

Cultural Centres as Informal Learning Environments

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Abstract

This article seeks to explore the features of the informal learning in cultural centers and Lithuanian cultural organizations. Cultural centers are unique cultural organizations in Lithuania that function as informal learning environments. The quantitative and qualitative analysis conducted in cultural centers of three border regions – Lithuania (Kybartai, Pagėgiai, Švenčionys, Lazdijai), Belarus (Pelesa, Rimdžiūnai) and Russia, Kaliningrad region (Sovetsk, Gusev) enabled to identify the features of educational activities provided in cultural centers and Lithuanian cultural organizations. Estimating different activity circumstances of Lithuanian cultural centers and cultural organizations acting in Russian and Belarus frontier zones (Lithuanian cultural centers, Lithuanian communities and cultural houses) the comparative approach revealed basic educational similarities and differences of local residents, creating premises for improvement of these processes' management.

Keywords: cultural centres, informal education, learning environments, border regions.

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Introduction

Cultural centers are unique cultural organizations in Lithuania, whose origins lie in the Soviet period. Thus, former “houses of culture” have been active in spreading not only culture, but also the ideological propaganda. However after Lithuania regained its independence in 1990 they were gradually reorganized into cultural centers. Totalitarian Soviet regime in Lithuania formed a high level of professional and amateur national culture, a developed network of cultural institutions and well-educated, ethnically conscious people, who strived to get freedom from communist ideology (Kublickiene et al. 2011:487). Today there are approximately 250 cultural centers in Lithuania. They are mainly financed from the State budget, subordinate to the State or to municipalities and financed by them/ depending on their funding. Cultural centers are dispersed throughout the country and under their “roof” find place different types of artistic groups—professional and amateur— and various cultural activities are organized. These institutions provide various educational and cultural services filling in the gap of similar activities in remote rural areas.

Most of the Lithuanian cultural centers are versatile and multifunctional, providing cultural, educational and social services for children, young people and adults. Frequently these activities include pre-school education and informal education of children, youth and adults, as well as entertainment, recreation, socio-cultural and artistic activities for children and adults, etc. By involving the different local groups and organizing meaningful leisure time, cultural centers develop positive socialization, cooperation and social partnership network. Thus, the functioning system of cultural centers in the country allows to satisfy the socio-cultural needs of the local communities with the assistance of artistic groups, educators and culture managers. Meanwhile, the traditional system of artistic and cultural institutions is more focused on the product as the final result or service redistribution, and usually it is impossible for them to create environments for non-binding communication for the people with the same interests or needs. Communication, encouraging people to join the activities and feel an inner connection, is natural, socially important and essentially occurs only in cultural centers (Matulis 2007:199).

Thus, the cultural center is one of the few organizations that is developing on a national basis, with few analogues in other countries, therefore it acquires special importance in creating and spreading culture in the country. It also plays an important role in the process of informal education in the society. Although the main functions of cultural centers are to develop, create, reconstruct, and disseminate culture, they conduct an informal education, which is often intertwined with the cultural, entertainment and recreational activities.

Despite the fact that informal education represents an important part of the activities provided by cultural centers, the review of studies conducted on informal learning-spaces in cultural organizations allows to state that this issue has been relatively little explored, while the most studies focus on informal learning in rural communities (Aberton 2010), in online learning communities (Gray 2004; Dabbagh, Kitsantas 2012) and in workplaces (Eraut 2004; Hodkinson et al, 2003). Thus, investigation question is what are the features of the informal learning in cultural centers and Lithuanian cultural organizations? The research, however, takes into account only four cultural centers in Lithuania, two in Belarus and two in Kaliningrad region of Russia (located between Poland and Lithuania) in order to explore the expression of educational factors. Thus the aim of this article is to reveal the preconditions for the improved management of educational activities in cultural centers/ cultural ethnic communities. The research is based on the concepts of lifelong learning and informal learning environments. The research methods of the literature analysis, document analysis, comparative analysis, quantitative statistics and qualitative content analyses were applied.

