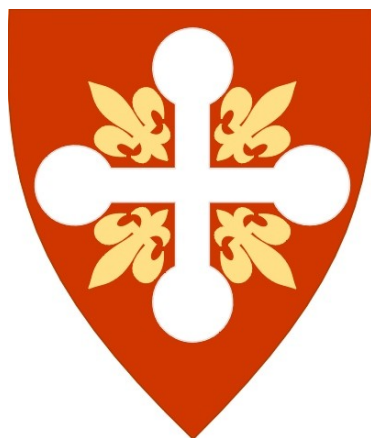


**PEDAGOGICAL CONCEPT OF
COLLEGIUM EDUCATIONIS REVALIAE**



INTRODUCTION

A school can become a factor facilitating the education and development of a child only if it joins forces with the pursuits of families¹ and other civic institutions in order to form an educational system together.

The conquest by the consumer society values, wherein superficial good prevails over permanent values, makes the self- evolution of a functioning and well-balanced educational system a utopian dream. The so-called pluralism and unquestioning tolerance in the system of values served up as democracy result in social agreements being possible only on a material basis.

In Estonia today, education is not an unambiguous mental quality. The educational system has been reduced to the abstract school network at the level of institutional administration and education itself to the sum of the norms of the state curriculum².

The crisis of ethics as a phenomenon in society brings produces violence in the school. The pressure accumulating in the contradictions of life today finds its expression in the form of stress, both self-directed violence and aggressiveness directed to others, in short, a pervasive culture of school violence.

Common sense says that such a situation can only be born out of co-existence of the most unsuitable circumstances. However, history repeatedly tells us about times, when the objectives of society were deliberately destructive.

The question remains – how to build up a school in a society where hedonism, conspicuous consumption and blatant disregard of ethical standards have become fetish; where the number of children growing up in families under the care of both parents is constantly decreasing, and where the birth rate is negative³; where drug

¹ Canon Law. Can. 796 § 2

² Law on Grammar and High School of Estonia.

³ It is the problem, which is predominantly discussed in media as technical and

abuse and school violence are expected to increase and where the flagrantly negative scenarios are becoming a reality? The school is helplessly facing the demand to combat the consequences of prevailing social illnesses without any support from other public institutions⁴.

In order to confront the destructive impact of the consumerism ideology the founders of Collegium Educationis Revaliae (CER) set as their target the creation of an environment for the integral development of the child, where the child could grow up healthy, respectful of him/herself and others, able to take responsibility and eager to contribute to the formation of a society that is worth living in. Estonia is geographically located within the area of European Christian culture. The system of values that secures a creative and sustaining attitude to life is therefore inextricably linked to the Christian culture. Consequently the statutes of CER declare that it is a cultural and educational centre supporting Christian values.

FOUNDATION OF EDUCATIONAL AND CULTURAL CONCEPT OF CER⁵

§1 Education shall prepare the person to live a fruitful and purposeful life in society (through practical application at school), and assist each person to realize her/his potential.

§ 2 For a Christian, the above mentioned task of education cannot be separated from the preparation for a fully augmented Christian life, directed towards serving God and neighbour, with the ultimate goal of eternal life in the new Creation.

§ 3 Education shall help the person to become an integral part of the national and material by nature, not as spiritual.

⁴ Canon Law . Can. 799

⁵ Adopted at the CER Summer Conference on June 8th, 1993.

world culture that has developed through history, embodying general human Christian values.

- § 4 Education shall give the person a solid foundation for shaping one's self, one's family, society and all creation in the spirit of Truth and Love.
- § 5 Education shall support the holistic development of the person, i.e. develop him/her physically, mentally and spiritually; it will address reason, will and conscience in each one's own personality and evince readiness to be open to others.
- § 6 Education shall assist the person to form the right hierarchy of values, dominated by spiritual values such as love, truth and justice. Material values are put at the service of spiritual values, temporal at timeless ones.
- § 7 Each person has the right to an education appropriate to her/his religion. That education helps to form a holistic and harmonious worldview, which is based upon this religion, proceeds from it and is confirmed by it.
- § 8 The liberty of each person to fulfil her/his rights and abilities is limited by respect for the rights of others. It is directed towards personal perfection within the framework of the common good.

Practical conclusions for CER:

1. Each pupil has the right to confessional education chosen by the parents, which deepens and confirms his/her religion and leads the pupil to a closer communion with the life of the church (congregation).
2. Instilling morals and a code of conduct at school must emanate from the principles of love of neighbour and respect for human dignity.

3. Curricula may not contradict Christian truths and values.
4. Neither the staff nor the students of CER shall question, ignore or ridicule Christian truths and values.

MISSION OF CER: PRESERVATION OF THE CULTURE OF LIFE⁶

Although CER unites people of very different outlooks; all are expected to respect the Christian system of values. When defining its mission, the Council of CER relied on the Cultural and Educational Concept of CER.

When declaring that the mission of CER is to preserve the culture of life, we stress that the task of CER is to function in supporting all aspects of life in the broadest sense, i.e. to support magnanimity, care, justice, fortitude and temperance as values that support the life being treasured and endured.

A definition of the culture of life can be agreed upon by people collaborating from diverse starting positions. For a non-Christian this definition infers supporting life in a general humanistic sense. For a Christian, this term is clearly stipulated in Church documents.⁷

CER would lose its mission and goal and its ability to function as an educational establishment of high quality as soon as the pursuit to establish “a good school” *per se* becomes predominant. Then one’s own activity is considered of value in itself, separated from its impact on families and society.

A school can fulfil its mission only if it has clearly defined its pedagogical concept. This foundation appeals to the families sharing a similar system of values and they decide to join this school, thus becoming a vital part of the school community.

⁶ CER Strategic Development Seminar, Randvere, February 6-7, 1998

⁷ Pope John Paul II, Encyclical *Evangelium Vitae*, The Gospel of Life.

BUILDING UP A SCHOOL COMMUNITY AS A PART OF THE PEDAGOGICAL CONCEPT OF CER

The Christian concept of a school can be lifted from theory to reality only through the cooperation of whole school community; i.e. staff, students and their parents. It is hard to decide to what extent the school has actually succeeded in its goal, merely by assessing it from inside during its daily activities. Furthermore, the Soviet background of the parents as well as the teachers needs to be taken into consideration. It is not sufficient to declare that the school pursues Christian values; we need to build up a school community which then activates the proclaimed values. Only after that the curricula, study aids, methods, disciplinary system and other factors enter into the picture as elements in the development of the pedagogical concept.

Parents' Community

A Christian school can effectively function only under the condition that it supports the family as the primary educator of children (the primary responsible person for the education of children). Treating parents as the primary educators, we assume that they have selected the school for their children as an extension of their upbringing ideology, based on the wish to bring their children up as Christians.

