offered are linguistically too demanding*
- *teaching problems due to the different levels of students’ language proficiency in a situation where the individualisation of teaching is complex (large classes, broad subject coverage)*
- *teaching problems in a situation where the language proficiency of most of the students is inadequate*

3.2. Teachers’ assessments of support needs and support measures

The present summary report has discussed how the target groups assessed their language skills (section 1.3) and various measures which could support students in language acquisition (section 2.2). We also asked the participants to assess a number of measures at school, community and national level, based on how those measures could support the transition/Estonian-medium instruction. Furthermore, we asked open-ended questions about support needs. In answering the *open-ended questions about support needs*, the *school leaders*, as expected, referred to the lack of personnel (e.g. three-quarters of the respondents surveyed in 2008), whereas *teachers* referred to customised teaching aids and methodological materials and training courses. Also, other needs and obstacles that were mentioned spontaneously in answering the questions probably do not come as a surprise for someone who is familiar with the issue of transition.⁸⁷ For example, the survey carried out among *teachers* (the answers of 466 teachers in spring 2009 to the open-ended question “*What kind of support do you expect from the state regarding the transition to Estonian-medium instruction in upper secondary schools?*”) confirmed the inconsistency of the schools’ financial and technical resources and, thus, also the needs of teachers. On the one hand, for example, the respondents pointed out that “... [*at the moment*] *we cannot view presentations or print out materials*” or “*we could use some repairs in the classroom, decent furniture, the opportunity to use technology*”; on the other hand, the so-called perfect conditions were described: “*a spacious class, media projector, a SMART board, sound equipment (speakers to listen to music), portraits of composers, illustrative diagrams, special dictionaries, technology*”.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ Students of Russian-medium schools could choose the language of examination.

⁸⁷ See Masso and Kello 2010 Annex 4; Jakobson 2009: 15-17; Kello 2009: 25-28, 32-36, 37-42, 52-53, 54-59.

⁸⁸ For needs regarding the financial and technical resources of schools, see Masso and Kello 2010 Annex 4, p. 114-115. Cf. Ugur and Raudvassar 2011.

In assessing the importance of various factors in ensuring the effectiveness of Estonian-medium instruction in upper secondary schools, the vast majority of teachers considered most of the factors to be *rather* or *very* important (agreement of more than 90%)⁸⁹ – the only exception was “the availability of private teachers for students outside school hours” with 41% (recognising the importance of a private teacher can be seen as an expression of general scepticism towards Estonian-medium instruction, and not necessarily as an assessment of a particular measure).⁹⁰ In case of this set of statements, the differences in assessments “very important” were more interesting than those in the assessments “rather important” – many things were considered as important, but some of them were seen as more important than others (see Table 3). Factors that were considered to be *very* important by the greatest proportion of teachers included the teachers’ proficiency in Estonian (84%). This was followed by investments in teaching materials, students’ interest in the Estonian language acquisition, and investments in training (77—74%), interaction between students and teachers (68%), management’s understanding and support for teachers (65%), students’ abilities and knowledge of Estonian (60 and 59%), management’s positive attitude towards the transition, and parental interest and support (58 and 57%). Factors that were also considered to be *very* important by half of the teachers (51 or 50%) included the diversity and suitability of learning methods, cooperation between teachers, and teachers’ belief in the necessity and successful implementation of Estonian-medium instruction; nearly half of them (48%) also considered the students’ interest in the subject to be very important. Less than half of the respondents considered “agreement on the necessity of Estonian-medium instruction” in the country (44%) and school (43%) to be very important. “The availability of an assistant teacher, extra tuition in school” was considered to be very important by 38% of teachers, whereas “the availability of a private teacher outside school hours” was considered to be very important by as much as 10% of teachers.

⁸⁹ In the order presented in the questionnaire: *The abilities of students (language, etc.); the diversity of the teaching and learning methods; the suitability of the teaching and learning methods; the level of students’ proficiency in Estonian; the level of teachers’ proficiency in Estonian; Teacher-student relationship; cooperation between teachers; parental interest and support; a positive attitude of the school management towards the transition; management’s understanding and support for teachers; teachers’ belief in the necessity and successful implementation of Estonian-medium instruction; public investments in the in-service training of teachers; public investments in teaching materials; students’ motivation to learn Estonian; students’ interest in a particular subject; agreement on the necessity of Estonian-medium instruction in school; agreement on the necessity of Estonian-medium instruction in the country; the availability of an assistant teacher, extra tuition in school; the availability of private teachers for students outside school hours.*

⁹⁰ For the figure presenting the assessments “rather important” and “important” together, see Masso and Kello 2010 p. 31 Figure 11; for associations with background variables, see *ibid.* p. 32-33.