1. Informal learning in cultural centres

Learning has become a life style in our rapidly changing societies, involving people in various learning networks and environments. Beside the formal education, non-formal and informal learning is an everyday phenomenon. Developing theoretical framework for understanding informal learning in the workplace, Eraut states that informal education provides greater flexibility or freedom for learners (Eraut 2004: 247). Informal learning usually occurs through contact with institutionally-authorized guides in situations without a fixed curriculum or assessment. It can be difficult to distinguish it from a self-directed informal learning, like knowledge as the traditional wisdom shared by elders. Thus, informal learning is defined as “any activity involving the pursuit of understanding, knowledge or skill which occurs without the presence of externally imposed curricular criteria” (Livingstone 2001:4). It can occur in any context outside the educative institutions and it is interlinked with everyday learning or lifelong process, whereby an individual acquires knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values from various resources in the surrounding environment. Informal learning consists of learning embedded in planned activities that are not explicitly designated as learning, but which contain an important learning element. It occurs from the daily work, family or leisure activities (Hodkinson et al, 2003:314; Colardyn&Bjornavold, 2004:71).

Informal education is a very important area of society development in the process of life-long learning. Informal education is usually associated with leisure activities, some science or art interests, desire to expand cultural horizons or acquire knowledge and skills that are necessary for the household or communication. Kolb et al. (2007) also points out the benefits of informal education, stating that it provides one with activity and freedom of choice develops independence and responsibility as well as enriched with new experiences and meaning.

The informal learning assists people to acquire competencies necessary for their socialization and development. Formal education alone does not provide sufficient opportunities for self-expression to realize the character and identity to create a national self-awareness.

Only the formal education does not provide sufficient opportunities for the realization of self-expression, development of the character and national self-awareness, realization of cultural creator role, freedom for creativity. In such a way informal education enriches the knowledge obtained in the process of formal education, provided additional skills and capacities implement those in practice. In modern society eight especially important competences relevant to the lifelong learning process context are emphasized: communication in the mother tongue and communication in foreign languages, mathematical, digital, learning to learn, social and civic, entrepreneurship, and cultural (Otten, Ohana 2009:12). For the development of those competences informal education design the prerequisites, enabling persons for the self-improvement and self-realization.

Both formal and informal education is performed in learning environments. Learning environment is defined as a qualitative and rich space that can empower an individual for personal development (Juceviciene, Tautkeviciene 2004:104). It is stated that learning environment is a dynamic, information based space for learning activities that contains various elements that have influence on learner, on educational information or/and the ways this information reaches a learner (Savicke, Juceviciene 2012:80).

Informal learning environments can be created in the vicinity of people. Cultural organizations as environments for informal learning have a subject of the interest from the researchers side and becomes of great importance in the realization of lifelong learning strategy. In some of the studies informal learning process is analyzed in museums (Savicke, Juceviciene 2012; Sanford et al. 2007:136) and libraries (Juceviciene, Tautkeviciene 2004; Sefton-Green 2004:6).

some educational activities in cultural centers are clearly identified in the Law of the Cultural Centers of the Republic of Lithuania: „to organize recreational, educational and other events; to organize

activities of amateur art collectives, studies, and groups; to take care of the preparation of amateur art collectives and their participation in festivals, local, regional, national and international events; to organize activities and artistic training for children and youth“ (LRS, 2004). While in the other defined functions’ guidelines for informal learning are expressed more liquid but anyway are recognizable: cultural center “fosters ethnical culture, art of amateurs, creates artistic programs, develops educational entertaining activities, satisfies cultural demands of society and organizes spread of professional art”.

Many people often chose to spend their leisure time in cultural centers, where various cultural attractive activities are offered. Cultural centers provide local people with numerous cultural-recreational-educational events: concerts, movies, exhibitions, theater performances, ethnic music bands or folk music dance groups, entertaining evenings, meetings with famous personalities, etc. Differently from the Western Europe Lithuanian cultural centers are oriented to the aesthetic education of local people. Being members of artistic groups, they sing, dance, perform, do ethnographic handicrafts, organize exhibitions, artistic groups national and international festivals, etc. Multifunctional cultural center could be described as a provider-institution of educational, cultural and socio-ecological services to the children and adult people living there or those who could visit the specific region (Merfeldaite, Petroniene 2009:130).

Creating environments of informal education cultural centers become extremely important agents in the community, suggesting solutions for the leisure employment and cultural activities, promoting creativity and aesthetical education for the local people. According to Savicke, Juceviciene (2012:78), learning in leisure environments is based on active participation, thus, learning becomes „joyful, accompanied with inner satisfaction, challenging, demanding some efforts, attractive and interesting, full of adventures and risks, competitive and even involving a sense of danger“.

