Chapter 5.

Social context and identity: The future of Russian-speakers’ secondary education in Latvia and Estonia

Analysis of identity in adolescence and early adulthood must recognise that identity is not simply an internal process but is also a socially embedded process (Marcia 1966; Cote & Levine 1988). External environmental barriers to identity frequently affect ethnically and/or economically marginalized communities (Yoder 2000). The European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Abuse (EMCDDA) report (1998) concludes regarding EU countries:

In many countries, heroin dependence is concentrated among marginalised subgroups...Problems linked to increased social exclusion of marginal groups, including addicts, are reported in some countries (p.14)

The relationship between heroin addiction and social marginalisation is repeatedly stressed in subsequent EMCDDA reports (1999; 2000). The 1999 report observes the link between heroin and poverty in France (p.10), between heroin and ‘marginalised communities’ (p.11) including the Roma minority in Spain, and notes that some members of the EU have drug prevention campaigns targetted to ethnic minorities (p.26). The 2000 report observes a European ‘trend towards viewing the drug problem in a broader context encompassing issues of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion’ (p.23). It reiterates that high-risk groups for drug use include ‘ethnic minorities’, the ‘socially deprived’ (p.26), and refers specifically in the context of heroin use that high-risk groups include ‘marginalised minorities’ (p.8).

It is well recognised that unemployment causes and reflects an increased likelihood of physical and mental health problems (e.g. Luft 1978; Brenner 1973;
Berg & Hughes (1979). Comparison of an Irish sample of marijuana users and heroin addicts found a direct relationship between drug of choice and objective life stress as assessed by demographic and biographical detail elicited by questionnaire (Delaney-Reid 1988). In other words, an objectively more stressful environment was a predictor of heroin use over use of the softer drug, marijuana.

The themes of unemployment and the social status of the minority Russian-speaking group in Estonia was a frequent theme in many of the interviews with the heroin addicts in section two. A striking feature of many of the interviewed addicts’ backgrounds is the very high level of early school leaving. This amounts to the loss of a potentially significant social support (Rutter 1985). Moroz (2002, Kopli Methadone Maintenance Programme, personal communication) estimates that typically the heroin addicts on the methadone maintenance programme in Tallinn have finished only 9th grade at school, though up to 30% finish 12th grade, namely, those who usually start taking heroin at a later age.

Current integration plans for the Russian-speaking minorities in both Latvia and Estonia need to be examined against this backdrop of social marginalisation of at risk youth among the minority ethnic group (see also Allaste 2002 on the marginalised position of Russian-speakers in North-Eastern Estonia). The Latvian State integration programme ‘The Integration of Society in Latvia’ proposes radical reform of the school system for the Russian-speaking minority from 10th grade onwards. After a transitional stage where 75% of 10th grade classes will be taught in the Latvian language, all classes from 10th grade onwards will be in Latvian by September 1st 2004, according to the Latvian Law on Education, adopted on 29th October 1998. The current Estonian State Programme similarly envisages a transitional period prior to all classes being in the Estonian language from the 10th grade onwards. Until recently the deadline for transition was 2007. Recently this deadline has been extended as a high school seeking to teach through the Russian language may apply through its board of trustees for permission from the government based on an application from the respective local council to teach in

1 Though see also Allaste & Lagerspetz 2002 on the affluent elite ‘club’ culture among ‘young well-educated urban professionals’ (p.198), largely ethnic Estonians, who use ecstasy and amphetamines and who ‘do not approve of using drugs intravenously’ (p.194)
Russian. Yet the recent amendments also require that schools must propose measures that would provide for the eventual transition of instruction to Estonian² (The Baltic Times, March 28-April 3 2002).

The Minister for Education³, Mailis Rand, has argued that Estonia’s main problem in education is not one of language but of the drop-out rate in secondary schools (The Baltic Times, February 7-13, 2002). With a drop-out rate of over 1,000 students at secondary level each year, Rand is quoted as stating that students:

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\text{are deprived of any proper training that would help them to make ends meet} \\
\text{(The Baltic Times, February 7-13, p.4)}
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Despite these arguments, and recent amendments delaying implementation of a full transition to schooling in Estonian due to difficulties in finding sufficient teachers with a proficient command of Estonian to teach in Russian-speaking areas, the current Integration Programme for Estonia remains one where the emphasis is on Estonian language learning rather than remedying early school leaving.

The overwhelmingly disproportionate amount of injecting heroin users among the Russian minority in particular in Estonia, combined with the dramatic increase of HIV cases in both countries in recent years (also disproportionately affecting the Russian-speaking minorities in both countries and predominantly spread by IDU’s) cannot be separated from issues of early school leaving and the proposals for language reform. Preventing and breaking the cycle of early school leaving, injecting drug use and HIV needs to be an urgent social policy priority in any future integration programmes and the danger of increased early school drop-out among the less academic Russian-speaking students needs to be examined with regard to the Latvian and Estonian integration reforms in education.

² The amendments were narrowly approved 44-34 with 23 abstentions in the 101 seat Parliament (The Baltic Times, March 28-April 3, 2002)
³ Prior to the recent 2003 general elections
Consideration of issues of integration needs to recognise that there is a diversity among Russian-speakers not simply in terms of ethnicity, but also in the degree to which a particular individual identifies him or herself with a social identity of belonging to a group of ‘Russian-speakers’. Elsewhere, categorisation by ethnicity has been questioned as failing to adequately express an individual’s social identity (see e.g., Bonnett & Carrington 2000 in the British context and Brice Heath & McLaughlin 1993 in the U.S. context, as well as postmodernist critiques of essentialising labels of class or ethnicity, Simons & Billig 1994; Sayer 1997). Moreover, a social class based analysis would suggest that those Russian-speakers who are benefiting economically from the transition to market economies in Latvia and Estonia are not necessarily going to identify with the needs of more socially disadvantaged Russian-speakers who are at risk of early school drop-out. Against the backdrop of a prevailing ethos of economic individualism, it may even be argued that individualism is a more fundamental social identity than ethnicity as such, whether expressed in terms of categorisations such as ‘Russian-speakers’ or otherwise.