Under these circumstances, the task of our school is to assist the families willing to re-establish the cultural continuity in fulfilling their mission, to revitalize the Christian values in Estonian society and overcome the crisis of ethics⁸. At the same time we are aware of the insignificant number of church members in Estonia. As a heritage from the Soviet era, many parents are not yet ready to take responsibility for their children's education to the required extent. We need to remind ourselves that in Soviet

⁸ See: Mission of Church in Society. Publication of Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church, Tallinn, 1998. (*Kiriku missioon ühiskonnas. Eesti Evangeelse Luterliku Kiriku ühiskondlik-poliitilised taotlused, Tallinn, 1998.*)

times the school was a puppet of the state and was used as an ideological instrument. The families were deprived of the right to decide about their children's education. The re-establishment of independence brought about a formal liberty, but at the same time, the arduously achieved freedom of choice made the helplessness of people clearly evident. People were incapable of determining their ideological identity at a personal level and also within the educational system. The people who had been manipulated while they were growing up were not used to considering themselves as active subjects of their own lives, including the moral right and obligation to choose between good and evil, make decisions and subsequently take the responsibility for their decisions.

In spring 1999 we carried out a survey among the parents of grades 2 to 4, with the purpose of finding out to what extent the parents' community actually functions as a community unified by a system of values⁹. The survey revealed that in 58% of families at least one parent considered him/herself a Christian; approximately 40% thought that their methods of rearing the children are rooted in the Christian outlook. In comparison, only 2.5% considered the materialistic worldview as the foundation for their upbringing philosophy. Many families had not considered their outlook in connection with the principles of bringing up their children. Three fourths of the parents assumed that Christian values are taught at school in the religion classes. None of the parents thought that outlook should not be handled at school. However, there were parents who preferred the so-called pluralistic approach, the presentation

⁹ The Position and Role of the Family in the Formulation of a Christian School in Post-Soviet Estonia by the Example of Collegium Educationis Revaliae. Survey Report. Tallinn, 1999. (*Perekonna koht ja osa kristliku kooli kujunemisel post-sovetlikus Eestis Vanalinna Hariduskolleegiumi näite varal. Uuringu aruanne. Tallinn, 1999.*)

of the overview of various religions without focusing on the formulation of the outlook of the child.

It was interesting to note that the parents estimated their own “degree of Christianity” much higher than that of their own parents. This fact reflects the pursuit to re-establish Christian values among the parents’ community of CER. In this respect the school and the parents’ community can be partners in a creative discussion for shaping the spiritual face of the school.

It has become evident that even the segment of the parents not belonging to any church prefer their children to be brought up under a regimen based on Christian values. Analysis of their statements revealed that most of them have selected the school wishing their children to be brought up Christians or have Christian values, including ethics, as the foundation for their upbringing. At the same time the role of parents in achieving these objectives is rather insignificant, as their self-esteem is more rooted in wishes than reality related to everyday practices.

For many families the school may be one of the important (possibly the only) accessing points to the spiritual world of values. In this context the andragogical role of CER is brought to the fore; its intention is to function as a cultural and educational centre. It assists those parents who are willing to become aware of the operative system of values and meet Christian values through the medium of the fine arts. In the contemporary world, the collaboration between the school and family becomes acute in another context as well. There is the need to render real support to families in preparing their children to establish stable families themselves. This is expected from CER as well.

Data on families reveals that 1/3 of the children do not live together with their fathers and 2/3 of the children separated from their fathers are brought up only by the mother. Many children experience complicated family relationships as their parents have

former families.

In addition to the mental and emotional pressure of separation, the economic situation worsens and there is less time available for the child in these families. Consequently the single mother feels less secure in the role of the caretaker than a family with both parents.

One fourth of the students are in a disadvantaged situation with regard to their preparation for a future balanced family life as they have grown up with a single parent. It can be categorically stated that approximately half of the families require special support from school in assisting the boys and girls to acquire appropriate gender roles and to prepare them for future family life.

Teachers' Community

Teachers play the key role in shaping the face of the school. Therefore the function of the teacher as the up-bringer in today's situation is one of the most complicated problems at schools.

On the one hand the faculty represents contradictory values as the heritage of the occupation period in the country. On the other hand, the profession of the teacher has low reputation and correspondingly low financial remuneration. In a society which focuses on material values, it is nearly impossible to find able, dedicated teachers, willing to teach for a pittance. Schools have been set adrift among the swirling eddies to fend for themselves.

As a result of self-regulation, the situation has emerged, where the representatives of the Christian viewpoint, patient and persistent by nature, are carrying a burden that is impossible to impose on them by purely administrative force. The members of the *Consilium* of CER, each in charge of his/her department, program or service unit, are enabling their personnel to achieve the mission and objectives of CER. It is their

unswerving devotion to duty that has generated the committed teaching community of CER.

The organisational structure of CER as the cultural centre and the environment supporting the development of personality and life-long learning has created favourable conditions for young people in search of their vocation, who have found and valued the teacher's profession regardless of the unfavourable attitude of society. We are fortunate to have many talented young men and women, who wish to join the faculty in CER. Their loyalty to CER is expressed in their search for the worldview within the framework of the mission of CER.

The fact that the concept of CER has been defined gives every teacher the opportunity to weigh its compatibility with their personal principles and find the internal desire to work for the achievement of its goals. Consequently the teacher will become a partner in the discussion to elaborate the pedagogical concept of CER. *Codex Magistri*¹⁰, the document approved by the faculty, defines the common ethical foundation for the daily cooperation of teachers coming from very different orientations.

No survey has been carried out among the teachers' community of CER to determine their outlooks. Following the Christian principles in CER means first and foremost acceptance of the liberty of choice. If a teacher discerns that CER does not meet his/her convictions, CER respects freedom of free choice and tries to help this person to find a position in more suitable conditions.

Students' Community

CER does not specifically focus on accumulating the highest-achieving and diligent

¹⁰ See below chapter: *Codex Magistri*

students and unconditionally expelling students who fail in order to achieve the image of a “good school”.

However, **talent** as a gift is valued at school, with each person carrying the responsibility to preserve and support it and use it with dignity.

Elementary School

Half of the student body of the Elementary School of CER has been admitted based on the results of their musical abilities test. They form choirs and other music groups bringing to life the traditions of medieval music and folklore and, as such, form one element of re-establishing and maintaining the system of values.

Students with different language and mathematical talents have the opportunity to develop, according to their ability, in groups at different levels.

The students talented in manual activities can find expression for their talents in workshops and studios. Their participation contributes to the preservation of the artisan traditions of the Latin Quarter cultural area.

Secondary School

The Secondary School also offers a wide selection of subjects to appeal to different talents (sciences or humanities, music, art, folklore or drama).

For admission to the secondary school preference is given to the students who have completed the Elementary School of CER, under the conditions that:

- CER Secondary School can offer the possibilities suitable to their personal talents and specific development needs;
- The Christian orientation of CER is suitable and supportive to the student and his/her family;
- The student has developed sufficient inner discipline to be ready to study, participate in and fulfil the requirements of the self-regulatory environment of

open choices.

The students who have finished the 9th grade of other schools are admitted to the places left vacant by CER students, according to the criteria listed above. Preference is given to students from rural areas, with limited opportunities to continue their studies in their local community.

Equal opportunities are given to both genders in the admission process, keeping in mind their characteristics.