Education in cultural centers is of great benefit not only for the youth, but also for the other age groups. Established amateur artistic groups, implemented projects and events are the results of informal education in these centers. Various workshops and conferences, art events, exhibitions, amateur artistic groups’ concerts cannot exist without special preparation and educational program of the cultural centers.

2. Methodology

Research instrument

Based on theoretical approaches on educational activities in cultural centres two authorized questionnaires were developed: one for the quantitative survey for the community members and another one for the interviews with the managerial personnel of the chosen 8 cultural centres/ cultural organizations (Urboniene, Jureniene, 2013:138). The first standard questionnaire consisted of five blocks of questions. The block of characteristics of educational activities contained 6 mixed questions. The questionnaire also included 5 demographic questions on age, gender, nationality, education, and frequency of participation in the activities in a cultural centre. In the second questionnaire there were also 5 open questions concerning educational activities in the chosen cultural centers.

This article presents characteristics of educational activities in the cultural centres from the respondents’ and informants’ point of view and their answers to the questions that were concerned with the informal education.

Data analysis

For the analysis of the data two methods were applied. For the analysis of the answers of community members the statistical data analysis was applied, which was performed using software SPSS 15.0 for Windows. Research data analysis was performed by applying the descriptive statistics. *Qualitative content analysis* was applied for interview data. Qualitative analysis of content was based on the four

stepperformance: 1) identifying the manifest categories, while referring to the 'key' words; 2) dividing the content of categories into subcategories; 3) identifying intersecting elements in the category/subcategory contents; 4) interpreting the content data (Miles, Huberman, 1994).

Data gathering

The research data was collected with two different methods. The statistical data was collected by performing a survey using a standard questionnaire with closed and open-ended questions for the community members. The quantitative survey was conducted in the end of 2012, spreading the questionnaires in cultural centers in three chosen border regions and in Lithuanian communities in Lithuania, Belarus and Russia, Kaliningrad region. In total 1600 questionnaires were shared, out of which 1199 were returned. The investigation had limitations as most Lithuanians in Kaliningrad region were denationalized and the questionnaire form had to be translated into Russian. The qualitative research data were gathered in January-March 2013. For the staff of cultural centres and for the leaders of Lithuanian ethnic communities semi-structured interviews were used for data gathering.

Target cultural organizations.

In the survey 11 cultural centers and Lithuanian ethnic communities from border regions took part:

- 4 cultural centers in Lithuania (Kybartai, Pagėgiai, Švenčionys and Lazdijai);
- 2 cultural centers and 2 Lithuanian communities in Kaliningrad region (Sovetsk and Gusev);
- 3 Lithuanian communities in Belarus (Minsk Pelesa and Rimdžiūnai).

Characteristics of the respondents.

In all three subsamples women were the majority, over 60%. Concerning the age, among Lithuanian respondents 25,5% were under 24 years, 21% - 25-39 years, 33% - 40-54 years, 16,7% - 55-69 and 3,7% - over 70 years. Among respondents from Kaliningrad region 11,2% were under 24 years, 31,6% - 25-39 years, 36,7% - 40-54 years, 19,4% - 55-69 and 1% - over 70 years. Among respondents from Belarus 34,6% were under 24 years, 25,8% - 25-39 years, 23,3% - 40-54 years, 12,6% - 55-69 and 3,8% - over 70 years.

The level of education among Lithuanian respondents was relatively varying, with 8,9% non-completed secondary education, 29,2% having a secondary education, 27,9% having a college education, and 34% having a higher education. Among Belarusian respondents 9,4% had not completed secondary education, 25,8% had a secondary education, 37,1% had a college education, and 27,7% had a higher education. Respondents from Kaliningrad region had a following level of education: 3% had non-completed secondary education, 9,3% - a secondary education, 9,3% - a college education, and 59,8% - a higher education.