(a) Labelling students as failures if they have difficulty learning in classes in their second language

MacDevitt (1998) highlights that one direction for educational reform in a European context is ‘the recognition of achievement for all students’ (p.47) (see also Kelly 1999 p.141). The danger of the current Latvian and Estonian integration plans is that many from the ethnic Russian minority will be labelled failures by the educational system if the proposed changes to language in Latvian/Estonian schools are implemented – when as a consequence of the implementation they have difficulty learning in classes in their second language. Such a high level of Latvian/Estonian language skills to study all 10th to 12th grade subjects (or even 60% of classes in Estonian until 2010) is a very high level of academic expectation. Some headmasters in several schools in Daugavpils, Latvia, have already observed that the

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4 See section one for an account of the different ethnic groups underlying the oversimplified categorisation as Russian-speakers
transition to classes in Latvian for Russian-speakers is especially difficult for pupils whose skills and abilities are below average (Poleshchuk 2001b, p.24). Warnock (1977) emphasises that the educational curriculum must be ‘genuinely suitable for all, not suitable only for the middleclass or the most academic’ (p.84). Gardner’s (1993) examination of multiple types of intelligence in educational psychology proposes numerous different types of intelligence, e.g., linguistic, musical, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic and personal. This highlights the need for the educational system to be flexible enough to allow for expression of different types of intelligence and not just linguistic (verbal) ability (see also McDermott et al. 2001 on differences between verbal and non-verbal learning). MacDevitt (1998) expands on this theme of recognising different types of intelligence and achievement and emphasises the need for avoiding labelling less academic students as failures, referring to:

...the need to provide recognition of achievement, particularly for more marginal students. Recognition is seen as a preventative measure which avoids some pupils being seen as failures and lessens the chances of premature drop out (MacDevitt 1998, p.47)

A focus on achievement would require a focus on developing primarily the strengths of the student (see also McKeown, Haase & Pratschke 2001) rather than tying the student’s educational progress to development of a potential weakness in the student regarding Latvian or Estonian language learning. The Estonian plan follows a deficit model of educational assessment where, in effect, the student is to be blamed for failing to reach certain standards necessary to ‘live and survive’ (p.22) rather than grow and develop as a person in a broader educational context. Any discussion of personal growth and needs of the student is restricted to linguistic knowledge with even the statement that Estonian is ‘the’ language of ‘selfrealisation’ (p.29) (my italics).

Pavelson & Vihalemm’s (2002) recent examination of some Russian-speaking students attending Estonian language high schools suggest that their results in national tests could have been higher if they had attended Russian-speaking schools,
although their attendance at Estonian speaking schools helped their Estonian language and ability to learn in university courses through the Estonian language. They refer to students such as ‘Anna’, ‘in case I had finished a Russian school, I would have had greater opportunities – I would have had better results of the National Tests’ (p.269), and Tanya ‘I think that if I had finished a Russian school, the academic results might have been better. My classmates from the Russian school, who had lower academic results than me, achieved better results at National Tests’ (p.269). Key differences between these students (in the account of Pavelson & Vihalemm 2002) who found their attendance at Estonian schools highly useful for their language levels for university - despite their lowered overall academic grades – and less academic Russian-speakers are:

a) these students and/or their parents chose to learn through the Estonian language
b) these students are high academic achievers who seek to go to university

Yet even these highly motivated, high academic achievers suffered from a significant decline in their overall academic grades as a result of learning subjects through their second language. While such students may have some margin for error with regard to their overall academic decline in grades, those Russian-speakers who are less academic are even more at risk of a fall in their academic grades to a level where they have no margin for error; further academic decline for the less academic Russian-speaking students means academic failure, demotivation and extremely high probability of early school drop-out.

A plethora of educational theorists and educational psychologists recognise the danger of labelling students as failures (e.g. Merrett 1986; Glasser 1969; Warnock 1977; Handy & Aitken 1990; Casby 1997; Kellaghan et al 1995; MacDevitt 1998; Kelly 1999) with the consequent knock-on effect of early school drop out. In the words of Kellaghan et al 1995:

A first influence [on early school drop out] is school failure. While there may be occasions when young people who are doing well may leave school, the vast majority will have had a history of doing badly. The issue of school failure is intimately related to the breadth/limits of the curriculum. With a broader
curriculum, there is a greater chance of achieving success in some domains, while a curriculum which is based on academic learning only will ensure success only for those with an academic aptitude (p.92) (my italics)

In the Estonian integration document, a missed opportunity for dealing with social integration of low academic achievers also occurs in the section concerning the need for speech therapists (p.34) which once again only narrowly focuses on speech therapy in the context of learning the Estonian language. If there is no flexibility, but rather, an overly academic emphasis on learning subjects in the Estonian or Latvian language, the words of Handy & Aitken (1990) would predict alienation\(^5\) and loss of identity for the less academic among ethnic Russian students:

> the loss of identity and sense of anomie of many students [occurs] in an organization where such academic values are overemphasised and other experiences and achievements are under-expressed (p.28)

Rosenberg (1965) describes self-esteem as feeling that you are ‘good enough’. Self-esteem is positively associated with school achievement (Purkey 1970; Brookover et al 1964; Hay, Ashman & van Kraayenoord 1997). Morgan (1998) cites Kaplan et al’s (1994) North American study of 4,141 young people tested in 7\(^{th}\) grade and once again as young adults which found a significant damaging effect of dropping out of high school on mental health functioning as measured by a 10-item selfderogation scale, a 9-item anxiety scale, a 6-item depression scale and a 6-item scale designed to measure coping. This effect was also evident when controls were applied for psychological mental health as measured at 7\(^{th}\) grade. Moreover, the significant damaging effect of dropping out of school was also evident even when controls were applied for gender, father’s occupational status, and significantly for at least some level of comparability with Latvia and Estonia, ethnic background.

\(^5\) Markus Warasin, Secretary General of the Brussels-based European Bureau for Lesser Used Languages is quoted as stating that there would be a risk of alienating children from the Russian-speaking minority in Latvia if they were cut off from their mother tongue ‘It’s not just a matter of education, but of the social impact…You don’t want some kids in Latvia to feel less good about themselves than the rest’ (Baltic Times April 11-17 2002)
Academic failure, ascriptions of low levels of ‘social competence’ by society, low self-esteem, early school drop-out are all a recipe for increased escape into drug taking – and from current trends in the Baltic States, heroin addiction. Programmes based on finding ways for at risk, less academic, minority youth to be rewarded and given labels of success are at best vaguely referred to in the Latvian plan and are totally lacking in the Estonian integration plan. Kellaghan et al (1995), commenting on the experience of U.S prevention of early school leaving schemes, emphasise that:

> success in one kind of target domain may have a snowball effect on other kinds so that the net beneficial effect may be greater than predicted for any one domain (p.90)

The danger is that the current trajectory of the planned restructuring of the educational system in Latvia and Estonia will bring a snowball effect of failure for the less academic and less verbally skilled among Russian-speaking minority youth – and will fail in its declared aim of including these minority groups as a positive resource for each respective society. Adjustment into the Procrustean bed of an imposed, academic, language curriculum betrays not merely a lack of a detailed strategic plan for their success but also an apparent indifference as to their failure.