The secondary school student of CER is expected to have strong self- discipline and a healthy life- style as well as to follow the rules and regulations of the school. The youth, who have voluntarily joined the system of values that presumes making wise choices and giving up insignificancies for real life values, are able to contribute to the formulation of the friendly and tension-free atmosphere of daily school activities and interrelations, which is the precondition for creativity.

Faculties for Extra- Curricular Activities (ECA) of CER (Music School, Art House, Music House)

The students of the ECA faculties of CER are mostly from the Elementary or Secondary School of CER, according to age. Nevertheless, none of the ECA schools operates as an exclusive system. Students from other schools, as well as adults, also take part in ECA. The aim of the activities is to bridge generations, either by professional pursuits or simply relaxation via art activities and communication, to support the development of personality.

Each child is talented in something. At the same time, each person has some weaknesses. Children with special needs also attend our school. The student community feels secure and confident through mutual respect and consideration. Each student is accepted as s/he is. The students are encouraged to set targets for themselves according to their abilities. Under these circumstances each student may

develop into a creative personality focused on professionalism, respectful of oneself and of others based on commonly accepted values.

CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT AS A PART OF THE PEDAGOGICAL CONCEPT OF CER

Each person manifests the culture in which s/he has grown up. The world today is characterised by cultural fragmentation as well as heterogeneity and disorder of values. This in turn is expressed by contradictions in persons involved in such a cultural situation.

One cannot build a purposeful educational concept without taking into consideration the impact of the cultural environment, which can be either supportive of or destructive to the aims of the educational activities. It has been said that a person acquires only 20% of his/her education by intentional learning; the rest is built upon the impact of the cultural environment in which s/he grows up.

Consequently, the school can only be effective if it:

- Supports (as discussed above) the upbringing objectives of families;
- Is positioned in the system of values, where the school itself is one counterpart in maintaining its sustainability or
- Attempts to create a cultural environment, which supports the educational aims of the school in order to build up the system of values to give meaning to the essence of the life of individual persons as well as their shared life.

CER was founded as the cultural and educational centre, where neither aspect should take precedence over the other. Active cultural life brings to the fore different fields of activities, helping top level professionals - musicians, artists, scholars, clergy, stage directors and teachers - to interrelate as a mediator in **search of the truth.**

Integration of subjects creates the self-regulatory prerequisite for life-long learning and openness of personality, in one word - development.

The purposeful formation of the spiritual environment and teachers, who are open and able to develop, are critical conditions for the development of students. In our society it seems to be the only path to the system of values which focuses on creativity and searching instead of consumption. In other words, it is the only way to create a pedagogically functioning environment and to establish an effective educational system.

There have been different phases in the formulation of CER as integral to cultural centre. In 1986 Music House was founded as a municipal institution by intelligentsia interested in change in the existing system of values. The people who had gathered in the Music House envisaged various future prospects, which were later carried out in the newly founded structure, Collegium Educationis Revaliae, in 1991. Further development of the area in the Old Town required the increased contribution of private initiative; therefore two NGOs, Foundation HEREDITAS and St Michael's Society were founded. To transform the local interventions into a national movement with global output, all initiatives and institutions in the area were gathered under one common name the Latin Quarter. The Latin Quarter is open to all people and organisations who share its original mission.

Impact of the Cultural Life on the Educational System of CER

The activities of the different fields of cultural life are integrated in CER. A joint cultural and educational environment in the framework of the programs is coordinated by the *Consilium* of CER.

Programs cover all structural units of CER (Kindergarten, Elementary School,

Secondary School, Music School, Art House, and Music House). They help to maintain the high standards in the area by integrating the professionals working in the respective fields. Without the program integration, the existing potential would be fragmented and limited to the resources of a single structural unit.

The Music Program is the means of establishing the professional music instruction system supporting the development of the personality. Its activities find expression in various professional and semi-professional music groups as well as an audience sensitive to the values presented to them. This enables the maintenance of high level concerts as a channel to build systems of values in a society re-establishing its independence. Within this framework the Music School of CER was founded a special focus on early music and folklore and setting up master-classes, choirs and orchestras. The early music ensemble LINNAMUUSIKUD was founded during the establishment of the Music House. It has become a pioneering trendsetter and a school in its own right in this field. The long- term process of creating demand in our own society remains a challenge. Recognition of the aforementioned activities beyond our borders certainly enhances acceptance in Estonian society. The ability of the society to receive spiritual values is dependent upon education, meaning the success of the educational activities of CER and the willingness of the parents as well as cooperation with other schools to make use of the experience of CER.

The Drama Program functions according to principles similar to the music program. It guides the first steps in drama of lower school pupils, encourages secondary school students to find themselves choosing a drama major and integrates all into the drama studio and theatre THEATRUM. The latter finds public expression in society and the theatre life of Estonia.

The Art and Handicraft Program has always been at the centre of attention in CER. Numerous workshops are important in the formation of the cultural environment of

CER.

The fine arts play an essential role in the education of a child.

The primary aim of art activities is relaxation and reinvigoration. Art involves the emotional side of the personality; artistic experience relieves stress and supports the formation of the holistic personality. This has become more vital in a contemporary school, where the amount of kaleidoscopic information is constantly increasing.

Of further importance is the function of arts in the personalisation of the knowledge that has been acquired in other fields.

For example, in earlier times history was ingrained through the stories told by family members, where historic events were related to the personal experience of previous generations. The emotional link made the historic events personally significant to the child and shaped the child's behaviour according to the experience of the previous generations. The history taught at schools today resembles a sheer list of facts that are of no concern to the student. When the student meets history by means of drawing, painting or acting it, history becomes personalised. In this context art functions as the medium for knowledge to become part of the personal space and is irreplaceable in the learning process.

More general is the knowledge that art is important for the development of a child for its reflexive function and role in building up the perceptual world. Putting artistic and scientific expression, i.e. images and words, face-to-face, the child develops an adequate picture of the world and his/her own creativity. Art shapes visual language; music the ability to perceive the world of sounds. Artists create the semantic space, which is important for people to express themselves, communicate and understand others.

Handicraft has equal importance with the arts in the development of the child.

Manual activity used in handicraft has a unique impact on precision motor ability,

which in turn not only makes a person manually agile, but is also related to the surface layer of brain and consequently to thinking ability in general.

The social function of handicraft is also worth mentioning. If a person is able to make something, he/she is able to appreciate the efforts of other people thus producing a more cooperative member of society, while simultaneously psychologically improving the ability to cope with life's complexities. In contemporary society it is essential for formulating positive self-esteem and balancing the stress created by social tensions. Development of hands and labour are important as shapers of humanity and this should not be forgotten at school. If a person gets in touch with the dignity of manual labour, as is the case in handicraft, a vital foundation for this person's ability to cope with himself/ herself and finding his/ her place in the society has been established.

All the above aspects are significant; therefore art, handicraft and the workshops have an important position when organising the studies of children and youth at CER. And it has paid off abundantly, both as compensatory activity and also as a driving force toward professionalism. This applies to children as well as parents and teachers.

In addition, the way a person uses colours, sounds and shapes presents the possibility to draw conclusions about the special traits of his/her psychology and personality.