Table 3: The assessments of teachers regarding the importance of various factors in ensuring the effectiveness of Estonian-medium instruction (%)

% „very important“		% „very important“ + „rather important“	
Teachers’ proficiency in Estonian	84	98	Teachers’ proficiency in Estonian
Public investments in teaching materials	77	97	Teacher-student relationship
Students’ motivation to learn Estonian	75	97	Public investments in teaching materials
Public investments in the in-service training of teachers	74	97	Students’ motivation to learn Estonian
Teacher-student relationship	68	95	Abilities of students
School management’s understanding and support for teachers	65	95	Students’ proficiency in Estonian
Abilities of students	60	95	Public investments in the in-service training of teachers
Students’ proficiency in Estonian	59	94	Cooperation between teachers
Positive attitude of the school management	58	93	School management’s understanding and support for teachers
Parental support	57	92	Students’ interest in a particular subject
Diversity of the teaching methods	51	91	Diversity of the teaching methods
Cooperation between teachers	51	91	Suitability of the learning methods
Suitability of the learning methods	50	91	Parental support
Teachers’ belief	50	90	Positive attitude of the school management
Students’ interest in a particular subject	48	85	Agreement in school
Agreement in the country	44	81	Teachers’ belief
Agreement in school	43	79	Agreement in the country
Availability of assistant teacher, extra tuition	38	78	Availability of assistant teacher, extra tuition
Private teachers	10	41	Private teachers

In a separate set of statements, the teachers were asked to assess the importance of different internal, external and subject-specific measures in terms of delivering Estonian-medium instruction.⁹¹ Of proposed measures⁹², the most valuable ones were cooperation with other subject or language teachers and cooperation with other upper secondary schools for a more rational exploitation of resources. Specific classroom activities such as doing homework in Estonian, using Estonian and Russian in the classroom, Estonian-language teaching materials, and virtual learning in Estonian

⁹¹ Please assess the following measures and ways of working – how important are they in delivering Estonian-medium instruction?

⁹² In the order presented in the questionnaire: Using Estonian and Russian to the same extent in the same class; using only Estonian in the class; using Estonian-language teaching materials (including videos), but Russian-medium instruction; doing homework, research projects and other out-of-school activities in Estonian; virtual learning in Estonian, e.g. e-Learning courses; cooperation with other upper secondary schools for a more rational exploitation of resources; cooperation with other subject teachers who teach in Estonian; cooperation with the teachers of Estonian language; the opportunity of the students of Russian-medium upper secondary schools to learn some of the subjects in Estonian-medium upper secondary schools; regular student exchanges with Estonian-medium upper secondary schools; the merging of Estonian- and Russian-medium upper secondary schools, by retaining some of the courses in Russian; a complete merging of Estonian- and Russian-medium upper secondary schools.

were also considered to be relatively important (cf. above 3.1). Again (cf. above 2.2), the least support was expressed for more radical changes, such as the complete merging of Estonian- and Russian-medium upper secondary schools.⁹³ The importance of cooperation was also stressed in focus groups.⁹⁴

In spring 2008, three-quarters of the school leaders, in answering the open-ended questions about resource needs, referred to the lack of personnel (33). Next, they too mentioned teaching materials (18), methodologies / teacher’s aids (14) and finances (3). The motivation of society (2), teacher training (2), curricula (2), additional lessons (1) and information technologies (1) were also mentioned.⁹⁵

In answering the question of whether something interferes with or impedes their job as organisers of the transition to Estonian-medium instruction, the shortage of teachers in particular was mentioned (24 responses). Some school leaders mentioned also the lack of textbooks and other teaching materials (5), the lack of methodologies and methodological materials (4), the lack of teacher training (2) and unstable funding (3). The lack of motivation of students (4) or teachers (3) and the insufficient knowledge of Estonian among students (3) were also mentioned. One respondent referred to the uncertainty about education policy, one to the uncertainty about curriculum and the transition, and one to the uncertainty about the future of the school.⁹⁶

⁹³ See Masso and Kello 2010: 33-34. School leaders (2008), when assessing different measures based on how important those were in supporting the transition to Estonian-medium instruction, also tended to agree rather with measures which included preservation of the existing schools. Almost unanimously (43) they agreed with Estonian-language homework, research projects and other out-of-school activities as a measure supporting the transition. Many also agreed with the usefulness of the following measures: *cooperation among upper secondary schools for a more rational exploitation of resources; regular student exchanges with Estonian-medium upper secondary schools; using Estonian-language teaching materials (including videos), but Russian-medium instruction; the opportunity of the students of Russian-medium upper secondary schools to learn some of the subjects in Estonian-medium upper secondary schools; virtual learning in Estonian, e.g. e-Learning courses*. On the other hand, for most respondents (27 and 33) the merging of Estonian- and Russian-medium schools was not acceptable. At the same time, the option of *merging Estonian- and Russian-medium upper secondary schools, by retaining some of the courses in Russian* was, nevertheless, acceptable to ten school leaders in Tallinn and six school leaders in Northeast Estonia – even though only one school leader of an upper secondary school in Narva agreed with the feasibility of the measure. (In addition to the usefulness of the measures, the respondents were asked to assess the feasibility of the same measures.) Ten school leaders accepted the merging of Estonian- and Russian-medium upper secondary schools as a measure supporting the transition. Seven of these respondents came from smaller towns that were dominated by Estonian-speaking populations and only three of them were from Tallinn, which means that the regional factor plays an important role here. Measures that were related to cooperation with other schools were considered to be most feasible: *Close cooperation with Estonian-medium upper secondary schools at staff level (e.g. teacher exchanges)* (41); *regular student exchanges with Estonian-medium upper secondary schools* (39); *cooperation with Russian-medium upper secondary schools for a more rational exploitation of resources* (37); *the opportunity of the students of Russian-medium upper secondary schools to learn some of the subjects in Estonian-medium upper secondary schools* (32). For details, see Jakobson 2009: 20-22

⁹⁴ Kello 2009: 40-42.