Both integration documents refer to the need to make the ethnic minority groups loyal to the Estonian and Latvian state respectively⁶. Yet loyalty is arguably best achieved through avoiding early school drop-out and its consequent alienation from the social system with heightened risks of escape into drug taking including heroin use and consequent risk of HIV. Fein & Spencer (1997) found that individuals who experienced a threat to their self-image in academics used their evaluations of others (i.e. negative evaluations of members of a stereotyped group) to feel better about themselves and restore a positive self-image. A possible implication of this finding is that those labelled academic failures among the Russian-speaking minorities in Estonia and Latvia would seek to restore their self-image through negative evaluations of members of a stereotyped group, with one such group being

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ethnic Estonians or Latvians respectively. Similarly, Spencer, Fein & Lomore (2001) found that:

When people were self-affirmed...they were less concerned with repairing their self-image vis-à-vis others (p.58)

(b) Targeting educational support to less academic students through a broader curriculum

From an educational perspective, the emphasis of both integration programmes on language is an emphasis on transmission of knowledge and curriculum as (language) content, rather than education as development i.e. responding to the developmental needs of the individual. Kelly (1999) criticises educational models predominantly based on education as transmission of knowledge and curriculum as content (see also Hunting 2000, p.245) as being simplistic and failing to be child-centred:

The idea of education as transmission or of curriculum as content...is simplistic and unsophisticated because it leaves out of the reckoning major dimensions of the curriculum debate. In particular, it does not encourage or help us to take account of the children who are the recipients of this content and the objectives of the process of transmission, or of the impact of that content and that process on them, and especially their right to emancipation and empowerment (p.53)

The focus on a top-down imposed language curriculum irrespective of the needs and abilities of the student is a failure to provide a child-centred education arguably contrary to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child for Latvia (2001) has already criticised the Latvian plan to abolish Russian-speaking schools from grade 10 onwards by 2004. Moreover, the timescale envisaged in the Latvian plan allows for a much shorter period of adjustment than in the Estonian plan. The focus in both the Latvian and Estonian integration documents is on processing the student into an
imposed language curriculum content. This is strikingly in contrast with the child-centred reforms in education advocated by IFAPLAN (1988), the German research Institute with responsibility for coordinating projects in the EC concerning transition from school to work. Their report concluded:

These changes have meant a new climate in secondary education. In the schools, the effect has been a push towards putting the student more at the centre of the teaching/learning process. The challenge is to stimulate re-thinking of the use of the school and its resources in terms of what it can do for her/him, instead of how young people can be fitted into what the school-system, or individual subject-teacher, have traditionally offered

In O’Donnabhain’s (1998) words:

As the IFAPLAN working document reported, it was no longer possible for schools to insist on young people fitting into whatever the school decided. Disgruntled young people react in one of two ways - they either rebel openly and cause major discipline problems or they simply drop out and grow up as a part of the deviant section of the society. Thus many educational initiatives attempt to put the young persons at the centre and allow the learning environment to grow around them so that they can develop a sense of active citizenship (p.46/7)

Moreover, Banks (1994) argues that too rigid and unsuitable curricula and insufficient attention to personal development are important contributory factors to early school drop-out (see also Casby 1997), while Higgins (2001) rejects a view of a homogenous mainstream of high-school students in the context of New Zealand.

(c) Student autonomy and motivation for learning

Peters (1965,1966) describes a key difference between education on the one hand and training, instruction or indoctrination - a difference frequently recognised
in research on education. This difference is individual autonomy without a concern for which, according to Peters, no process of teaching can be called education. Therefore, from Peters' well-known perspective, an imposed language curriculum upon students in the Latvian and Estonian integration documents amounts not to education but to training, instruction and even indoctrination due to the lack of autonomy given to the student. This imposed dimension occurs despite the rhetoric in the Estonian document emphasising autonomy of the individual:

Focus on the individual means that integration into society is the result of the free choice of the individual, not a decision dictated from 'above'. An individual’s attitudes and understandings change above all on his own initiative and the State’s task is to create conditions favouring this change (p.15)

With regard to diversification of measures for the organisation of teaching, one of the criteria for assessing the effectiveness of activities in the Estonian document is student motivation (p.30). Yet lack of autonomy is well recognised in Western cultures as damaging student motivation. For example, teachers who are autonomy supportive, in contrast to controlling, catalyze in their students greater intrinsic motivation, curiosity and desire for challenge (e.g. Deci, Nezlek & Sheinman 1981; Flink, Boggiano & Barrett 1990; Ryan & Grolnick 1986; Deci & Ryan 1992; Ryan & Stiller 1991) and students taught with a more controlling approach not only lose initiative but learn less effectively, especially when learning requires conceptual, creative processing (e.g. Amabile 1986; Grolnick & Ryan 1987; Utman 1997; Glasser 1986). However these findings on motivation in education would obviously gain strength if replicated on an Eastern European student body as student schemas about the qualities of an effective teacher arguably do depend on cultural context. Beishuizen et al (2001) observe a difference in expectations of what constitutes a ‘good’ teacher when comparing a primary and secondary school sample of students in Britain. Primary school students focused on transfer of knowledge and skills whereas secondary school students emphasised relational aspects of good teachers. On the assumption that secondary students’ emphasis on relational aspects of
student-teacher interaction is an appreciation of relationships which are not authoritarian, a relational emphasis would thus prioritise a role for autonomy with regard to motivation and learning. Similarly, Mac Iver et al (1991) found that extrinsic pressure did bring increased effort among middle school students but not among high school students, while Gottfried, Fleming & Gottfried (2001) found that for a U.S. sample, it was in the later high school years that academic intrinsic motivation dropped most, particularly for maths and also reading and science. Thus the lack of autonomy concerning language learning for 10th grade students onwards in both the Estonian and Latvian integration proposals for education will impact upon the student age cohort which is already most vulnerable to decline in motivation in education as well as most resistant to attempts at external imposition of tasks.