The system of values as a whole is treated in the framework of the **program of Christian upbringing**. It covers, as explained above, different fields from music, art and drama to religion, family studies and philosophy. On a more general level the idea is most clearly represented in the Latin Quarter by TRIALOGOS as a festival unifying the spiritual experts of many fields.¹¹

Programmed activities should enable the pooling and economising of mental as well

¹¹ For more information see: www.trialogos.ee

as material resources in the various fields to achieve their aims. In addition to programs mentioned above, there are also the programs of languages, folklore, physical education, among others, covering the complete curriculum. Synergy is created to promote each field and integrate the fields. This results in an environment that is life- giving, giving ample opportunities for communication.

DISCIPLINE SYSTEM

Discipline is considered a part of pedagogical system. It is taught/ learnt to support the child in his/ her development. Furthermore, it helps the child to form a personality which enables the setting of goals and management of himself/herself, leading to deliberately achieving these life-goals. Hence discipline is first of all taught as the way of developing self-discipline, then as a tool for the person to build willpower. The concept of self-esteem is very closely related to that of will, self- discipline and discipline; as self-respect and self-dignity are the key issues in forming one's will and self-discipline.

It is the task of the teachers, as the professionals, to explore and find the good in each child, which can be the basis for building up his/her self-esteem and helping each attain self- respect. The child himself/herself at each level of development cannot be expected to do that. Support from adults is needed here. Although parents care for and worry about their children, they often lack the experience as well as time to fulfil this task on their own. The teacher's role in the destiny of the child is often crucial – how the child manages in life, finds the right place, becomes the person who is able to be happy, finds the way to self and others. Consequently the responsibility the teachers have often exceeds the one carried by other professions.

Considering the above, the discipline system in CER is rooted in the concept of

“Assertive Discipline”¹². The main principle of assertive discipline is the task of the teacher to pay attention to and approve the child for displaying positive behaviour. It is also the task of the teacher to set clear and unambiguous limits, and together agree on the consequences for both positive and negative actions. This way the students learn that consequences are due to their own choices, not an expression of the teacher’s changing moods. It is the task of the teacher to apply this system consistently. A student needs to feel that misbehaviour does not create anger in the teacher, an outcome which could have negative effect on his/her achievements in the future. It is also important to bring across the knowledge that it is not the child that is scolded, but the negative behaviour. Humiliating the personality and damaging the dignity is against the principles of assertive discipline as well as anathema to the mission and goals of the school.

The essential part of the discipline system demands that the teacher knows what best helps him/ her teach well and the pupils learn successfully. Implementation of the discipline system demands a common system of values as well as rules and requirements, agreed upon by all units of CER. A teacher can successfully apply the discipline system only if certain conditions have been created by the school administration. This includes reciprocal unconditional support by both the administration and the faculty.

¹² Canter,L., Assertive Discipline (A Take Charge Approach for Today’s Educator.)

CODEX MAGISTRI¹³

Colleagues at CER are loyal to CER and the principles recognised in the organisation.

Their pursuit is:

- 1 to study Christian ethics thoroughly and follow the ethical principles in communication as well as their professional activities,
- 2 to establish supportive, intrigue-free atmosphere,
- 3 to become successful via cooperation,
- 4 to train and develop themselves vocationally, in their speciality and pedagogics as well as culturally,
- 5 To achieve high self-discipline and punctuality in keeping agreements.

TEACHER

Vocation

The profession of teacher belongs to the set of careers denoted as vocations. The decisions a teacher takes have direct impact on the life and destiny of other persons, those who are especially delicate or are easily influenced.

The responsibility inherent in the profession of teaching is too heavy a burden for the person who considers teaching as one of the possible job alternatives or solely as a means of making a living. Peter Jarvis calls the profession of a teacher a “caring profession”¹⁴.

Vocation can be considered as an identity melded between the personality and its

¹³ Amended and approved at CER *Consilium* on 29.01.98; First issued in the publication “ARTES”, Vanalinna Muusikamaja, Tallinn, 1989

¹⁴ Ethics and the Education of Adults in Late Modern Society., NIACE, Leicer, 1997

realisation in the society. It is a form of calling, a mission to contribute to society in a specific way. Only by way of perceiving teaching as a vocation could the teacher not stand marginalised when faced by difficulties inherent in the profession, but be able to conceptualise and overcome the difficulties. Thus serenity and balance in the personality of the teacher are a precondition for fair and supportive communication with the students and for teacher's participation in shaping the destiny of the students. In such a condition, devotion through vocation, the teacher avoids a personality crisis otherwise brought about by the stress and fatigue due to the constant availability demanded of teachers.

Profession

The success of a teacher lies in becoming professional in his/her special field. This is a prerequisite. A person who is fond of the selected field and who continuously improves in this field, engenders interest in students. It is considered important in CER that each teacher pursue professionalism in a given field. Participation in the creative and scientific activities of the field (concerts, performing artists, artisans in workshops, participation in surveys and working groups developing study aids and textbooks etc.) is strongly encouraged. Professional improvement and research serves as a tool for reflection on the pedagogical work. Vice versa, lack of competence in the field forces the teacher to cover up his/her lack, so as not to reveal the incompetence. Such a teacher behaves authoritatively, tries to give an impression of knowing everything, is disturbed by students' questions and refuses to allow any joint research projects. Without doubt, it is essential for a teacher to master his/her field, making it desirable and possible for the student to assume the role of apprentice, as in any medieval guild.

Job

For the school to become an educational and nurturing institution, each teacher has to fulfil a certain role in the faculty and staff community. A majority of teachers also perform the function of a homeroom teacher, many are project managers in programs related to their field, leading the working group of a new curriculum or a process at school as an organisation.

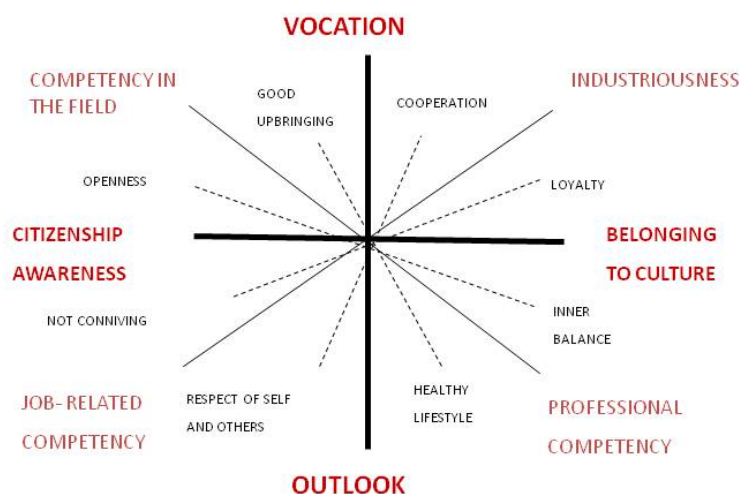
On the one hand, it assumes a well-developed organisational structure with clearly determined fields of activities and responsibilities and on the other hand competence in management and leadership of all co-workers in the organisation.