According to nationalities, major part of respondents in Lithuania was comprised of Lithuanians – 96,7%, in Belarus – 77,3% of Lithuanian, whereas in Kaliningrad region – only 8,2%. Respondents of other nationalities who participated in the investigation in Lithuania were: Polish – 1%, Jewish-0,6%, Russians-0,9%, Tartars-0,3%, Latvians-0,1%, Belorussians-0,3%. In Belarusian subsample national minorities who participated in the investigation: Belorussians – 18,2%, Polish – 1,3%, Russians – 2,6%, Tartars-0,6%. In Kaliningrad region besides already mentioned Lithuanian national minority, which comprised 8,2%, 2,7% Belorussians were questioned as well. As it can be observed from the submitted research data, mostly denationalized are the Lithuanians living in Kaliningrad region, who were the minority during the research since it was possible to return only 98 questionnaire forms out of 300.

Characteristics of the informants

In the second sample there were 55 informants working in the cultural centers and leaders in the Lithuanian cultural communities in Belarus and Russia, Kaliningrad region. The scope with regards to gender was distributed in the following way: 14 men and 41 women, 22 informants out of them have had professional experience up to 10 years; 18 of them have had professional experience of 10-20 years and 15 of them have had professional experience of work in the field of culture of more than 20 years. Only 4 of all the informants do not perform work related to management of the cultural organization or do not have commitments of a managerial nature for the communities of Lithuanian immigrants. All the informants from the cultural centres of Kybartai, Pagėgiai, Lazdijai and Švenčionys administrate the organization or its branches or artistic groups.

3. Results

Starting with quantitative research data some tendencies can be identified. The results showed that respondents from Lithuanian and Belarus subsamples mostly come to cultural centers/ Lithuanian cultural organizations to take part in events and festivals (75% and 76%), while in Kaliningrad region subsample people attend a club or an artistic activity there (62%). The possibilities for learning in these environments are presented in the below analysis.

The Figure.1 presents the opinion of the respondents concerning the possibility to learn new things in cultural centers/ Lithuanian cultural organizations. The diagram shows that the largest part of the respondents of all the three groups under research (in Lithuania – 86.9%, in Belarus – 97.9%, in Kaliningrad region – 95.8%) think that one can learn new things in cultural centers/ Lithuanian cultural organizations.

Figure 3.1. Opportunities to learn new things in cultural centers by subsamples (by subsamples, %, N= 1068)

The respondents of all the three groups under research, independently of their age, indicated that there were conditions formed at cultural centers/ Lithuanian cultural organizations to learn new things. Generalizing the selection by the respondents (of Lithuania, Belarus, Kaliningrad region, Russia) about the possibility to learn new things at cultural centers/ Lithuanian cultural organizations, and analyzing them from the perspectives of gender, education, age and social status, it was observed that more than 80% respondents think that such possibilities are provided.

Figure 2 provides the learning benefit given by the activities of the cultural centers/ Lithuanian culture organization to the members of the community.

Figure 3.2 Benefits of participating in activities of cultural centers (by subsamples, %, 1-3 answers)

Thus, the Lithuanian (43.8%) and Belarus (45.0%) respondents noted that the biggest benefit for them was to have a possibility to share valuable experience. The respondents of Kaliningrad region (67.3%) indicated that they deepened their knowledge in such fields as ethnic and professional culture spheres, and a smaller number of them (62.2%) noted that they had the national identity feeling growing. The Lithuanian respondents (41.9%) indicated that the sense of solidarity of the community was also increasing. The Belarus respondents (31.3%) chose the tolerance development towards other nations. The smallest number of Lithuanian (4.3%) and Kaliningrad region (4.1%) respondents indicated that they reduced fear and hostility towards other races, nations, religions, while Belarus (13.1%) respondents mentioned that they acquired knowledge of ethnographic handicrafts.

Analyzing the significance of educational activities of cultural centers/ Lithuanian cultural organizations in terms of gender, it was noticed that women were more active than men. In terms of age groups this question was not responded by any of the respondents over 70 years of age in Kaliningrad region. The respondents from the Lithuanian subsample show the same tendencies just like in other sections: the growth of the feeling of solidarity as well as sharing valuable information. The respondents of Kaliningrad region of all age groups, just like those in line with education, except for the respondents up to 24 years of age (27.3%), chose the growth of the national identity feeling and the increase of knowledge about ethnic and professional culture. The respondents of Belarus pointed out the sharing of valuable experience (25-39 years old – 56.1%; 40-54 years old – 45.9% and the percentage dropped down to 35.0% between the age of 55-69 years. The respondents over 70 years indicated that the solidarity feeling among the members of the community was increasing (50.0%).