The collective effect of demotivated peers must also be recognised as a real problem leading to increased school drop-out, if a compulsory immersion in the Latvian/Estonian language is implemented (see Morgan 1998, p.81 for an account of peer influence on early school drop-out). Moreover, it must be noted that the option of retaining Russian-speaking minority students in classes of lower level if they fail to reach sufficient standards of communication in the Latvian or Estonian language respectively is an option which would be rejected by a vast amount of educational research which has failed to find support for any form of grade retention as an effective intervention for most students with low achievement or marginal socioemotional adjustment (Hauser 1999; Jackson 1975; Holmes & Matthews 1984; Fowell & Lawton 1992; Smith & Shepard 1987; McGill-Frantzen & Allington 1993; Jimerson et al 1997; Jimerson 1999; Ferguson, Jimerson & Dalton 2001).

(d) Consultation and choice for parents of Russian-speaking students in the education of their children

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7 However, interpretation of autonomy in a different context of the mother-adolescent relationship was subject to different interpretations affecting motivation based on social class (Boykin McElhaney & Allen 2001)
An imposed Latvian/Estonian language content to the curriculum from the 10th grade is independent of the wishes of the parents of the Russian-speaking minorities, namely, the primary educators of the student. Representatives of significant numbers of parents of Russian-speaking pupils attended the conference 'To study in the Native Language' in Riga, Latvia, on 25 November 2000. The statement of the conference participants appealed to the government and parliament for changes in the current educational policy in Latvia which they believe is aimed at assimilation of minorities. They demanded lessons of Latvian, not in Latvian (except for certain subjects). They emphasised that for this purpose the preservation (and restoration) of Russian is required. The non-governmental organisation in Latvia, LASHOR (Latvian Association for Support of Schools with Russian language of instruction) similarly seek to maintain high school education in the minority language. LASHOR criticise the Latvian Ministry of Education and Science for trying to introduce bilingual models in schools without a developed methodology of bilingual education, without preliminary training of teachers and without the necessary textbooks and study aids. They state that bilingual education is to be introduced only when there is an adequate framework for support and support for appropriate educational methodology. Other local commentators, such as Pabriks (2000), reject the idea that bilingualism in the Latvian context is equal to assimilation, but also criticise the adoption of a bilingual education model without proper preparatory measures. The Latvian document expresses the laudable sentiments:

The integration of society in Latvia is a partnership between persons belonging to different social groups, Latvians and non-Latvians, citizens and non-citizens, a process in which each side is actively involved (p.11)

However, an imposed language curriculum and abolition of Russian language schools from the 10th grade from 2004 onwards, against the wishes of significant sections of the Russian-speaking population (parents and students) is not the reality of partnership, despite the rhetoric of partnership.
The rhetoric of the Estonian integration document states that:

integration is clearly a bilateral process – both Estonians and non-Estonians participate equally in the harmonisation of society (p.3)

Yet such proposals need to live up to the rhetoric of equal participation through not merely consultative influence but genuine decision making power being given to parents of Russian-speaking students concerning the education of their children. According to the data of the survey (2000) of non-Estonians by the Legal Information Centre for Human Rights in Estonia only 5% of respondents support assimilative models of Russian school education (classes with Estonian as the language of instruction) and 14% argue that only basic school in Russian should remain. As little as 11% supported the (former) official model proposed in the Estonian Integration plan. The rest of the respondents are in favour of preservation of Russian language education in Estonia, contrary to the integration plan for 2007. Poleshchuk (2000) concludes:

These figures demonstrate that only 1/3 of non-Estonians support or are indifferent to the perspectives of the Russian-speaking community assimilation or ‘radical integration’ (p.3)

Furthermore, three years ago only two parents of children at Pahklimae High School in Narva supported the switch to schooling in the Estonian language in 2007 (Baltic Times April 4-10 2002). Järve (2001) summarised the main issues of concern expressed by participants in a workshop on multiculturalism and minority education in Narva-Joesuu in June 2001. Firstly, are Russian-speaking parents free to choose the language of instruction for their children under present Estonian circumstances? Secondly, with regard to Russian-speaking children in Estonian schools there are many psychological difficulties which should not be overlooked (Järve 2001).

8 Tatyana Zarutskih, Director of Pahklimae High School in Narva states that ‘The Russian diaspora must have a right to choose the school language’ (Baltic Times April 4-10 2002)
The lack of autonomy given to the ethnic Russian-speaking students and parents in Latvia concerning compulsory classes in the Latvian language from the 10th grade by 2004 is not simply a failure to utilise but also is in danger of damaging, the role of a very important potential resource in the educational life of the student, namely, his or her parents. Leading figures in developmental psychology, such as Vygotsky (1978) and Bronfenbrenner (1979) have highlighted the important role of the parent in the educational development of their children (see also Bandura et al 2001). Ekstrom, Goertz, Pollack & Rock (1986) describe how the educational support system of the home had the most impact on school performance in their analysis of early school drop-out in the U.S context (see also Egyed, McIntosh & Bull 1998). Consultation with parents had been found to be just as important as direct interventions with children, if not more so (Conoley 1987). An examination of the reasons for high academic achievement of Chinese and Japanese children compared to U.S children (Stevenson et al 1990) located the attitudes of the Chinese and Japanese families, in particular mothers, as a significant influence on student performance. Moreover, Overett & Donald (1998) observed statistically significant improvements in reading accuracy, comprehension as well as reading attitude and involvement for parental involvement in their children’s reading in Grade 4 classes in a disadvantaged community in South Africa. Social reinforcement of parents of truanting students served to increase attendance whether contacted by the school principal or secretary (Sheats & Dunkleberger 1979) though much would presumably also depend on the attitude of the parents themselves.