⁹⁵ Jakobson 2009: 16-17.

⁹⁶ Jakobson 2009: 15-16.

In the focus groups, the school leaders expected more partnership from the authorities and referred to the state’s omissions with regard to the communication directed at parents.⁹⁷

Here are more detailed overviews of some of the areas of support needs.

3.2.1. Teaching and learning materials

In answering the open-ended question “*What kind of support do you expect from the state regarding the transition to Estonian-medium instruction in upper secondary schools?*” (2009), 141 or 30% (the largest proportion) of teachers mentioned something related to *teaching aids and/or methodological materials*. Moreover, several complained that today, teachers are faced with too many responsibilities (customising the existing materials, finding additional materials from different places). Above all, teachers emphasised the need for *customised* materials for students who learn in a language other than their mother tongue. In addition to customisation, teachers often pointed to the *quality and diversity* of teaching aids and methodological materials, that is, to materials that would not only cover the syllabus, but could be chosen by teachers according to the situation, the substantive and linguistic needs of particular students, etc. The need to choose between different materials is probably related to the different levels of students’ language proficiency by regions, classes, but also within the same class. Teachers who participated in support and focus groups also complained that preparation for Estonian-language classes takes a lot of their off-time; many teachers felt exhausted.⁹⁸

In other words, many teachers were not willing to, by themselves, develop or customise (to the extent that was needed) teaching materials that were designed for students whose mother tongue was Estonian, or did not consider the relevant expectation to be justified.⁹⁹ Special support in the form of teaching aids and methodological materials is probably needed by those teachers who teach or are planning to teach in Estonian a subject which is not their specialty. At the same time, the criticism expressed in focus groups with regard to the existing support materials and customised teaching aids illustrates the difficulty of developing teaching aids which would be equally suitable for all the students who switch to another language of instruction due to the different levels of language

⁹⁷ Kello 2009: 55-56.

⁹⁸ For needs relating to teaching and support materials and methodological preparation, see Masso and Kello 2010 Annex 4, p. 111-112, 113-114; Kello 2009: 33; cf. Ugur and Raudvassar 2011. A significant number – about a fifth – of respondents who answered this question also pointed to the need to improve the language skills of teachers, for example, through appropriate training (Masso and Kello 2010: 114).

⁹⁹ Expectations regarding developed materials, syllabi, etc., are not a specific characteristic of the teachers of Russian-medium schools, however, when changing the language of instruction, the need to take on an additional responsibility becomes a much more significant issue for teachers. Those who participated in focus groups also expressed the feeling that the state is the one that wants to introduce Estonian-medium instruction and, therefore, state should also be the one that creates the necessary conditions.

proficiency of students (materials which are too primitive for some students may be too complex for others).¹⁰⁰ The above-mentioned proposal to reduce the workload of teachers who teach students whose mother tongue is Russian in Estonian may, therefore, be worthy of attention. Also, the dissemination of linguistic adaptation techniques in addition to ready-made additional materials may be justified.

In focus groups (2008), teachers criticised the existing support materials and teaching aids for their incomprehensible compilation principles, dissatisfactory level for the student, insufficient attention to the content of the syllabus, poor quality of translation, incorrect terminology, unnecessary complexity either linguistically or in terms of the content or, vice versa, excessive primitiveness.¹⁰¹

In the survey of 2009, teachers were most satisfied with worksheets (55%), special dictionaries (53%) and visual learning materials (52%) – however, all three received criticism from approximately a third of the respondents. Although collections of materials (a more subject-specific type of materials) had been used less by teachers (26% had not used), almost half of the teachers were satisfied with these as well. There was almost an equal proportion of those who were satisfied with textbooks and methodological materials (46% with each), but there were just as many dissatisfied respondents. These two types of materials were most often used by the teachers.¹⁰² Teachers of history and social studies were most often dissatisfied with textbooks (four-fifths, compare with half of the teachers of Estonian language and literature, sciences, and natural sciences). Also, the teachers of history and social studies were most often dissatisfied with visual learning materials, such as maps and diagrams (two-fifths, compare with one-third of the teachers of Estonian language and literature and one-fifth of the teachers of sciences and natural sciences). Teachers of sciences and natural sciences expressed greater dissatisfaction with workbooks (10% more when compared to others).¹⁰³

The most frequently used sources from which teachers who taught in Estonian had received information on the teaching materials used in Estonian-language classes included trainers/teachers, the Internet and the school library (a quarter of respondents mentioned such information sources). Less information was received from other teachers (less than a fifth) or the school management (a

¹⁰⁰ Kello 2009: 33.

¹⁰¹ Kello 2009: 33.

¹⁰² Masso and Kello 2010 p. 20 Figure 2.

¹⁰³ Masso and Kello 2010: 21.

tenth). Professional associations and methodical counselling centres as the sources of teaching aids for Estonian-medium instruction (less than a tenth) seem to be relatively unexplored.¹⁰⁴

3.2.2. In-service training

The participation of teachers surveyed (those who taught or were planning to teach in Estonian, as well as other teachers) in various types of in-service training and their assessments of their need for certain types of training courses in the future is illustrated by Figure 2.