Analyzing the activities of informal learning of cultural centers/ Lithuanian cultural organizations with regards to the education of respondents, several tendencies have been noticed: the first one is that the respondents of Kaliningrad region (72.4%) and Belarus (59.1%) with university degree indicated the importance of strengthening of the national identity feeling. The Lithuanian respondents with university degree (50.8%) claimed the importance of increasing feeling of solidarity of the community. The second aspect is that in spite of their education, the Lithuanian subsample respondents more or less equally selected the sharing of valuable experience.

Generalizing we could state that in all the three subsamples, when analyzing the benefit given by educational activities of cultural centers/ Lithuanian cultural organizations, a few tendencies have been noticed: in all the sections (gender, age, education, social status), the dominating answer was the sharing of valuable experience and the increase of the solidarity feeling among the members of the community. The respondents of Kaliningrad region indicated the increasing feeling of national identity as well as enlarged knowledge about ethnic and high-level culture.

Figure 3 presents the general opinion of the respondents about the learning or educational activities offered by cultural centers/ Lithuanian cultural organizations.

Figure 3.3 Satisfaction with education activities in cultural centers (by subsamples, %, N = 981)

From the Figure 3 it is evident that the Lithuanian respondents least of all (88.0%) are satisfied with the learning and educational activities offered by cultural centers. The representatives of Lithuanian communities and organizations in Belarus evaluated their activity best of all (96.5%), and in Kaliningrad region – 93.3%. Such a situation may be due to the fact that the Lithuanian respondents have bigger possibilities to consume the products created by cultural centers, as they have full-time specialists and therefore their opinion is more critical than that of Lithuanian communities living and acting outside the territory of Lithuania.

Further the segments of consumers of the created educational products by cultural centers/ Lithuanian cultural organizations are presented. Figure 4 gives the general graphic view of the researched. It shows that the respondents from Lithuanian subsample (72.1%) and Kaliningrad region's subsample (73.4%) think that people of various ages may learn more and develop. Whereas the respondents of Belarus totally disagree (0%) that elderly people may learn new things, but in their opinion, children and teenagers (35.5%) and youngsters (26.8%) may acquire new skills and knowledge.

Figure 3.4 Age of people that can learn more new skills? (by subsamples, %, N=1023)

Generalizing the products created by cultural centers/Lithuanian cultural organizations to various segments during the research, it was established that the respondents of Lithuania and Kaliningrad region in all the sections under research (gender, age, education and social status) indicated that people of various age can improve and learn new things, and the respondents of Belarus said that children and teenagers have the possibilities to improve themselves most of all.

Respondents from all the subsamples were asked to indicate if communication with other people coming to cultural centers/ Lithuanian cultural organizations allows learning new things Figure 5 graphically shows that almost all the respondents (from 88.1% in Lithuania to 98.0% in Belarus) agree that communication with other visitors of cultural centers allows to learn new things. It is closely related to Figure 2 where it was inquired what cultural centers provide for the members of communities. The dominating answer in all the sections was that sharing of experience.

Figure 3.5 Communication in cultural centre with other visitors allows to learn new thing (by subsamples, %, N=1083)

All the sections showed one tendency (gender, age, education and social status) that communication with other visitors of cultural centers/ Lithuanian cultural organizations allows learning new things. Just the respondents in Kaliningrad region, having no secondary education (33.3%) noted that it did not allow them to learn new things, but this percentage does not form the majority, so it does not express the general established tendency.

Figure 6 graphically shows the choices of the respondents about what should be improved so that the members of the community who consume the products created by cultural centers/ Lithuanian cultural organizations and taking part in their activities could improve themselves more and learn.

Figure 3.6 Suggestions about development of educational activities in cultural centers (by subsamples, %, N= 1011)

As it is evident from the picture, the respondents in Belarus (48.3%) and Kaliningrad region (47.9%) think that more artistic-creative events should be organized, while Lithuanians (36.2%) think that entertainment and leisure events should be organized more often. This question is closely related to the fact, what cultural activities and events are visited most often of the respondents from Lithuanian and Belarus subsamples. The Lithuanian respondents chose festivals and other leisure events and here they confirmed that this activity should be enlarged, because it provides conditions for them to improve themselves and learn new things.