In CER it is considered vital to create a system which could be self-regulatory without much administrative effort. It is only possible in an organisation with a shared culture as well as open and smooth functioning information system. Then each person interested in common success is able to make adequate decisions arising from the input of the entire organisation and the targets set in cooperation with co-workers. Such an approach presupposes the focus on teachers as personalities: they must possess sufficient information and understand the underlying concepts. Their responsibilities must be agreed upon and each person must be given enough authority to fulfil these responsibilities.

The teachers need to be aware of the fact that their capable and effective performance in the organisation is fully dependent upon many factors in their own personality. The main characteristics that have an impact on being a teacher in CER were listed at the strategic development seminar of CER¹⁵ and are presented in the graph below:

¹⁵ Strategic development seminar of CER *Consilium*, at Loone, February 26-27, 1999.

Teacher's Model



TEACHER TRAINING SYSTEM IN CER

The main fields of teacher training in CER are: personality development, professional, speciality and job- related training.

"Personality development" can only be considered in the sense of creating favourable conditions paralleled by the willingness of the teachers to achieve understanding, peace and balance in their own personalities as well as being open to continuous self-searching. No one is entitled to interfere with the self-determination and pursuits of another person. At our seminars the condition of the personality and the outlook of a person have been considered as essential for a teacher's profession. Consequently the cultural environment is a vital component of the teacher training system at CER, as described above, offering persons various opportunities to explore their inner self and explore the world.¹⁶

The professional competency of teachers is high in most cases. If the aim of CER is

¹⁶ See chapter: Cultural Environment as a Part of the Pedagogical Concept of CER.

realised, i.e. the teacher's work as a pedagogue parallels that of a practicing professional, the teacher's professional training and high competency is continuously secured.

Vocational training is the one most needed for young teachers through a purposeful in-service training program because they were educated either during the Soviet time themselves, or by professors who relied on the values of the Soviet period.

The vocational in-service training program is necessary for teachers to enable them to:

- conceptualise their efforts as teachers and understand that these have meaning in the cultural and social life;
- master teaching methods to handle different kinds of students;
- notice and support each child, adapting teaching so that the child is able to achieve the best results taking into account his/her abilities.

In order to assist young teachers or even more experienced teachers in need of renewed energy, a vocational teacher training program has been established by St. Michael's Society. In addition to the individual vocational competence that is improved during these courses in cooperation with colleagues, effective teamwork is established among the co-workers. Consequently when employing faculty in CER, preference is given to teachers who have passed the training courses of St. Michael's Society and who aim to achieve a positive impact on the teaching community as a whole.

Job related in-service training in CER proceeds from the objective to support the establishment of self-regulation in the organisation. Therefore the pedagogical and management concept of CER deems management and leadership training mandatory for all faculty. In order to better handle specific job-related issues the in-service training program is based on the results of the research carried out by the health and information service of CER. Job-related training is also provided by St. Michael's

Society. Management training acquired elsewhere is accepted only if the principles comply with the pedagogical concept of CER. On-going in-service training is also conducted in CER in the form of seminars, projects, working groups and programs.

PLANNING OF IN- SERVICE TRAINING

Planning human resource development and creating favourable conditions for it must proceed from real situations and needs. In- service training programs for the following strategic period are based on the result of the internal audit and the priorities and objectives of the strategic plans of each school level.

INFORMATION SYSTEMS AND BEING INFORMED

The responsibility of every member of CER community is to ensure that reciprocal information about each person's activities and their results is disseminated. A stable flow of information is secured by standard procedures and available documents that lay the foundation for organising the daily operations of CER, e.g. strategy, annual calendar etc. The strategy defines the overall goal, the future objectives. The annual planning and cooperation are based on the annual calendar and the unified class schedule of all structural units of CER.

Information concerning the following week is published in the weekly bulletin “**Teataja**”, issued every Friday. The electronic version is available for parents and other stakeholders on the CER website.

Information is stored in two main databases, both used for job-related purposes:

1. Information system of CER comprises:

- Student data
- Staff and faculty data
- Parents' data

- Data on groups at schools and programs
- Tuition fees and payment monitoring of ECA schools
- Individual development feedback data
- Research data

2. E - school – data related to studies and school performance

E-school is a public electronic database for schools, which enables anyone to monitor and administer the information based on the pre-defined access criteria of each user, e.g. a teacher has access to the data of the classes s/he is teaching; the parents have access the data related to their children, such as the grades, remarks, missed classes, homework assignments etc. The school administrator is able to access accumulated data and generalised reports in addition to the detailed data specified earlier.

Students and parents can access the e-school via internet from every computer.

A common system of catalogues and folders has been created for archiving and exchanging data within the CER and its structural units.

Public information is available on the **CER website** (www.vhk.ee). Different target groups can find main documents, general information, access to databases, CER weekly bulletin “Teataja”, information on events in the form of a calendar, news etc.

For distributing information to staff, faculty and parents, **mailing lists** have been created¹⁷. The lists are automatically created by the data inserted in the CER database, the current e-mail address of the teacher, student or parents being mandatory for receiving timely information.

INDIVIDUALISATION OF STUDIES ACCORDING TO THE INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN OF THE CHILD

The student body of CER possess diverse abilities, due to the conceptual principle of

¹⁷ Lists can be found at: <http://lists.colleduc.ee>

enrolling children primarily according to the compatibility of the upbringing principles of the parents and the school, not by the top-list of abilities tests. Acceptance of differences can be considered one of the core principles of the pedagogical concept of CER.

The upbringing based on the Christian values enables the child to respect the worth and uniqueness of each person and be aware of the abundant benefits such a community offers, being formed of mutually respectful, yet diverse people.

One of the tasks of CER is to maintain the life of Latin Quarter as the cultural area. In each class of the Elementary School there are many pupils participating in the full program of one of the ECA schools. For secondary school studies each student has to select a major area. This clearly elicits the variety of talents of the students.

The difference of abilities is multiplied by the principle to enrol into each class some children with special needs, either physical or social. Furthermore this is the only possibility to implement the declared principle of each child's being talented in some area. It is only the matter of finding out in which field the child can achieve the best results. It is the task of the teachers to help the child to become what and who s/he would like to, and is able to be. At the same time the child must be assisted in overcoming the weak aspects, which unquestionably exist in every person.

In order to implement these principles the longitudinal research of the development curve of each child is carried out at CER. The research focuses on the relation of the talents that have been revealed at different phases of development of the child and the process for further development and performance as well as the creativity and personality formation of the child. Every three years the profile of the child's physical, psychic and social levels of development are described.

The teachers give individual assessments to all students twice a year. With this help along with monitoring the health, the feedback on the well-being and performance of

the child is collected. Based on that, adaptations to the child's working load and the curriculum can be made, if necessary. Special programs and support services are also implemented if they are deemed necessary.

The traditional paradigm in education, which considered the class the focus, needs to be changed. In the child-centred approach, the individual child should be the focus.

The teaching of children with special needs as well as collecting resources for these activities takes place in the framework of a rehabilitation and integration program.

Individualisation of studies for supporting the development of the child predicates the close cooperation between the structural units for creating a seamless environment for development. As individualising the studies requires additional spiritual as well as financial resources, the economical use of the existing resources and the integration of the initiatives of the different levels (state, municipal, citizen) is mandatory for achieving the synergy effect.

SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Obviously, support systems are needed for teaching children with special needs. The needs of the child dictate the importance of finding answers to all the specific issues. A special program has been launched to organise the studies of visually impaired children.

However, support services are required for all children, because, in addition to talents, every person also possesses weak sides. The child can develop talents to the fullest only in case of being able to overcome the problems that may, if unattended, become obstacles.

As in every other school, there are psychologists, social workers, speech therapists and also remedial teaching to assist the children.

There is a **day-care centre** to support the families of lower school children. Most parents work and are unable to organise purposeful activities for the child every day. At the centre a teacher follows the children's programs, organises the periods for rest and home assignments and also sees to it that they are on time for their specialty classes and ECA groups.

Problems usually occur at school when children are under stress and unable to concentrate. Such students cannot focus or study during the class periods, and they also disturb others and keep them from study. **A special classroom for calming down** gives the teacher the opportunity to send the troubled child to an environment where the child receives special attention to help overcome worries and study the required material. In order to prevent problems at school an **additional tutoring system** is essential and has been implemented. When problems in the families are more severe, it is essential to offer full board and care at the school. Students can live either temporarily or for longer periods at the **Boarding House of St. Michael's Society**.

It has also become necessary to establish **a system of support persons** to give care,

personal support and advice needed for coping in life, help not offered by the other measures provided.

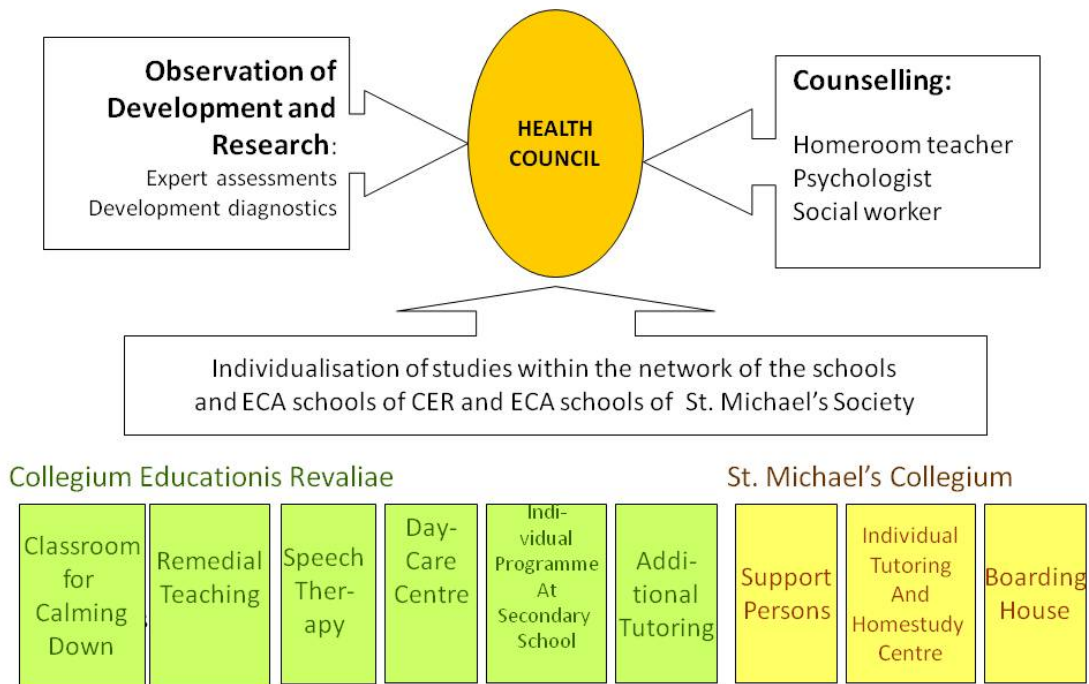
In the stressogenic society of today the tensions in many children have increased greatly, so that they are unable to go to ordinary schools regardless of the high level of their abilities. As a civic society initiative **the Individual Tutoring and Home- study Centre of St. Michael's Collegium** has been established for the children who due to health or any other justifiable reason are not able to find security at ordinary schools.

A lot of support activities are carried out by volunteer workers and based on contributions. Many students, teachers and parents are involved in these activities.

In the caring environment, which is supportive of dignity, each person has the possibility to support another person knowing that s/he can also count on the help of others when in trouble. This relieves tension in the school environment.

Research has an important role to play. It informs the organisation of schedules with the sequence of working and relaxation cycles needed for building up ergonomically appropriate schooldays.

Individualisation of Studies and Support Systems in CER



GENDER AT SCHOOL

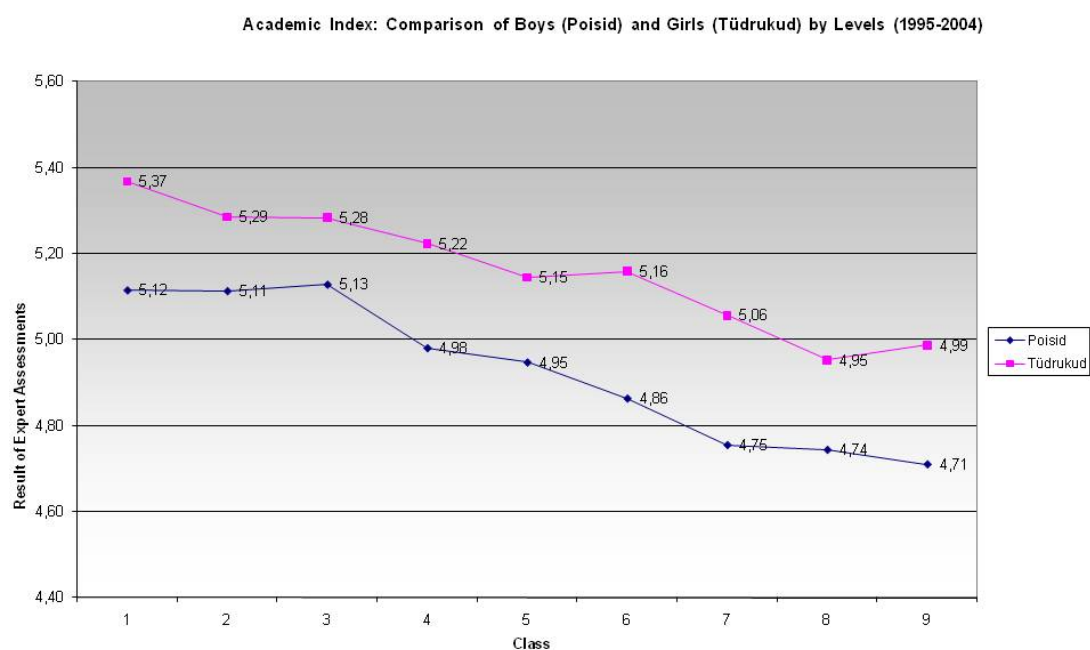
School cannot focus only on preparing the student for the entrance into the next school level. A person fulfils his/her life in society mostly through a family. At the same time contemporary society, especially a post-Soviet one, is characterised by the severe crisis in the family.

