Global and Intercultural Dimension in Curriculum Development

European and international dimensions have been addressed in the national curriculum for preschool child care institutions [1], in the national curriculum for basic schools [2] and the national curriculum for upper secondary schools [2], in vocational education curricula and also in higher education and teacher training curricula and in adult education. As regards specific subjects, social study and history have the closest relations with European studies. In 2008, the European Commission Representation in Estonia in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Research [3] issued a textbook called “The European Union for You! This is How the European Union Works” to be used in general education and vocational schools.

In January 2010, the Government of the Republic approved a new national curriculum for basic schools and national curriculum for upper secondary schools, which were implemented in 2011-2013. Compared to the previous curriculum, the focus had shifted from subject-centeredness to the development of competencies. The European dimension in the curricula cannot be analysed on the basis of an increase in cognitive awareness alone, but also through the acquisition of European basic values by means of development of competencies. The curricula highlight eight basic competencies required for developing a responsible Estonian and European citizen: value competency, social competency, self-identification competency, learning competency, communication competency, mathematics competency and competence in entrepreneurship. The general competencies of the Estonian national curricula are ideologically related to the European Union key competencies of lifelong learning. General competencies are supplemented by knowledge in subjects which also go beyond the competencies in subjects. A young person exiting Estonian general education system is expected, for example, to be able to not only list human rights and the features of democracy but also be able to recognise hate speech, react to discrimination cases and evaluate the fundamental principles of the European Union.

A possibility to study according to international curricula also promotes the international dimension of Estonian schools. The state has allocated necessary resources to ensure the implementation of IBO (International Baccalaureate Organization Diploma Programmes) and EB (European Baccalaureate) programmes. Tallinn European School was opened in autumn 2013. Presently, one can study in accordance with English, German or Finnish curricula.

The national curriculum for preschool child care institutions approved on 29 May 2008 contains a theme called Children in Other Countries, under which the children’s songs and dances of neighbouring countries are studied, children’s first names and habits and the fairy tales of other nations are introduced.

In basic school subject syllabi issues related to Europe have been treated through different sub-topics. For example, the literature and culture of European countries have been discussed on the basis of the syllabus of the Estonian language and, from Grade 7, that of the Estonian language and literature, and study materials include, in addition to Estonian literature, also information on writers of other countries.
Foreign language syllabi contain information about names, habits and manners of communication of the country where the respective language is spoken. Textbooks like the "Reader of a little European" (for primary school) and the "Reader of a young European" introduce folk and classic literature of different countries of Europe (Andersen, La Fontaine, Wilde) and also contain Estonian texts. Students are expected to understand basic human values through the literature of different countries, to learn to see similarities and to understand the position of Estonian culture in the global culture.

At stage II (grades 4-6), music instruction covers music of the peoples of the neighbouring and European countries and at stage III (grades 4-6), music and culture of the peoples of the world.

In basic school, the history syllabus contains the history of Europe. In the 20th Century course, EU issues are taught in the context of international relations. A student is expected to have obtained the chronological framework of the main steps of history, to know the main historic events, to understand the cultural contribution of different eras, to be able to set the history of Estonia into the context of the history of Europe and value cultural diversity. In social study, the European and international dimensions also exist – people of various nationalities, culture, etc.; human and children's rights: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Declaration of the Rights of the Child, etc.

At the level of upper secondary education, subjects that include information on Europe comprise literature, geography, art, history, music, philosophy (an elective course) and social study, in the framework of which also important legal acts treating social relations in the EU (e.g., the Convention of Human Rights) are taught.

At the level of upper secondary education, social study is structured entirely around the European and international dimensions: society, governance, economy, an individual in the society, diversity (racial, national, religious, etc.) of the modern world, global problems, most important universal and regional organisations, European integration, etc.

It is also specified in the learning outcomes of social study at the upper secondary school level that a student is familiar with the main characteristics of formulation, structure and organisational principles of the modern society; is informed of the functioning mechanisms of modern economy; is familiar with important international organisations; is able to characterise international political, economic and cultural communication principles, modern-day socio-political systems, the main problems and developmental tendencies of the modern world; is familiar with the rules of democracy, human and citizens' rights, etc.; is able to adequately identify his or her own role and opportunities in the modern world, to work and live in a market economy, etc.

In a class of social study, it is possible to use the EU textbook, which is a translated textbook complemented with information on Estonia. An upper secondary school elective subject syllabus on the European Union has been prepared and is being used in some schools.

The objective of the subject is that a student:

- understands questions related to the EU;
- knows the history of the development of the EU and the integration endeavours of Estonia;
- knows the tasks of EU institutions and mechanisms of reaching their goals as well as the level of representation of Estonia in the institutions of the union;
- is able to characterise the impact of EU law on Member States and the distribution of competencies between Member States and the union;
- knows EU policies and the objectives related to the four freedoms;
- is able to analyse the impact of the EU on Estonia.
The study content includes the development of international organisations, EU history, the institutions of the EU and EU policies.