Thus, despite the fact that the majority of respondents stated that cultural centers perform educational activities, which are especially visible in organization of artistic-creativity activities, their usefulness were assessed differently, i.e. respondents from Belarus stressed that the most possibilities for the improvement and increase of knowledge have children and teenagers.

Qualitative investigation results complement the above presented results of quantitative research. Thus it was important to identify how the employees and leaders of cultural centres and cultural organizations understand informal learning and how they value it in their professional or social activity, because it largely determines the role of informal learning in the context of the activities of those organizations. So, when the informants were asked about how they understand informal education, what

educational activities are carried out by their organization and for what groups of people it is meant, we gained the material that allows us to make further generalizations.

A large number of the informants representing the Lithuanian cultural centres understand informal education as **learning** under the conditions of informal training. Most of them mentioned **new knowledge and skills** provided to the visitors of the cultural centres and participants in events. The newly acquired knowledge and skills in certain fields were named, for instance, learning archaic crafts (*“Get-together parties are arranged where one can learn to weave willow twigs in one place, and learn to knit in another place, also we learn the craft of shoemaking and decoration of Easter eggs”*), cooking (*“I am mostly involved in ethno-culture, we organize various events and then we teach cooking, etc. Now we have a very nice festival of cooking heritage.”*), playing or dancing (*“We teach folk, modern, linear dances for kids and adults of various age.”*), even very specific businesslike skills can be provided (*“We teach employees of the branch to prepare projects.”*).

Often at cultural centres, education as teaching and as learning is often part of many undertakings and events, for example, according to one informant: *“Education takes place in the ensemble, for instance, before starting to learn a song or a dance, we always discuss its origin, how it is performed in other places, etc. People learn about their own country, get more knowledge, and broaden their outlook. Before Mardi Gras (Shrove Tuesday), we make masks and learn about the origin of this festival. Before Easter, we lay the Easter table, talk about traditions, what dishes should be served, etc. We arrange a quiz on January 15 “Flowing by the Nemunas through the History of Lithuania Minor”. Each year we organize a folklore festival when we say good-bye to storks. An ornithologist visits us and he tells about how storks live and people with children are very interested in it...”* So it is evident that cultural centres organize many events that have various educational elements related to educational activity. Often they mention learning stressing the importance of transference of experience. As it was noticed by the manager of one cultural centre, *“we try to broaden knowledge, form skills, transfer experience and teach how to consume amateur high-level culture by educational activity.”*

Out of traditional educational events that are organized by cultural centres that participated in the research, the informants named those that, in their opinion, include most of the educational factors: all national holidays, Easter, Advent, Autumn Festival, the Border Fiesta, Honey festival, Flax festival, Summer Farewell festival, the evening of romances, modern dance festival, etc. Such a variety lets us state that any event by its nature may be both entertainment and informal learning.

Comparing the data gained from the informants from Lithuanian cultural centres and the informants from cultural organizations and Lithuanian communities in Belarus and Russian border territories, it should be underlined that the informal learning aspect for the latter is not as important as their activities. It was mentioned only by one informant in these samples, for example, the informant in Sovetsk (Kaliningrad region Russia) said that, *“Most often the educational activity is related to ethno-culture: organization of festivals, teaching of folk dances and songs.”*

Another difference is that the informants from the Lithuanian cultural centres differ to the informants from the border territories of Belarus and Russia, regarding **the broadening of outlook** which is important as **informal learning** or any other category of defined education. It was only mentioned by one informant from Sovetsk (Kaliningrad region Russia): *“People hear songs from other cultures, and it means they get to know them. They get to know national clothes. We want to broaden the knowledge of languages, as well.”*

While, many of the employees of the Lithuanian cultural centres said that, *“Informal education is the educative activity”*, or, as another informant put it, *“Work with my ensemble contributes to the enlightenment of people, their concentration and solidarity.”* Again, the broadening of outlook is, of course,

related to the knowledge and skills gained, knowing deeper ethnic culture as well as professional high-level culture. As it was said by the informant from the cultural centre of Lazdijai, *“When people participate in our events they enlighten themselves, because they invite someone to show them and teach them something new. Comparing the situation as it was three years ago and as it is now, much more educational activity is performed now. In this year of dialects, we will have events devoted for all the 4 dialects. It is also a cognitive event, and cooperating among people and sharing of the experience are evident.”* The enlightenment of local people – both young and older – is also a very important aspect of the activity of cultural centres, as, according to one informant, *“We play classical music in classes for children, because a child will not have a chance to listen to it anywhere else, and when he or she hears it, they start to understand it.”* Another informant noted such a concept of education as the way of broadening of one’s outlook: *“I understand education as letting older people learn about innovative things, getting used to them and integrating into them, for example, computer literacy.”*