The need for partnership between the student’s family and the school has been advocated in the EC context (MacBeth, Corner, Nisbeth, Ryan & Strachan 1984) and beyond (Epstein 1990; Kroth 1989). In the Irish context, the need to involve parents more actively in their children’s education was recognised in the national programme of special measures for schools in disadvantaged areas (1984) and the report of the Irish Department of Education Working Party on the Primary School Curriculum and the Disadvantaged Child (1985) (see also Burke 1992). The Irish White Paper on Education ‘Charting our Education Future’ (1995) further affirmed the crucial role of parents ‘in forming the child’s learning environment’ and pointed to the need for positive attitudes to education and to encourage self-esteem. In the
British context, a practitioner and academic consensus has developed over a large number of years that a lack of dissonance between home and school, and parents’ involvement in their education in both settings, is in students’ best educational interests (David 1993). While acknowledging the need for some boundaries between school and home contexts from the student’s point of view, Edwards & Alldred (2000) state that this prevailing view on the centrality of parental involvement transcends the British context:

Across the political spectrum, parental involvement and home-school partnership are regarded as, variously, enhancing the educational performance of children from deprived socio-economic backgrounds, or as a market mechanism or communitarian approach to improving schools’ effectiveness for all children. This orthodoxy is evident not merely in Britain but, given the global nature of the processes of familialisation and institutionalisation, is either entrenched or growing internationally (p.437)

An argument can clearly be developed that the optimum focus of an effective programme to learn the Latvian or Estonian language would need to have the positive support of the parents of the Russian-speaking minority students. This suggests two aspects:

i) The need for a strategy for adult education of the parents of the Russian-speaking minority children so as to encourage their direct involvement in the learning of the Latvian/Estonian language of their children particularly in the early years of school,

ii) Imposition of the Latvian/Estonian language as the pervasive language of the later years of school against the wishes of the parents of the students will have very limited effectiveness and will serve predominantly to demotivate both parent and student – and alienate them from the educational system.

The key difference between aspect i) and aspect ii) is that learning of the Latvian/Estonian language in aspect i) is voluntary not imposed. Reference is made in a marginal way to the role of parents in the Estonian document, while being virtually
absent in the Latvian document. A potentially promising though undeveloped reference to the role of parents in the Estonian integration programme is regarding extracurricular activities which mentions ‘the system for family study’ (p.31). The ‘wishes of parents’ (p.22) are also mentioned as one voice for consultation with regard to the curriculum in Estonia, and ‘parents’ desire’ to send their children to Estonian-medium schools is discussed (p.26), though with no mention of ‘parents’ desire’ to have their children attend Russian-medium schools. Similarly, the Report of the Government of Estonia (2000) refers to the role of Russian-speaking parents as being four times more likely than their children to want the child to transfer to Estonian speaking schools (p.25) and observes the increasing number of Russian-speaking parents placing their children in Estonian speaking kindergardens and primary schools (p.19). At least the Estonian documents give some acknowledgment of scope for active parental involvement whereas the Latvian document merely refers to an ‘information programme for parents’ (p.61) with nothing at all about an active contributory role for parents with regard either to integration or their children’s education. Both the Latvian and Estonian documents are a missed opportunity to involve parents of minority children in an active way in the education of their children⁹ – and miss the opportunity to motivate parents to monitor their children’s progress in Latvian or Estonian, or even to devise programmes to motivate both parent and child to learn the Latvian or Estonian language together.

Elsewhere in the Estonian document the underlying assumption exists that it is only the children but not the parents who are of concern for political participation:

The younger generation of non-Estonians who have received a secondary and higher education in the Estonian language will become partners in the dialogues taking place in Estonian cultural life, politics and the economy (p.21)

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⁹ Pabriks (2002) examination of representation and ethnic discrimination in Latvian state and local government institutions observed the weak involvement of the Russian-speaking minority in the process of the State’s renewal and “the consequent lack of representation in newly created institutions” (p.50)
This invites the question as to whether their parents are to be partners in the educational (and political) dialogue concerning their children. Kovacs (2002) refers to the danger in the Eastern European context that policy-makers will ‘act as gatekeepers to filter demands of ethnic groups’ (p.23), while the Latvian document mentions that ‘on the psychological level, integration is the ability to trust’ (p.8). Will future Latvian and Estonian documents concerning integration actually trust the Russian-speaking parents through giving them an active role in the dialogue concerning their children’s education as well as facilitating their active involvement in their own children’s general learning and also learning of the Latvian/Estonian language?

(e) Student participation in school activities and community activities as a protective factor against school drop-out

Participation in even one extracurricular school activity is associated with a reduction in rates of early school dropout, particularly for high-risk youth (Mahoney & Cairns 1997). Mahoney (2000) defines participation as one or more years of involvement in the extracurricular activity and states:

The participant is attracted to the activity and is likely competent in that area or may even excel. Unlike preventive interventions that attempt to correct academic or social deficits by remedial work, extracurricular activities may foster a positive connection between the individual and school based on the student’s interests and motivations. The specific activity pursued may be less important than the act of participation itself (p.503)

A key point emerging from Mahoney’s (2000) empirical research which arguably goes beyond its U.S context is that for at risk youth ‘the simultaneous participation of their peer social network in school activities was critical’ (p.512) to the associated reduction in school dropout and criminal arrest. Morgan (1998) cites a study by Beacham (1980) which found that over 60% of high school drop-outs were not involved in any extracurricular activities during their high school years – a level which
is significantly higher than any estimates of the overall number not participating in such activities. Morgan (1998) also refers to McNeal’s (1995) attempt to specify whether certain types of extracurricular activities were more influential than others in preventing dropping out. From a database of over 20,000 high-school students, it was found that participation in activities such as sports and fine arts significantly reduced the risk of dropping out, whereas participation in academic or vocational clubs seemed to have less effect. The beneficial effects of sport and fine arts remained even when important factors like race, socio-economic status, gender and ability were controlled. A strategic plan targeted to the less academic students among the Russian-speaking minorities in both Estonia and Latvia to develop their engagement in extracurricular school activities is clearly needed as a protective factor against a life of early school drop-out, heroin and heightened risk of HIV (as well as against other risks associated with early school drop-out such as involvement in the sex industry in particular, for female early school leavers who cannot find a job without the state language). Two promising examples of extracurricular activities involving fine arts, mentioned in the Latvian plan relate to (i) minority children and youth festivals ‘Zelta Kamolins’ (Golden Ball) involving organisation of folklore and choir festivals and concerts of minority school choirs and folklore ensembles as well as theatre performances and (ii) Interactive Radio Competition for young people broadcast live with performance of songs in languages of different nationalities broadcast by radio stations most popular among adolescents. Reference to extracurricular activities in the Estonian integration plan suggests the provision of language camps and co-operation between schools. McNeal’s (1995) study would suggest that if these are focused on activities such as fine arts and sports, rather than being predominantly academic, they would be more likely to contribute as a protective factor against early school leaving.