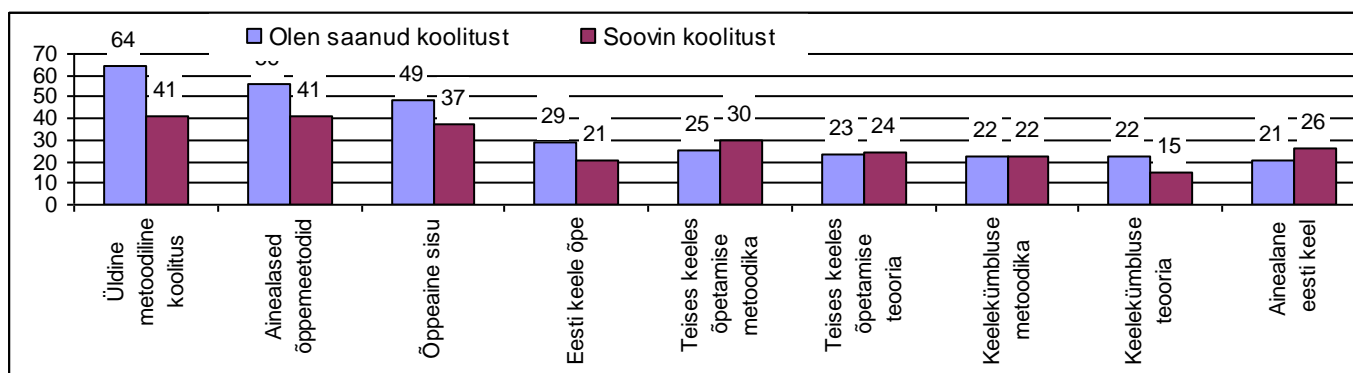


Figure 2: Received and desired training (2009, %, n=683)

From left to right (blue – I have received training; lilac/purple – I would like to receive training):

1. General methodological training (e.g. methods of active learning)
2. Subject-related teaching methods (subject didactics) – 3. Subject content (some kind of topic or problem related to the subject)
4. Teaching of Estonian language (general)
5. Methodology of teaching in a second language (content and language integrated learning) – 6. Theory of teaching in a second language (content and language integrated learning)
7. Language immersion methodology – 8. Language immersion theory
9. Subject-related Estonian language

Often, the teachers wished to participate in training courses similar (of similar type) to those they had already experienced. Associations with the location of the school demonstrate that while for teachers living outside of Tallinn and Northeast Estonia, i.e. in mainly Estonian-language environment, there was no difference between those who wanted to receive and had received training in teaching in a second language and those who did not want to receive and had not received the training, the proportion of people who had received or were interested in receiving such training was significantly larger (by 13%) in Tallinn and slightly smaller in Northeast Estonia (by 7%). 46% of teachers who already taught in Estonian and 22% of teachers who planned to teach in Estonian in the future had

¹⁰⁴ Masso and Kello 2010 p. 21 Figure 3.

received training in teaching in Estonian. The majority of those who had no intention of teaching in Estonian in the future had not received training in teaching in Estonian. Nevertheless, about one-fifth of them expressed interest in such training. Interest in and experience of such training was more common among women, people under the age of 39 and teachers of humanities, and less common (by one-tenth) among science teachers. Variation among the teachers in terms of participation in subject-related in-service training was associated only with age: teachers who were less than 39 years old had participated in in-service training more frequently than their older colleagues.¹⁰⁵ The greatest dissatisfaction with training opportunities was expressed by mathematics and science teachers and teachers of history and social studies.¹⁰⁶

In focus groups (2008), teachers pointed to several training deficiencies: training is strenuous and time-consuming, occurs at the expense of teachers’ spare time; not enough information on the content of the training is provided beforehand (advertisements do not provide sufficient information); the usefulness of information received from the training is doubtful; training does not address the issue of teaching a particular subject in a second language, but focuses on the content or methods of the subject in general; the approach is too theoretical/general; trainers may be professionally competent, but are “remote”; trainers seem to be unprepared; participants do not receive feedback. In other words, the teachers expected an in-service training to be purposively planned and concentrated, and to offer useful and new information. The teachers also wanted to receive adequate advance information on the content and objectives of the training. They pointed out that a possibility to practice the theoretical part would be beneficial. Importance was attached to consideration of participants’ prior knowledge, awareness of the needs of teachers and schools, and feedback on the participant’s (home)work done during the training.¹⁰⁷

Therefore, it could be useful to provide support that is as individualised as possible and fully adjustable to fit the needs of a particular teacher (personal mentor, a support group). Flexibility is important in view of the specificity of the support needs of teachers who start using another language of instruction: the complexity of the paradigm shift in teaching¹⁰⁸ and the need for emotional support¹⁰⁹, differences in the technical supply of different schools, diversity of the prior professional

¹⁰⁵ See Masso and Kello 2010: 23-25.

¹⁰⁶ Masso and Kello 2010: 26-27.

¹⁰⁷ Kello 2009: 33.

¹⁰⁸ See e.g. Ugur and Raudvassar 2011: 11, 17.

¹⁰⁹ Ugur and Raudvassar 2011: 18.

training (in terms of both knowledge/skills and professional identity) and of the motivations and fears of the teacher (for details, see also Ugur and Raudvassar 2011).