Thus, the differences in evaluation of the role of informal education in cultural organizations in terms of trans-cultural aspect were revealed. First of all, employees and leaders of cultural centers/Lithuanian cultural organizations see the informal education as organic part of activities of these educational centers, which cover various aspects of educational aspects – training, widening of the scope and perfection of values, related to the self-realization. Such view is of importance to the development of cultural organizations in order to stimulate increase of individual values and tolerance of local inhabitants. For the representatives of Lithuanian cultural centres aspects of the educational and individual values training are of great importance. For the cultural organisations located in Russia and Belarus (close to the border) personality perfection and Lithuanian nurturance aspects are of great importance. However, still a part of the respondents follow rather limited education conception, thus we could misunderstand role of the education in the activities of cultural employees and public volunteers.

Conclusions

Investigating informal education conception, the constitution components – learning, enlightenment, and development – in the research data analysis were revealed unequally: in Lithuanian cultural centres educational activities are mostly focussed to the learning and enlightenment activities, while in cultural organisation in Kaliningrad region and Belarus informal learning and especially enlightenment aspects are not emphasised. All attention is focussed to the development of values and increase of national identity.

The investigation showed that education conception is frequently related with recreation. Insufficient understanding of education and assessment was revealed also in the extremely limited planning of the educational activities in the investigated cultural organisations. In the study two educational activities assessment tendencies were revealed: 1) qualitative investigation showed that heads and managers of the cultural centres widely understand educational activities as self-contained process, however, these activities are not interpreted as deliberate and purposeful activities of cultural centres; 2) however, respondents who are “using products” of cultural centres hardly see educational benefits and more often name it as recreational. Nevertheless investigation data showed that both head and managers of the Lithuanian cultural centres and members of the Lithuanian communities, which are “using cultural products” do not recognise that cultural centre organises and performs lifelong learning process.

In Belarus investigated Lithuanian communities due to specificity i.e. concentration (school, cultural centre, church and community) are capable to perform lifelong learning process, however their informal education activities are oriented to the children and youth. The exceptional are the Lithuanian

cultural organisations in Kaliningrad region, which due to the lack of human resources and limited capabilities are not able to perform the process.

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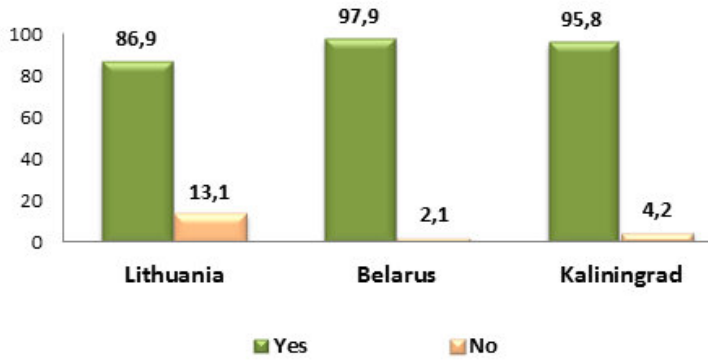