In upper secondary school, 5 courses (35 hours each) are dedicated to learning the history of European history: the human society and culture course contains European history from Ancient Rome until the end of the 19th century and the Recent History course treats the world, including European history from the beginning of the 20th century until present time. European history is treated through the most important events, problems and processes from the evolvement of the civilization until the international events and global problems of the present time. Across themes, issues like culture, economics, daily life, political life of the society and development of international relations are observed in different periods. The objective of subject study is that a student learns to see oneself in a relationship with the home locality, Estonia, Europe and the world. The learning outcomes emphasize that a graduate of upper secondary school is aware of the most important cultural achievements of the world, understands the coherence of culture and knows the Estonian history and its links to the history of the Baltic Sea countries, Europe and the world.

In 2006, a cooperation agreement was signed between the Ministry of Education and Research, Estonian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) for the implementation of the education programme "Exploring Humanitarian Law" in Estonia. A study material translated into Estonian has been published and Estonian teachers have received various trainings. The main goal of the study material "Exploring Humanitarian Law" is to form a sense of responsibility in young people so that they would respect life and human dignity. The material treats historical and present day events, in order to give students an idea how the desolation of war as well as human suffering not related to war can be reduced with the help of implementation of humanitarian law. The issue is introduced to students through discussions and memories of people having participated in armed conflicts.

Issues related to the Geneva Convention are treated in Estonian general education schools also today. In history, the matters treated comprise education for peace, observing how wars change people's understandings in the sphere of humanitarian law, creation of the Red Cross and themes related to prohibition of weapons; the matters treated in social study comprise people's rights and obligations, links between human rights and humanitarian law, refugees and resettling; in natural sciences, the effects of crises on the environment and population processes are handled. General policy of a school, i.e. school democracy, internal communication culture in school, etc. plays an important role in treating issues related to human rights. Various thematic programmes (Human Rights Friendly School, KIVA, Good school, etc.) help to cement and increase the knowledge acquired in lessons.

“Globaliseeruv maailm”, teaching material for an upper secondary school elective course issued by the NGO Mondo Global Education Centre is based on the knowledge, skills and attitudes acquired in the upper secondary school compulsory geography courses, and is closely associated with the material covered in history, social education and economics courses. The content of the teaching material integrates with the world education, which creates an opportunity to understand the reasons and impacts of globalisation and to be an active citizen through the knowledge of the main international development goals and the principles of sustainable human development. The elective course allows a student to engage in the topical issues of various regions by the examples of developed and developing countries. Knowledge of the natural, cultural, demographic and economic diversity and peculiarities of the world contributes to one's coping in the globalising world.

There are three courses of Estonian literature (35 lessons each) in the upper secondary school literature syllabus and three courses of world literature, comprising mostly European literature from ancient times to postmodernism. Three sets of world literature textbooks from different authors, readers and other text collections have been issued for schools.

The purpose of organisation of vocational training is to create the possibilities for the formation of such individuals who possess the knowledge, skills and attitudes or competencies, and the experience and social readiness for working, participating in social life and for lifelong learning.
The professional standards which serve as the basis of vocational training are placed on the second to fifth qualification level. Curricula are divided into national curricula and school curricula.

National curricula for vocational secondary education are prepared in cooperation with social partners on the basis of the Vocational Education Standard [5], relevant professional standards and the national curriculum for upper secondary schools. National curricula are divided into broad groups of studies, fields of study and curricula groups on the basis of ISCED-F 2013.

All national curricula for vocational educational institutions have modules for the development of general skills. General study modules cover subjects of economics, entrepreneurship, legal acts, environmental protection and occupational safety. Development of foreign language skills, with an emphasis on professional language, also forms a part of the general studies. Half of the general studies have been integrated into the general studies of the specialty, which allows the learner to obtain broader knowledge related with the specialty. Self-tuition skills of a learner who has completed a curriculum have developed to an extent where the learner can obtain information and follow the developments in the professional field at home and abroad.

Both at the system and school level, cooperation is pursued in the framework of different initiatives, e.g., on the basis of the recommendation by the European Parliament and the European Credit System for VET (ECVET), Estonian vocational education credit point has been developed and implemented (EVECP).

Through various international projects, curricula and teaching materials have been developed, learners have been provided with an opportunity to obtain professional experience and work practice abroad.

**Partnerships and Networks**

Opportunities for partnership and networking are offered by the Erasmus+ programme (strategic partnership, eTwinning) and the sub-programmes of the Nordic cooperation programme Nordplus. Additionally, in Estonia the programme ProgeTiiger has been launched, aiming at the improvement of students’ technological literacy and digital skills, acquisition of which also contributes to the international cooperation.

**Legislative References**

- National curriculum for preschool child care institutions [6]
- National curriculum for basic schools [6]
- National curriculum for upper secondary schools [6]