3.2.3. Collegial cooperation and exchange of experience

In answering the open-ended question “*What kind of support do you expect from the state regarding the transition to Estonian-medium instruction in upper secondary schools?*” (2009), thirteen teachers pointed to the necessity of *exchanging experiences* and mentioned also material support in organising inter-school events, partnership with Estonian colleagues or, more specifically, the opportunity to receive further training or education in Estonian-medium schools. They also emphasised the importance of exchanging experiences with teachers of the same subject, organising meetings or visits to classes, and creating a forum, on which the network of teachers teaching in Estonian could be based.¹¹⁰

The answers to the question *how often have you cooperated with other teachers in preparing for the classes* (a question for teachers already teaching in Estonian in the context of question sections on Estonian-medium teaching) showed that both on a daily basis (24%) and occasionally (66%), the cooperation most often occurred with the Estonian language teacher of the same school. Teachers of Estonian were followed by the teachers of the same subject of both the same school (21% and 58%, respectively) and other schools (7% and 62%, respectively). 6% of teachers cooperated on a daily basis and 70% of teachers cooperated occasionally with the teachers of other subjects of the same school; 3% and 45%, respectively, cooperated with the Estonian language teacher of another school and 3% and 25% with the teachers of other subjects of another school.¹¹¹

The previous set of statements was followed by a question *how satisfied are you with the amount of cooperation with other teachers when preparing for the classes*. 18% of the teachers were completely satisfied, whereas 3% were completely dissatisfied. 56% of teachers were rather or completely satisfied (ratings 4 and 5 on a 5-point scale) and 11% of teachers were rather or completely dissatisfied (ratings 1 and 2). Among those who expressed dissatisfaction were the everyday users of both internal and external (same school and another school) contacts – therefore, it can be said that despite of the existence of a certain cooperation network, people actually expected more support from it.¹¹²

¹¹⁰ Masso and Kello 2010 Annex 4.

¹¹¹ For cooperation, see Masso and Kello 2010: 22-23.

¹¹² Masso and Kello 2010: 22.

The teachers’ questionnaire included altogether four general questions about satisfaction. Three of them were for teachers teaching in Estonian and one for all teachers: (1) the already mentioned satisfaction with the scope of cooperation with other teachers in preparing for the classes, (2) satisfaction with themselves as teachers teaching in Estonian, (3) satisfaction with the way students had so far coped with learning the subject taught by the respondent in Estonian, and (4) – as the question for all teachers – satisfaction with the training opportunities offered by the state to teachers in relation to the transition to Estonian-medium instruction in upper secondary schools. The harshest criticism was directed at the training opportunities offered by the state (the mean value of the score on a 5-point scale was 2.7). In this comparison, satisfaction with the scope of cooperation with other teachers was relatively high (3.9). The respondents were more critical of themselves as teachers (3.5) than of the coping of their students (3.9). Also, associations appeared: the greater the scope of cooperation with other teachers and the higher the satisfaction with the training opportunities offered by the state (but not with the performance of students), the higher the satisfaction with themselves as teachers.

3.2.4. Other support needs

In addition to the previously mentioned support needs, in answering the open-ended question “*What kind of support do you expect from the state regarding the transition to Estonian-medium instruction in upper secondary schools?*”, support for the supply of teaching resources for optional subjects was also mentioned. Several respondents also mentioned the reduction of the workload of teachers (by maintaining the remuneration) in preparing for teaching in Estonian (during linguistic, subject-related or methodological training), as well as justification for higher remuneration and the need for teaching in smaller groups.¹¹³ Due to how the question was formulated, the answers mainly focused on how the state could help the school and/or teachers directly – through direct and practical financial aid, training or educational materials. The answers were less focused on supporting Estonian-medium instruction indirectly through supporting the students’ knowledge in Estonian. However, several respondents pointed to the need to support the transition through making *Estonian language learning* in the main language *more efficient*; one teacher mentioned the need for a preparatory upper secondary school in some classes¹¹⁴ and one teacher pointed to the low remuneration level of a

¹¹³ For needs regarding the financial and technical resources of schools, see Masso and Kello 2010 Annex 4, p. 114-115.

¹¹⁴ See Masso and Kello 2010 Annex 4, p. 118.

school psychologist, which is not consistent with their importance during the transition to Estonian-medium instruction.¹¹⁵

3.3. Students’ experiences

In spring 2009, we asked 11th graders to describe how optimistic or worried they had been about Estonian-medium instruction before they had experienced it and to what extent had their expectations or fears proved true. In answering the questions, the students assessed their expectations as having been fairly realistic – two-fifths of them indicated that the anticipated problems proved to be a reality, whereas a quarter of students had neither expected any problems nor perceived them in reality. At the same time, one-fifth of respondents had experienced problems which they had not expected, and in only one-tenth of the cases, reality was perceived as more positive than the previous expectations.¹¹⁶

Greatest satisfaction with one’s own coping with Estonian-medium learning was expressed by students who had experienced intensive learning or language immersion programs in basic school (nearly 2/3 of students in intensive learning or language immersion classes were satisfied, compared to only one-third of students in other classes)¹¹⁷, as well as by students from outside of Tallinn and Northeast Estonia (60% of them were satisfied, while in Tallinn and Northeast Estonia, satisfaction was expressed by 40% of students). Also, greater satisfaction was expressed by students with higher academic performance (nearly half of the students who mostly received high grades and about a third in other cases) and Estonian citizenship (half of the students were rather or completely satisfied, compared to one-third of Russian citizens).¹¹⁸

A separate set of questions explored specific problems that may occur in relation to learning in a second language. 16 statements provided to students for assessment have been ranked according to their level of agreement in Table 4.