Figure 3.1

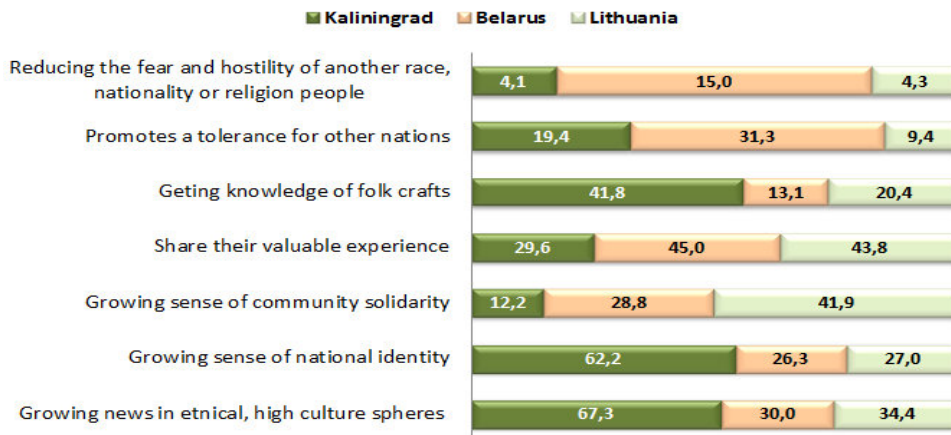


Figure 3.2

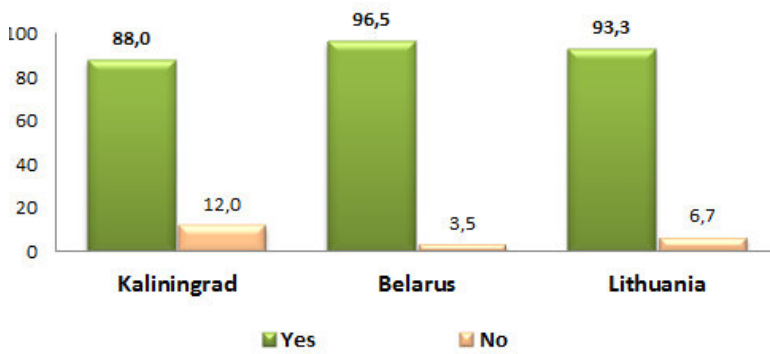


Figure 3.3

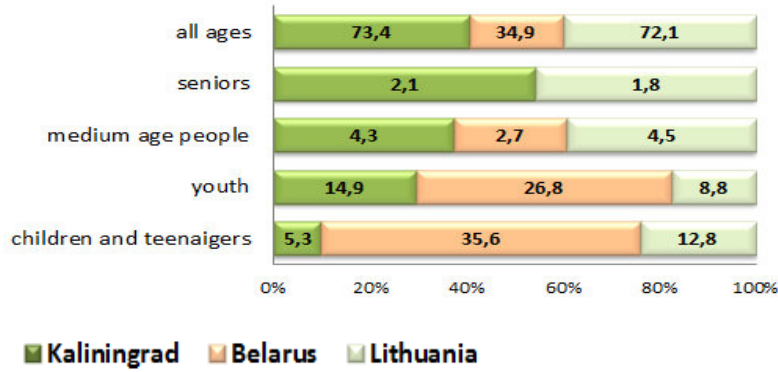


Figure 3.4

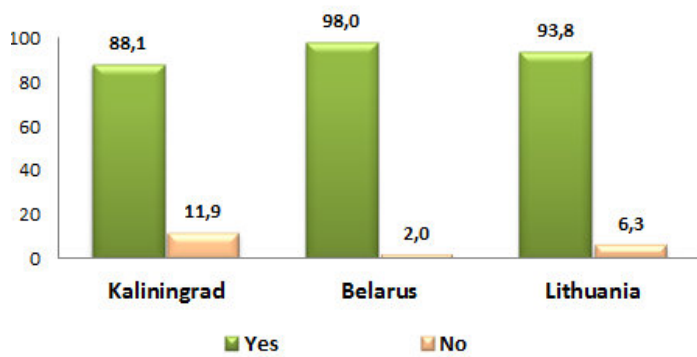


Figure 3.5

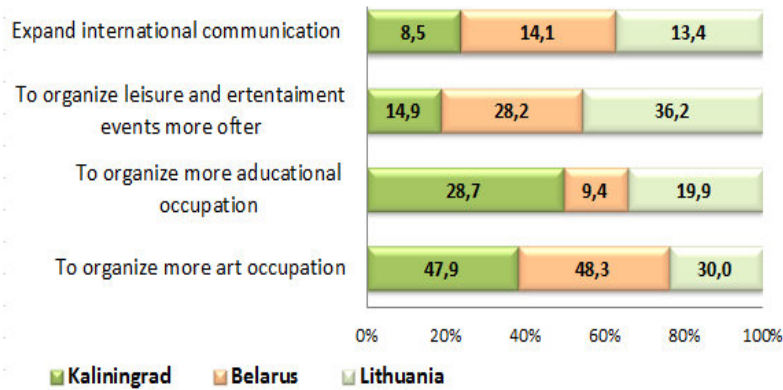


Figure 3.6