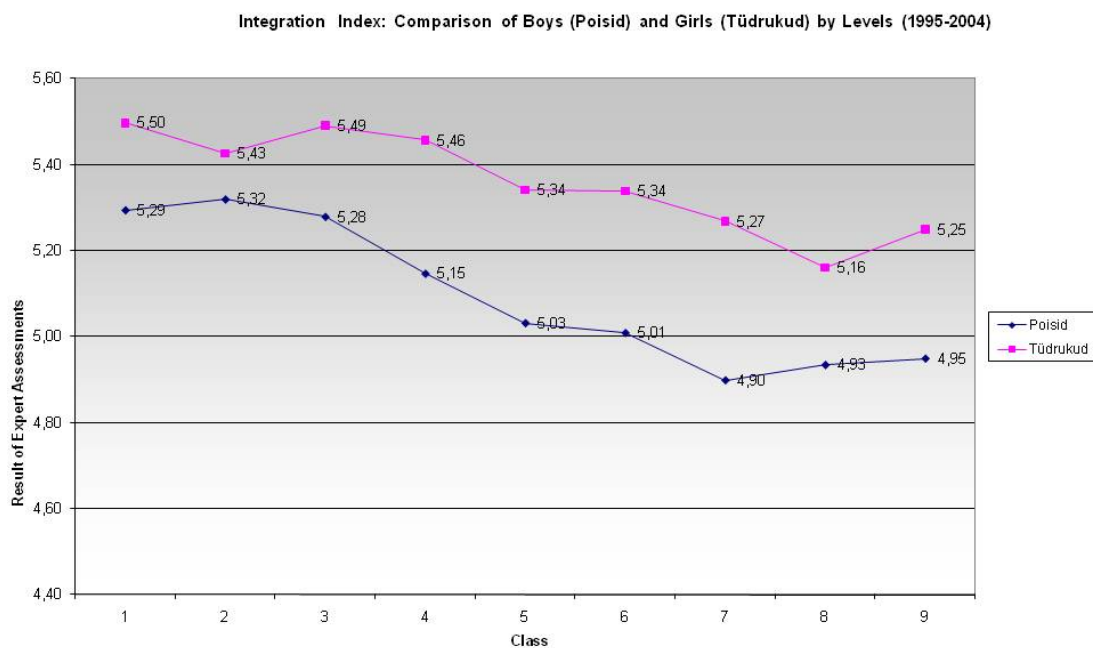
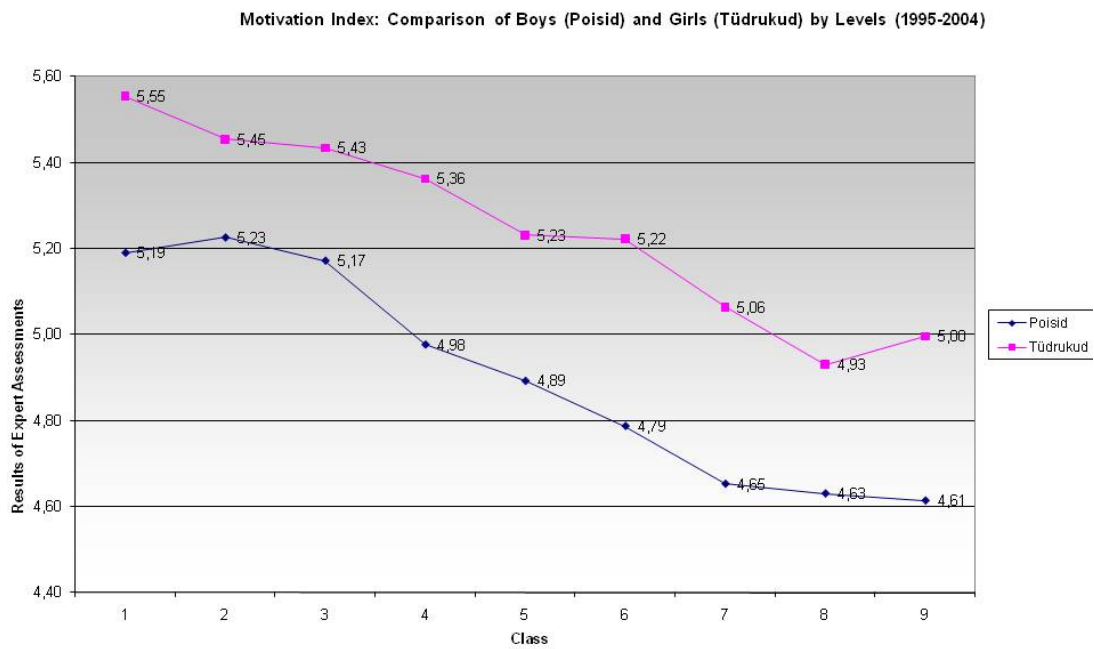
In Estonia very many children grow up in complicated or split families and consequently suffer from deprivation. This mental condition becomes a hindrance in personality development and an obstacle to the establishing of strong caring families themselves in the future. Parents expect school support in valuing family and preparing the young people for family life, including formulation of normal morals and gender identity.

Unfortunately the school stands on just as fragile feet in this context; family crisis is a

problem the teachers are not immune to either. Regardless of the difficulties the teachers as professionals should be able to create favourable conditions so that the school as an institution can support the young people in getting ready to establish family relations based on gender identity, mutual respect and tolerance as well as moral maturity. Both the upbringing system and the curriculum at school should reinforce the family-supportive value system.

As the development of girls is faster at a certain age, the traditional school practice has favoured female gender over recent last decades. At the lower and middle levels of elementary schools there are many more boys with difficulties. When comparing the coping and performance of boys and girls in CER, using the research data of annual assessments accumulated over a decade for the elementary school, we can conclude that the boys are less motivated to study, their academic performance is lower and relations among boys are also tenser.





The ordinary school in a consumer society addresses gender neutrality, under the label of equality. As the majority of teachers working at schools are female, in co-educational classes the girls unavoidably become the tools for disciplining the boys as

samples of good behaviour. Thus the school develops the system of values that is grounded in the female behaviour pattern, resulting in much higher drop-out rate of boys from the school. Under these circumstances gender polarity cannot develop, the relationship between genders become dissolute and tensionless.

Boys being ignored, their failure and low self- esteem as well as their uncertainty coupled with the girls' need to dominate are one of the main problems at school. This will often be revealed only later in life, when marriage relationships are being established.

On the other hand, while finding her place in the society, the girl's preparation to become a mother, the one who preserves the culture, acquires predominance in addition to successfully choosing a career. This role has significance only if the boys develop the opposite role, that of men who are ready to devotedly support and protect life and value the family. These gender roles are supported by the curricula and promoted at school.

There are apparently more ways to avoid underestimating either gender. In CER equal conditions for boys and girls have been created by separate boys' and girls' classes in grades 1 to 9. Teaching them is fundamentally different. As girls are more able to verbalise their tensions due to gender differences in brain reactions, it is easier for them to cope at school. Drop-out is the main threat to boys, as stress causes either giving up or aggression in them and consequently deviant behaviour is more frequent with boys. In addition, boys suffer much more in the throes of divorce.