Brice Heath & McLaughlin’s (1993) conclusion from examination of sixty different youth organisations involving approximately 24,000 youths in the U.S

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10 Art 19 of the Law on Education of the Republic of Lithuania (1998) recognises:
‘Educational institutions of Lithuania may have children and youth organizations designed to foster moral, civic, cultural, physical and social maturity of pupils and help to meet their needs in self-education and self-expression’
context concludes that the need to establish organisations outside the educational institution context is also a vital one:

Currently, those youth leaders and organizations judged most effective by young people do not define themselves with reference to schools. Most exist with relatively little recognition from or similarity to schools; most of the young who come to these organizations, in fact, regard school as a place that has rejected and labelled them by what they are not rather than what they are (p.4)

The Latvian integration document conceives of (presumably state supported) youth organizations, what Berger & Neuhaus (1977) would term ‘mediating structures’, as an important part of integration in Latvian society. There is an enormous need for a detailed strategic plan for such organizations as part of integration in both Latvia and Estonia targetted at at risk youth.

(f) The interrelation between linguistic-communicative and socio-economic integration

The Estonian State Programme ‘Integration in Estonian Society’ recognises three dimensions to integration, namely, linguistic-communicative integration, legal-political integration and socio-economic integration. However, its overwhelming focus is confined to the first dimension, linguistic-communicative integration. The latter two dimensions are relegated to the status of “long-term” aims i.e. aims achievable later than 2007 (p.17) though with some scope for socio-economic issues to be faced at a regional rather than national level in the short-term through a regional development plan (1998-2003) for the predominantly Russian-speaking Ida-Viru region, a social plan for Ida-Viru county to deal with unemployment, and an ‘Estonian regional development strategy’. Issues regarding socio-economic integration are treated as being “too complicated” (p.18) to be dealt with by the State Integration Programme. This approach noticeably diverges from that of the Latvian integration document ‘The Integration of Society in Latvia’ which recognises
that “the integration of society is closely linked to social and regional problems; the course of discussions strengthened the conviction that a section on social integration should be an integral part of the programme” (p.5). The broader scope of the Latvian plan is evident from its subsections ‘civic participation and political integration’, ‘social and regional integration of society’ and ‘education, language and culture’. Moreover, the Latvian integration plan commits to particularly support disadvantaged regions (p.51), to increase investment in disadvantaged regions (p.51), to an action plan for each town (p.45) and to lifelong education for the disadvantaged and longterm unemployed (p.41). The new institutional set-up foresees the creation of a Social Integration Foundation (in charge of selecting projects and securing financing) and the Law providing for the creation of the Foundation was adopted by Parliament in July 2001. *Yet despite the broader scope of the Latvian plan which purports to examine the integration issue in a manner broader than focusing on simply language learning, the concrete consequences of the Latvian plan place even more emphasis on language learning than the Estonian plan, as all classes will be in the Latvian language from 10th grade onwards, commencing September 1st 2004.* Thus despite the potentially broader focus of the Latvian educational reforms highlighting socio-economic problems underlying educational reform, the reality of the Latvian proposals is the total abolition of Russian-speaking schools by 2004 so that linguistic-communicative competence is the overriding goal of the educational reform plans for Latvia although at first glance it may seem that the Latvian proposals are couched in apparently more moderate language than the Estonian reform plans.

The ECMDDA (2000) report recognises that truancy and school suspension and expulsion is not desirable as non-school attendance leads to heightened risk of drug use. Similar conclusions that absent students are somewhat more likely to be involved in various substances use than students consistently in school have been found in international studies (e.g. Grube, Morgan & Kearney 1989; Andersson, Hibell & Sandberg 1999). Moreover, absent students in Sweden were found to have more ‘advanced’ drug habits (Andersson, Hibell & Sandberg 1999). Enrolment rates in secondary schools in Latvia, Romania and (in particular) Bulgaria are much higher for 16-18 year olds from households in the top quintile of income (per capita) than
for those from households in the bottom quintile (UNICEF 2001). The wealthiest two-fifths of households in Latvia have enrolment rates of 88 and 86% respectively, whereas the poorest fifth of the population have an enrolment rate of only 57% (UNICEF 2001). p.22. While the Latvian document refers to the need for social policies to reduce early school drop-out, this policy goal is totally undermined by the overriding goal of abolishing Russian-language schools. In contrast to the Latvian plan which recognises somewhat the problem and commits to action plans for at risk areas, the Estonian document ignores these problems of early school drop-out almost completely through its framing the terms of its document in terms of linguistic integration and postponing any discussion of socio-economic and political integration until after 2007. Moreover, the Report of the Estonian Government (2000) only refers to drop-out among Russian-speakers in the context of university education (p.45). These omissions are all the more serious given that Estonia was found to be in the top three countries in the ESPAD 1999 survey for highest percentage of students absent from school due to truancy (together with Italy and Poland with 41-45% of students absent) in the previous thirty days. The focus of the Report of the Government of Estonia (2000) is on Russian-speaking children acquiring knowledge in school 'of how to cope and survive in Estonian society' (p.21). This focus may be criticised not simply for its underemphasis on child-centred notions of development of potential for growth of the individual (see also UN Convention on the Rights of the Child) through acknowledging only survival needs, but also for silence on how those who are at risk of early school drop-out will 'cope and survive in Estonian society'.

In Romania there is a national project and several regional projects for preventing early school leaving focusing mainly on children from the minority Roma community as well as areas of most poverty (Romano 2001 personal communication). The European Council of 15 December 1997 adopted a resolution setting out Employment guidelines for incorporation into national employment action plans to be drawn up annually by member states. One of the areas concerned

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11 In contrast to the other countries examined, Russia, Azerbaijan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan (UNICEF 2001)
12 This extremely high percentage of school absentee was obtained even despite the low sample in ESPAD 1999 of the most at risk population in Estonia, namely, Russian-speaking males from Eastern Estonia (see also Section 4)
reduction of the numbers of early school leavers. Member states are required to assess the situation as regards the problem of early school leavers, establish their objective concerning the reduction of drop-outs and explain the strategy and measures they intend to develop to improve the quality of their educational systems. A comprehensive integration plan in both Estonia and Latvia must surely include comparable strategies to deal with early school leavers, especially within the Russian-speaking minority. Moreover, Art 28 e) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (ratified by all three Baltic States) requires States to ‘take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates’.