¹¹⁵ In answering the question “How important are the following factors for the Estonian-medium instruction in upper secondary schools to be effective?” (additional response options under “other”), the respondents mentioned *consultations for student groups who are unable to acquire the language and support students from Estonian-medium schools* as the ways of supporting students (in addition to a strong or bilingual family, language environment, students’ wishes, etc.).

¹¹⁶ Masso and Kello 2010: p. 53 Figure 7. Statements *I was optimistic and did not expect any significant problems; I was optimistic, but in reality unexpected difficulties occurred; Problems which I expected proved true; Problems which I expected did not occur in reality; Hard to say, I did not expect anything in particular.*

¹¹⁷ It is possible that Estonian-medium instruction was started in the distant past – five or six years ago – and students simply did not remember their worries at the time.

¹¹⁸ Masso and Kello 2010: p. 54 Table 2.

Table 4: Problems experienced by students in relation to Estonian-medium instruction (2009, % “sometimes, occasionally” + “quite often”)

<i>Learning a subject in Estonian was/is generally more difficult than it would have been in Russian</i>	85
<i>Transition to Estonian-medium instruction should have been more gradual</i>	82
<i>Learning a subject in Estonian was more time-consuming than it would have been in Russian</i>	81
<i>My grades were worse than they would have been if I had studied the same subject in Russian</i>	65
<i>Using Estonian in the class was tiring (e.g. reading, listening, writing, speaking)</i>	64
<i>When doing tests I felt that the language was a great obstacle</i>	62
<i>I cannot participate as actively (e.g., I try to speak less) as I could have participated, if the class was in Russian</i>	61
<i>Because the instruction was in Estonian, I started to have an aversion to the subject</i>	60
<i>It is difficult to understand the content of the class (too much information passes by)</i>	54
<i>It was difficult to switch to another language when going from one class to another</i>	53
<i>The teacher determined the speed of the lesson, based on the better students' knowledge of Estonian</i>	49
<i>The teacher paid too much attention to the correctness of my Estonian</i>	43
<i>I and the teacher, we don't understand each other</i>	33
<i>I felt that the teacher was too strict in using Estonian (did not use enough of Russian as additional aid)</i>	29
<i>The teacher's knowledge of Russian was/is inadequate</i>	25
<i>The teacher's knowledge of Estonian was/is inadequate</i>	23

The table demonstrates that many students had experienced problems in Estonian-medium instruction. Difficulties were mentioned regarding studying the subject content, time spent on studying, grades, as well as the general tiresomeness of the class. Also, students largely agreed with the statement that transition to Estonian-medium instruction should have been more gradual. Half to two-thirds of the students recognised also specific linguistic problems such as difficulty in actively participating in learning activities and difficulty in understanding the content of the subject. Teachers' excessive attention paid to the correctness of Estonian and strictness in using Estonian, or inadequate knowledge of Russian or Estonian, were considered to be problematic less often. While weaker students were more often critical about Estonian-medium instruction, the present set of statements shows that according to half the students, the teacher determined the pace of the lesson based on better students' language proficiency.

Correlation analyses show that three problem areas which are distinctive as a result of correlations between them – those related to Estonian language and subject learning, learning outcomes and organisation, and the competence of the teacher – are statistically significantly differentiated by background variables connected to both the individual and the school. Criticism that concerned teachers was rather associated with individual characteristics, i.e. male respondents and students with lower academic performance were more critical about the work of teachers. Also, male respondents agreed more often with problems related to learning outcomes and organisation, as well as Estonian language and subject learning. (Such differences can only partially be explained by the somewhat lower academic performance of the male students.) Assessments of the problems related to

Estonian language and subject learning vary also by another socio-demographic variable, citizenship: due to the more modest knowledge of Estonian, stateless people and people with Russian citizenship agreed with the existence of various problems more often.

Another group of variables that differentiated the perceptions of problems is related to the factors connected to the school. The orientation of the class was one of the influencing factors here: problems were more often perceived by students who had studied in a regular class (or studied up to three subjects in Estonian) in the basic school, i.e. whose previous experience of Estonian-medium instruction was more modest. As the proportion of such classes in Russian-medium schools was significantly smaller outside of Tallinn and Northeast Estonia (i.e. since in Tartu the proportion of pupils who had studied in Estonian four or more subjects was larger), students living there agreed with the existence of problems less often. By contrast, in Tallinn and Northeast Estonia, the proportion of those who had encountered problems was almost equal to the proportion of those who had not.¹¹⁹

In focus groups (2008), students also pointed most often to different problems of understanding and difficulties in expressing themselves and, thus, to the worsening of grades. The students in Narva also highlighted the fact that “only those students are involved in the learning process who understand what they are being taught, whereas students whose language skills are poorer are left aside or leave completely”. Students often associated the difficulties in understanding with the teacher’s strictness in using Estonian, and found that learning would be much easier if the teacher explained things, if necessary, also in Russian and allowed students to express themselves in Russian as well. In addition, the students pointed out that “learning in Estonian was not necessarily more difficult than learning in Russian, if it was accompanied by a simplification of the subject content by the teacher”.¹²⁰

In the questionnaire of 2009, we also asked the students to assess the effects of learning in Estonian based on their own personal experiences. 17 statements provided to students for assessment have been ranked according to their level of agreement in Table 5.