At the same time the adolescence crisis is more severe for girls. Even though the boys have constantly more problems, their adolescence at school is less painful if they are treated reasonably.

The active learning method is highly relevant for teaching boys as they concentrate selectively. Their interest can be held only if the activity seems justified for them.

Teaching boys demands a deductive approach, whereas an inductive approach is more appropriate with girls.

At the end of adolescence, when the development levels become more or less equal, the clustering of students in CER is different: study groups involve boys and girls based on shared interests, not on gender.

The single gender groups in the elementary school do not mean isolation from the opposite sex. It expresses the pedagogical principle of arranging the interrelation of boys and girls based on clear gender roles. The cooperation of teachers in integrating events and extra- curricular activities of boys and girls becomes a significant part of the upbringing system of the school. A teacher with a true vocation is able to see more than his/her work of conducting daily classes and solving discipline problems. He or she is aware of this concept and also capable of implementing its principles.

CURRICULUM AS A PART OF THE PEDAGOGICAL CONCEPT

The curricula of the structural units of CER (schools, ECA groups etc) form a whole, the curriculum of CER. Within this common curriculum it is possible to create favourable conditions for learning for students with different talents and needs, enabling them to develop the gifts they have in them into fruitful talents and overcome the difficulties in development (deviations) in order to form a whole personality.

The following principles and fields summarise the core of the integrated curriculum of CER:

Values

The system of knowledge, abilities and skills defined by the curriculum should relate

to the personality of the student and build up his/her outlook based on clear values (in CER the value system of Christian ethics).

The knowledge, comprising the outlook, helps the young person to conceptualise his/her own existence, in relation to the society, culture and all creation. Only on this foundation is s/he able to find a vocation, the way to use everything learned at school later in life toward self-fulfilment for the benefit of self and others.

The system of values is an integrating factor, uniting different fields of the curriculum. Against the background of the system of values, knowledge becomes meaningful. If this becomes true, the graduate can be considered an educated person.

Literacy

Literacy is the skill that opens the door to all cultural heritages for the child.

Therefore achieving literacy is one of the primary aims of the school. Reading and writing at an advanced level is not just the matter of language classes, but should be undertaken in every class at school. It is important not just to teach the child formally to read, but to develop in the child a habit of reading to enrich the inner world. This leads to understanding the connection to the cultural heritage created by previous generations. Although the world is rapidly changing and information accumulates exponentially, the school should not focus predominantly on the skill of finding necessary information. School is the place where the new generation meets its cultural heritage, thereby finding its contemporary identity on the basis of the past. No other institution in the society can replace the school in fulfilling this function.

Arithmetic

Similar to literacy, arithmetic is one of the basic skills opening the door to many fields in life and refining the person's ability to think. As one of the fundamental skills it

also needs careful attention and steering into many other subjects as the means of deeper perception of the world.

Study Skills

Study skills develop in a child as an impact of a demanding and guiding environment. Individuals' methods of perception vary, resulting in different strategies for effective studying. The child at each level needs support to find out how to study effectively and to cope with tasks that require demanding effort. For this purpose it is mandatory that the teacher be an expert, able to notice the possibilities each child has and guide the child to use them. Skills for studying can be built up step- by- step. At school the foundation is laid at the lower level by developing habits of how to keep order. Appropriate methods and content of the studies must be planned by the teacher in order to shape the independent study skills of the student. One pre-condition for developing study skills is the ability to use and plan time purposefully (time management). In order to learn to act purposefully, the students need to know the teacher's scheduling method and session plan to be able to collaborate with him/her. The diary is the initial planning instrument with which the students learn to manage their time for assignments and daily activities. All teachers should join efforts to guide the students how to use it.

Focusing Skill

A primary problem for increasingly more children is the inability to concentrate. This problem has become more acute in contemporary society everywhere. The list of causes covers fields from the pollution of the environment, lack of minerals because of changed diets, overload of information and to social problems.

The performance assessment research carried out in CER confirms that concentration difficulties rank high among the pressing problems at our school. The teachers find

that difficulties in focusing and concentration disorders are the most frequent obstacles to the child's development and satisfactory performance at school. Widespread research reveals that this problem is more common among boys. Although it is obvious that there are different reasons for concentration deficiencies, rooted mostly outside of school, we cannot ignore it at school and expect it to be solved outside. Lack of concentration skills is not usually the child's fault; it is something the child suffers from and needs help with to overcome.

Building up willpower, acquiring skills to cope with him/herself, positive self-esteem, secure and stable environment, supportive relationships and also the experience of meditation – these are the measures to be used in the pedagogical process to assist the child. The teacher, as the professional, can support and advise parents, who lack appropriate preparation and often face problems in their own lives, incapacitating their ability to help their child.

In every subject it is possible to set the tasks so that the child learns to perceive the intended objective as well as the means required to achieve this objective. In order to make the effort and use willpower the child needs to have a clear understanding of what is required and what are his/her possibilities.

This is the way the composition of the curriculum and the methods used in different subjects for acquiring knowledge, abilities and skills become the instruments for building up concentration power.

Cultural Customs and Behaviour Norms

Every culture has the concept of "good behaviour". In our culture it is primarily linked to the upbringing at home. The school systems and school types of different countries have focused on a variety of different issues when conveying good manners, cultural customs and norms. In many countries good upbringing is secured by

teaching children outside their homes at convents or boarding schools, putting stress on professionalism and the spiritual aspect in the upbringing. In Estonian culture we are accustomed to relying on the home to pass on manners and customs. The school has been respected as a partner in this process. Today when the employment and work load of parents has increased dramatically and the families only meet when it is time to go to bed; the need to address the issue of good behaviour at school has become more evident. Good manners, skills for coping in different situations, knowledge of how to behave in the theatre, the cinema, the library, the street or church – are the experiences many children need to be taught at school. In the curriculum there are many topics that can be presented in these various situations. All work in tandem to formulate the behaviour and norms of the personality. The curricula of different subjects should consider this need and the teachers incorporate it in all the subjects.

One of the important factors in creating a cultural environment is appropriate academic clothing, including a **school uniform**.

Wearing a school uniform tapers visual noise in the classrooms. Dark uniforms bring the essential part of the teaching and learning activities to the fore – the light faces of the children, where the information and reactions are easier to follow in contrast to the dark background. Lack of colour noise and a darker environment is also conducive to concentration, a necessary ingredient, as elucidated earlier.

A school uniform is the most tangible way of recognising boundaries. Giving up the possibility of expressing oneself by or hiding behind ever more colourful and brand-name clothes achieves the perception and definition of the real essence of one's own personality. This applies to students as well as teachers. The ability to change and wear appropriate clothing in different situations (work, school, gym, spare time) prepares the person for entering and exiting different social roles and finding the proper behaviour, respectively.

Last but not least, the school uniform carries an important social function, stressing affiliation and unity. Wearing the school uniform, the student shows that s/he does not consider being superior to the fellow-students and accepts others as equals. Clothing becomes one of the factors of the academic environment, which hopefully unites students and faculty into one academic community.