(g) Social competence

The Estonian plan with its ‘main emphasis’ (p.4) on linguistic-communicative integration develops four sub-programmes in detail: (i) ‘education’, (ii) ‘the education and culture of ethnic minorities’, (iii) ‘the teaching of Estonian to adults’, and (iv) ‘social competence’. The Latvian plan similarly emphasises social competence though it will be seen that the very conception of what social competence means is different to some extent in both documents. The modern study of social competence can be traced to Thorndike (1920) who defined social competence, which he called social intelligence, as ‘the ability to...act wisely in human relations’ and argued that it is distinct from abstract and mechanical intelligence. The early research prompted by Thorndike’s idea operationalized social competence as social insight, social memory and social knowledge (e.g. Broom 1928;1930; Chapin 1942; Hunt 1928). More recent research has operationalized social competence as socially effective action (e.g. Brown & Anthony 1990; Ford & Tisak 1983). Some commentators emphasise social competence as involving ‘ability

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13 Section 10 of the Fundamental Principles of the UN Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (The Riyadh Guidelines) stresses the need for ‘preventive policies facilitating the successful socialization and integration of all children and young persons, in particular through the family, the community, peer groups, schools, vocational training and the world of work, as well as through voluntary organizations. Due respect should be given to the proper personal development of children and young persons, and they should be accepted as full and equal partners in socialization and integration processes’.
to master...developing and maintaining friendships’ (Wiest et al 2001, p.122; see also Asher & Parker 1989; Vaughn, Colvin, Azria, Caya & Krzysik 2001). There is general agreement in the psychological literature that social competence cannot be reduced to just one or two dimensions, but is multidimensional (Buhrmeister, Furman, Wittenberg & Reis 1988; Duran 1983; Marlowe 1986; Riggio 1986) and involves a diversity of definitions (van Aken 1994; Hubbard & Coie 1994; Rohrle & Sommer 1994). Schneider, Ackerman & Kanfer (1996) divide social competence dimensions into the following categories: social intelligence dimensions, interpersonal personality trait dimensions, social skill dimensions and social self regulation dimensions. They observe that within the social intelligence category, social insight, social memory and social knowledge are included. Their review of interpersonal dimensions to social competence highlight traits such as assured-dominant, warm-agreeable, social closeness and social anxiety. Their review of the literature on social skills with regard to social competence highlight skills such as the sending and receiving of verbal and non-verbal signals as well as coaching, negotiating and conflict management. Aspects of social self-regulation which they observe include self-monitoring and emotional control. Schneider, Ackerman & Kanfer (1996) argue that social competence is ‘a compound trait’ and also conclude that ‘social competence overlaps substantially with the personality domain, whereas cognitive ability (as operationalized by academic performance indicators) is less related to social competence. The more verbally-oriented facets of cognitive ability do, however, overlap to some extent with social competence...’ (p.479). In similar vein to Schneider et al (1996), Rutter & Rutter (1992) reject ‘social incompetence’ as a ‘unitary phenomenon’ (p.155), while Dodge et al (1986) regard aggression as a form of ‘social incompetence’.

The Estonian subprogramme of social competence is divided into three objectives:
(a) Inhabitants of Estonia actively participate in the development of the civil society regardless of their nationality and mother tongue, (b) the attitudes of Estonians and non-Estonians contribute to the achievement of the main aims of the state programme and (c) improvement of the situation of groups of the population with serious social special needs. Objective (b) treats social competence not so much as a
skill or psychological trait but as an attitude. Moreover, valuing Estonia is itself treated as being associated with social competence later in the document (p.44/5) with further reference being made to ‘socio-cultural competence’ (p.55). This raises questions as to definition of social competence given that it implies that other attitudes or values are socially ‘incompetent’. An unfortunate implication of objective (a) and (b) is that those who do not speak Estonian actively or who engage in political dissent from the goals of the State programme are not socially competent or at least are presumed not to be socially competent. A badge of inferiority for those who are not ‘socially competent’ is a theme which arose with regard to a publicity campaign (Autumn 2001) in Estonia to ‘encourage’ Russian-speakers to speak Estonian. It portrayed those unable to speak Estonian as tongue tied, with depictions of a man’s mouth tied with a lace and a woman’s mouth with a balloon in it. Many Russian-speakers in Estonia are said to have found this advertising campaign offensive in its attempt to ridicule those unable to speak Estonian (Kalikova 2001 personal communication). Yet the ethos of the advertisement simply mirrored the narrow and negative conceptions of social competence and incompetence expressed in the Estonian integration document. Furthermore, according to the psychological literature, interactions with friends tend to be associated with social competencies in ways that interactions with nonfriend acquaintances are not (Azmitia & Montgomery 1993; Hartup 1996; Ladd & Kochenderfer 1995; Newcomb & Bagwell 1995, 1996). Thus, the ability of Russian-speakers to interact with their friends rather than their acquaintances is as much an indication of social competence as simple language learning.

Oppenheimer (1989) suggests that many aspects of social competence are simply indicators of conformism within a society. Moreover, Durkin (1995) warns of the danger inherent in use of the concept ‘social competence’:

A possible liability of the notion of social competence is that it can attract prescriptivism. Social competence sounds like such a self-evidently desirable property that it is tempting to confuse it with moral worth and to assume that it expresses an objective standard that all ought to be encouraged to match (p.154)
A further issue relates to Wiest et al’s (2001) description of competence as ‘the internal drive to be effective and master the environment’ (p.113). This approach to social competence which emphasises internal or voluntary dimensions to competence is *prima facie* in tension with a top-down imposed requirement to learn Estonian or Latvian in schools as being for the purpose of social competence. This internal or voluntary dimension to social competence is also implicit in Kavussanu & Harnisch’s (2000) examination of assessment of competence as not simply being in comparison with other people but comparison with oneself according to ‘self-referenced criteria’ (p.237) to assess progress (see also Kelly 1999 on ipsative assessment).

The Estonian document is not so much the politicisation of a scientific psychological concept ‘social competence’ as the appropriation of a vague, generic psychological category already ripe for politicisation (see also e.g. Burman 1994 for an account of politics within psychological concepts). Social competence is defined explicitly in the Estonian document as ‘a person’s ability to function adequately on all levels of social life’ (p.66). Selective highlighting of certain features of social competence tends to label those ethnic Russians (whether Estonian citizens or the 25% of the population who are not) as in a presumed state of social incompetence if they do not speak adequate levels of Estonian. It has a dual effect of (a) stamping many from the Russian-speaking minority with a badge of failure and (b) is an individualisation of the integration problem which tends to move attention away from the need to improve education, social support and socio-economic conditions in Russian-speaking areas of high unemployment.