¹¹⁹ Masso and Kello 2010: 52-56.

¹²⁰ Kello 2009: 47-49.

Table 5: The effects of learning in Estonian based on students’ personal experiences (2009, % “rather that” + “definitely that”)

<i>The ability to understand Estonian increased</i>	60
<i>Vocabulary of Estonian expanded</i>	59
<i>Writing skills in Estonian improved</i>	49
<i>Knowledge of Estonian, gained earlier, solidified</i>	44
<i>My ability to interact improved, I started to speak Estonian more confidently</i>	41
<i>Interest in Estonian culture decreased</i>	37
<i>Confidence to use Estonian in studies increased</i>	35
<i>Interest in the subject decreased</i>	35
<i>Confidence to use Estonian outside of school increased</i>	33
<i>My grades in the subject “Estonian language” got better</i>	29
<i>Interest in the Estonian language decreased</i>	29
<i>Interest in the Estonian language increased</i>	18
<i>Learning process became more interesting and variegated</i>	17
<i>Interest in the subject increased</i>	15
<i>Confidence to use Estonian outside of school decreased</i>	14
<i>Interest in Estonian culture increased</i>	12
<i>Confidence to use Estonian in studies decreased</i>	11

The table shows that, in particular, students agreed with the positive language-related consequences of learning in Estonian (comprehension, vocabulary, written and spoken language, etc.). However, the sixth place belongs to the statement “my interest in Estonian culture decreased”, agreed by as many as one-third of students. Almost the same proportion of students agreed with decreased interest in both the subject as well as the Estonian language.¹²¹

Association analyses show that assessments regarding the effectiveness of Estonian-medium instruction are mostly differentiated by factors connected to school. The impact of Estonian-medium instruction on the knowledge of Estonian was assessed more positively by students in other regions of Estonia, and regarded as slightly less important by students in Northeast Estonia and Tallinn. In the latter two cases, however, the differences in percentages are not very great. The orientation of the class in basic school was statistically slightly more important: students who had learned four and more subjects in Estonian in basic school agreed with the positive consequences more often (eight out of ten students, compared to the frequency of ½ of others). Another statistically significant variable, which was associated with the students’ assessments of the effects of Estonian-medium instruction, was the academic performance of a student. The association was observed for negative linguistic-cultural consequences (interest in the language and culture and the confidence to use Estonian), significantly more often agreed by students who received low grades (mostly 2-s and 3-s).

¹²¹ These three variables – *decreased interest in the Estonian language, decreased interest in the Estonian culture, decreased interest in the subject* – are statistically significantly correlated ($r \sim .7$), i.e. students who agreed to one statement agreed in almost half of the cases with the second statement as well. Therefore, a group of young people who are quite pessimistic about Estonian-medium instruction clearly stands out from the sample.

On the other hand, the level of agreement with statements regarding the positive impact of Estonian-medium instruction on the knowledge of Estonian and the motivation to learn Estonian did not differentiate students with different levels of academic performance.¹²²

¹²² Masso and Kello 2010: p. 59 Table 5.

CONCLUSION

The present summary report provided an overview of most of the surveys carried out in 2008–2011 within the project “Russian Child in Estonian General Education School”. In particular, the summary report was designed to provide an overview of empirical studies conducted.

As a result of the studies carried out within the project, it can be said that the students and teachers of Russian-medium upper secondary schools in Estonia favoured maintaining the present situation more often than changing it, that is, abolishing Russian-medium upper secondary schools or introducing mainly Estonian-medium instruction. Such results or, in other words, support for maintaining the status quo is also consistent with other studies (e.g. Golubeva et al. 2009).

The modest support for transition to Estonian-medium instruction could have several reasons. For example, for many students one of the reasons is linguistic orientation (towards English rather than towards Estonian) and future plans (emigration as a very real possibility). Similarly, the opinions of many teachers and school leaders were characterised by uncertainty, hesitation or simply ‘reform fatigue’. Nevertheless, such tendencies were not common for all teachers. There was a group of teachers who were better integrated and more willing to start teaching in Estonian (according to the cluster analysis of the results from 2009, around a quarter of the respondents belonged to this group): teachers characterised by a relatively high degree of satisfaction with the current scope of usage of the Estonian language in subject instruction. Although this group did not differ from others regarding their personal experience in using the Estonian language in the teaching process, it was characterised by a supportive network of Estonian language teachers when preparing the lessons. Additionally, on the positive side, the cluster analysis of the results of the survey showed that about a fifth of the respondents belonged to a group of teachers who had positive scores for factors related to students and the teaching process, teachers’ professional development and their everyday work and working conditions, and could be described by satisfaction with professional development opportunities. Also, this group was more often than average satisfied with the extent of Estonian-medium instruction, and was quite convinced that Estonian-medium instruction was well reasoned in their own subject fields (history and language subjects more often than average). On the other hand, satisfaction with the scope of cooperation with other teachers was lower than average and the positive individual and social consequences of Estonian-medium instruction were also seen more seldom.

Despite these examples, the results of the analysis showed, however, that most of the teachers considered the changes in the education system to be too fast and rather saddening, and were pessimistic about the transition to Estonian-medium instruction. Among students – who were a bit more optimistic than teachers, but still rather hesitant – the attitudes towards Estonian-medium instruction depended not only on the place of residence, but also on the school where they studied. In other words, while the level of language proficiency was associated with individual factors, the attitudes (which, in turn, may facilitate or hinder language or subject learning) depended largely on the school environment and the attitudes prevailing there.

With regard to the education reform carried out in Estonia, some parallels can be drawn with Latvia where the proportion of the Russian-speaking population is somewhat larger, but where a similar reform was carried out already a few years ago. The results from studies conducted in Latvia (Djačkova 2011) give reasons for believing that the attitudes will become more positive in the course of the process. For example, the attitudes towards the education reform in Estonia are somewhat comparable to the relevant attitudes at the beginning of the reforms in Latvia (about one-fifth or one-sixth of students support it). Similarly to the Latvian experience, attitudes may become more positive in the course of the reform. Surveys have shown a correlation between the personal experience of learning in Estonian in basic school and the positive attitudes towards the change (Vaiss 2009). Thus, the fear of change may diminish gradually with growing experience. However, it must be noted that the experience in one country will not be identical to that of another. For example, the socio-economic differentiation along ethno-linguistic lines is stronger in Estonia.

This study supports the conclusion that the transition to second-language education should be implemented calmly and gradually, according to the possibilities of schools, and prescribing the speed and nature of transition to second language acquisition in the same manner in different socio-linguistic regions should be avoided. Also, in implementing the change in schools, Estonian-medium instruction at the basic and lower secondary level should certainly be encouraged to avoid academic decline caused by a sudden change in the language of instruction, especially in those subjects which are also studied by students in Estonian at the upper secondary level. At the same time, caution should be exercised, since a mechanical change in the language of instruction, without due interaction and mutual support between language and subject teachers, may indeed be detrimental to the students’ learning outcomes, which has been also indicated in previous studies (Mehisto 2009:47).

Improving the linguistic skills of teachers of several Russian-medium schools is one of the key factors here. At the same time, the results of the study indicate even greater variation in cultural attitudes by teachers and schools. Previous studies (Masso 2010) have also shown that instead of language study at the national level as the universal ‘key’ to integration, young people desire more opportunities for identity choices. The results of the qualitative analyses carried out within the project support the assumption that great language proficiency may not be a strict precondition for defining one’s own social cohesion (alumni survey 2010/2011). These results provide evidence supporting the need to pay attention not only to emphasising the instrumental meanings of language proficiency, but also to the symbolic and integrative meaning of the language. Thus, there is a need for training courses which would address cultural problems connected to teaching in Estonian within a particular subject: in addition to the knowledge of Estonian, a certain capability of ‘cultural translation’ is also important.

Since the transition to Estonian-medium instruction includes also the transition to an integrated subject teaching and the alteration of teaching methods due to the growing involvement of ICT in teaching, the teachers’ work can be characterised by a very high level of complexity. Both teachers and school leaders are faced with the challenges of coping with such complex changes. On the one hand, it requires sophisticated training opportunities to address the particularities of a multilingual and multicultural classroom in teaching specific subjects. On the other hand, the results of studies indicate a need for training school leaders in the field of change management (Mehisto 2009). Teachers may need not only linguistic training, but also methodological consultation and emotional support. Via their students, the teachers’ worries and ‘psychological barriers’ may easily become societal problems. Although a certain amount of stress is inevitable in cases of innovation, experiencing constant stress and ambivalent, even conflicting demands (cf. *ibid.*) can have negative effects on the teacher’s efficiency.

In addition to teaching and learning materials and theoretical knowledge acquired through training courses, teachers seem to need more individualised support which is more attentive to the particular needs of the moment. Personal mentoring and collegial support groups may offer considerable help for teachers in dealing with the transition, both emotionally and professionally (Ugur, Raudvassar 2011). Support groups, especially if they bring together teachers from Russian- and Estonian-medium schools, can also facilitate the integration of Estonian- and Russian-medium school teachers, a need that was indicated as one of the solutions by teachers themselves in the survey. Also, specific preparation is necessary for teachers whose mother tongue is Estonian and who

are willing to give lessons in Russian-medium schools. At the same time, ethnic Estonian teachers switching to former Russian-medium schools (in the context of the decreasing number of both Russian- and Estonian-medium schools) is probably not the main or the sole solution to the shortage of Estonian-speaking and competent minority school teachers. On the one hand, especially in Northeast Estonia, this solution would take more than a few years. This solution, at least in ethnically more sensitive subjects, might also be problematic for cultural reasons.

In general, national language teaching/learning does have an integrative and “democratic” potential as a function of decreasing the segregation of the education system. However, this potential could be lost when schools have to compete (in terms of who will survive in the situation of the declining number of students, and who is capable of preparing better titular-speakers). Besides clear communication between the ministry and target groups, and support in effecting Estonian-medium or bilingual education (e.g. effective cooperation between teachers, study materials, support groups, etc.), there is a need to take into consideration the inherently long duration of educational changes – the results may be seen only in the course of generational change.

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