A further example of the individualist ethos of the Estonian integration approach which adopts the twin approach of locating problems of identity mainly within the attitudes of the Russian-speaking minority themselves, and also minimises

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14 Kalmus & Pavelson (2002, p.232) state in the Estonian context that ‘Social competence is inseparably bound to communicative competence, i.e., good command of the official language’

15 Kalikova, Kurbatova & Talu (2002, p.34) refer to “so-called ‘alien’s syndrome’” among the Russian-speaking minority: “they feel they are second-rate people in Estonia, that their knowledge and competence is not required by society”
emphasis on the positive potential role of the State regarding integration, is the words of the Report of the Government of Estonia (2000) which refers to:

the alienated and passive attitude that is widely spread among the non-Estonians [which] must be replaced by the understanding that the opportunities available for each person in Estonian society depend mainly on the individual (p.16) (my italics)

In the Estonian integration document the guiding ethos is one of untrammelled individualistic competition in society, while there is an overwhelming silence on what measures are to be taken to support and educate the weaker students, the so-called 'losers' in the 'competition' between students. Only a very vague outline is provided of education for social competence as a policy towards helping those with ‘serious social needs’. Are low academic achievers or those at risk of early school leaving and consequent drug taking outside the category of 'serious' social needs and thus not deserving of help in a competitive society? This important restriction upon those deserving State attention to ‘serious’ social needs is nowhere defined as to the breadth of its scope. Moreover, this competition ethos pervading the Estonian document ignores the insights of educational psychology on multiple types of intelligence (e.g. Gardner 1993) and the need for the educational system to be flexible enough to allow for expression of different types of intelligence and not just linguistic (verbal) ability. Against this backdrop of a prevailing metaphor of competition among students, social competence takes on a mantle of Social Darwinism where the concerns of the less academic students are overlooked.

In contrast to the Estonian document, the Latvian integration plan includes within its conception of social competence attempts to improve the situation of those on low income, in poverty, with education broader than simply learning the Latvian language. Furthermore, in the Latvian document, social competence is associated with dealing with early school drop out to the extent that it is linked with

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16 Similarly the Report of the Government of Estonia (2000, p.5) focuses on socio-economic integration overwhelmingly at the level of the individual, referring to the individual’s ‘…achievement of a greater competitiveness and social mobility in society’
adult education (p.24/5). The Latvian document provides the following activities as recommendations for education in social competence: providing residents with basic knowledge and information on their possibilities to participate in local community and labour market; development of skills necessary for participating in solving issues that are important for oneself, participation in activities of NGO and co-operation with local authorities; fostering development of new public initiative groups and civic organisations in the local community; formation of civic consciousness and responsibility towards the state; development of participation traditions. Nevertheless, the breadth of vision of the Latvian document is undermined by the subordination of these dimensions to the overriding goal of abolition of Russian-speaking schools by September 2004.

Summary

Analysis of the Estonian and Latvian integration programs for their Russian-speaking minorities from the perspectives of international research in psychology, sociology and education highlights numerous fundamental problems with the programs. These include:

- The narrow conception of social competence for Russian-speakers in the Estonian program leading to a failure identity for many among this minority group

- The lack of provision for less academic students. Labeling less academic and less verbally skilled students as failures if they have difficulty learning in classes in their second language heightens the danger of early school leaving among this group. It ties the student's educational progress to development of a potential weakness in the student regarding Latvian/Estonian language learning rather than focusing on different types of intelligence to accentuate the areas of particular strength for the student to encourage them to continue at school and to avoid a failure identity
• The overriding goal of high school classes being taught through the Latvian/Estonian language is a focus on transmission of knowledge and curriculum as content that fails to provide a student centred education focusing on education as development of the individual. Rigid, unsuitable curricula lead to heightened early school leaving.

• The danger of demotivation of less academic students if transfer to classes in Estonian/Latvian takes place from 10th grade onwards. An imposed language curriculum against the wishes of the student and parents undermines student autonomy and parental involvement/support with consequent risk of decreased motivation for learning. Undermining student autonomy at 10th grade is with regard to a student age cohort which is already most vulnerable to decline in motivation as well as most resistant to external imposition of tasks. Moreover, a strategy of grade retention for those less academic students who struggle to learn in classes through the Latvian/Estonian language is not an effective intervention strategy.

• Despite rhetoric advocating partnership with Russian-speaking parents, genuine partnership between the Latvian State and the parents of Russian-speaking students in the education of their children is excluded due to the lack of genuine choice and decision making power accorded to Russian-speaking parents regarding the top-down, imposed language reforms in Russian-speaking schools in Latvia. This failure to develop an important potential resource in the educational life of the student is demotivating to both parent and student and also undermines the potential for encouragement of the voluntary direct involvement of Russian-speaking parents in the Latvian/Estonian language learning of their children.

• This demotivation and failure identity that has foreseeable consequences of early school leaving, with heightened risk of heroin use and HIV.

Some significant strengths in the Latvian integration plan, which are not given much importance in the Estonian integration proposals, and which need to be retained in future proposals for integration, include:
Proposals to develop student participation in extracurricular school activities and also community activities; these are contributing factors to reduction of early school leaving, particularly when they involve sports and the fine arts, rather than being academic or vocational clubs.

Language learning as linguistic-communicative integration is recognised, at least theoretically, as not being split from socio-economic issues of integration, unlike in the abandoned Estonian integration document. The Estonian proposals relegate issues of socio-economic integration and legal-political integration to long-term aims and in effect treat them as subordinate to the aims of linguistic-communicative integration.

Social competence is viewed in a much broader sense in the Latvian document than in the excessively narrow conception of social competence in the abandoned Estonian integration proposals. This narrow conception overlooks the fact that social competence is a multi-faceted conception that cannot be reduced to simply one dimension. Moreover, the Estonian conceptions of social competence ignore contrary views of social competence as:

i) interaction with friends rather than acquaintances, ii) competence according to self-referenced criteria rather than external, imposed criteria, and iii) without the emphasis of inferiority implicit in the competitive ethos of the Estonian documents’ conceptions of social competence, where the less successful are in danger of being destructively labelled socially incompetent.

From this analysis the need for fresh integration programs emerges. Such programs would be ones:

- where Russian-speakers are actively involved in their design and have active decision-making power regarding their implementation
- would focus on rather than exclude socio-economic integration from its scope
- would directly tackle the problem of early school leaving
- would focus specifically on a strategic plan to develop a role for less academic Russian-speaking students in Estonian and Latvian society