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## Opinions of Pre-Service Preschool Teachers About Purposefulness: Sustainability Aspect

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### Abstract

The contradictions of human development nowadays are related to the educational environment, which is characterized by changes induced by globalization and modern technologies; therefore, the activation of the potential of personality is becoming increasingly important, which is impossible without the training of purposeful and motivated teachers at the institutions of higher education. The aim of the article is to analyze the opinions of students, pre-service preschool teachers, about teacher purposefulness in the context of sustainability. The research methodology includes the theoretical method – the analysis of theoretical literature and the empirical method – a survey of 271 pre-service teachers, i.e., 1st-year part-time students at the University of Latvia. The results of the study show that future preschool teachers' understanding of purposefulness is related to their life experiences and is formed in relation to the development of personal goals.

**Keywords:** Pre-service preschool teachers, purposefulness, sustainable teacher education.

### Introduction

We are currently living in the time called the Decade of Action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals set by the United Nations Organization by 2030. Reports on sustainable development goals (Sachs et al., 2022; United Nations, 2020) show that so far global efforts have not been sufficient to ensure significant changes in society.

Therefore, the multidimensional conceptualization of sustainability in its natural, cultural, political, and social dimensions is particularly relevant, as it is important to focus on problem solutions bearing in mind future expectations (Li & Monroe, 2019; Miller, 2018). According to the report “Learning for the Future” (UNECE, 2011), these

expectations put a special emphasis on changes in individual's knowledge, worldview, and creative thinking necessary for sustainable development of education.

This era is also called the Anthropocene, in which the relationship between human beings and nature is affected by the mixing of anthropocentrism, egocentrism, and selfishness, changing the sensitivity of human beings and their ability to adapt to the environment (Salīte et al., 2021).

As the digitalization of education invests technology with the meaning of omnipotence (Vides aizsardzības un reģionālās attīstības ministrija, 2020), skill-based technological changes imply competition between education and technologies (Rivža et al., 2021; Mirķe, 2023). On the other hand, the importance of education as an essential social capital that ensures success in international competition – in human upbringing, development, and value formation – is underestimated. The introduction of new technologies and the spread of new means of communication in society lead to profound anthropological and social changes in human beings (Dudik & Markov, 2020).

At these crossroads of problematic issues, it is important to preserve the personality's search for the meaning of life, purposeful self-realization, and self-development. Therefore, the issue concerning the quality and efficiency of human capital, the activation of personal potential, which is not possible without the training of purposeful and motivated teachers oriented towards growth and excellence, is becoming increasingly important (Izglītības un zinātnes ministrija, 2021).

The re-orientation of education towards sustainability is especially relevant in teacher education because teachers are entrusted with the care of young people – the next chain link in the evolution of human consciousness, and it depends on the teachers whether the aforementioned evolution will progress in the direction of inclusiveness (UNESCO, 2005; Grabovska & Grabovskis, 2009).

The objective of teacher education is significantly related to the efforts to help future teachers to arrive at a sustainable and inclusive wisdom of life (Salīte et al., 2009), because the teacher is the main implementer of national strategic and tactical goals of education and the driver of change. The essence of sustainable higher education is to ensure the ability of individuals to adapt to the changing environmental conditions, to prepare students for professional activity in information society, as well as to create opportunities for everyone to improve themselves creatively and to change their standard experience of life activity (Grabovska, 2006, p. 139). The reorientation of students towards the goal of sustainability should also be implemented in the education of prospective preschool teachers as its main strategy (UNESCO, 2014).

In this regard, our study highlights the importance of developing pre-service preschool teachers' sense of purpose in teacher training programs at the institutions of higher education. The aim of the study is to analyze the opinions of students, pre-service preschool teachers, about purposefulness in teacher's pedagogical activity in the context of sustainability.

### **Theoretical Background of the Study**

Along with globalization and the rapid development of technology, the nature of professions and the demand for them are changing (Jarvis & Song, 2017; Murphy, 2014; Žabko, 2023). The studies show that, regarding individual's attachment to profession, which includes the motivation of choosing a profession, considerations like the "creative nature of work" are becoming less important, whereas the opportunity to have "good remuneration" is becoming increasingly important (Koroļeva et al., 2014,

pp. 167–168; Priževite, 2022). It should be noted that the prestige of the profession, its attractiveness and competitiveness are also important motives of professional choice (Priževite, 2022). The low prestige of the teaching profession leads to the situation that the students who are willing to obtain higher education enroll in teacher training programs, but after graduation they continue to work in another profession (Ekonomikas Ministrija, 2020; Nevmerzhytska et al., 2023). In the studies devoted to the teaching profession, it is emphasized that a large number of students enrolling in teacher training programs have a low level of motivation and do not always have an adequate idea of the specifics of teacher's work, psychological and emotional tension, and the need to work in a constantly changing situation. They join teacher training programs because they have not managed to enroll in more prestigious study programs, such as law or medicine (Pipere et al., 2022).

The aforementioned demonstrates that in today's social and cultural context, several indications of unsustainability can be seen in relation to the teaching profession. The studies maintain that the changing situation in teacher education requires teachers who find both their personal and societal purpose in their teaching activities and are able to work in the teaching profession in the long term (Kuusisto & Tirri, 2021).

Latvia has started a new transformation of the content of education; therefore, the training of prospective preschool teachers is related to the need to develop diverse competencies. For this initiative to be successful, the selection of candidates for the teaching profession must be reviewed (OECD, 2019). Therefore, the preparation of purposeful preschool teachers in the study process is very important, paying special attention to the formation of students' understanding of purposefulness in teacher's professional activity.

The foundations for the understanding of purposefulness in scientific literature are constituted by the ideas about the meaning of personal activity and life activity (Leontiev, 1975, 2005; Rubinshtein, 1989/2004), a theory of goal setting (Rubinshtein, 1989/2004; Locke & Latham, 1990; Weiner, 1996; May, 1989, etc.), self-efficacy theory (Bandura, 1977), value theory (Eccles & Wigfield, 2002), and achievement theory (Elliot, 1999). In the context of our study, Rubinshtein's ideas about the relationship between will and purpose and the movement from external control to internal control are essential (Rubinshtein, 1989/2004). Human will does not arise directly from needs but stems from the awareness of motives and their result – purpose. The purpose itself is like a stimulus dominant. The regulation of activity with the help of will is conscious, and it is reinforced by goals and motives.

Purposefulness is defined as the most important characteristic of individual's will, which manifests itself in the ability to set and achieve a goal (Leontiev, 2007). The most important aspect in the definition of the purpose is the recognition of the purpose as a conscious motive and task (Leontiev, 2007, p. 252). The purpose of human activity is the relationship between a subjective need and the perception necessary to satisfy the need, i.e., internalization (Rubinshtein, 1989/2004): the desired or achievable result of the action predicted/ anticipated in thoughts; purpose expresses the meaning of any activity and describes the content of human life (May, 1989).

Several scientific studies on teacher purposefulness are based on the concept of purpose developed by Damon et al. where purpose is defined as “a stable intention to accomplish something that is both meaningful to the self and of consequence beyond the self over time” (Damon et al., 2003, p. 212). This definition stems from Frankl's (1988) concept of the role of meaning and purpose in individual well-being, resilience, and freedom of action, through which a person can find meaning in situations when

even basic needs are not met. Thus, when an individual knows his/her goals and is committed to achieve them, the purpose is a moral beacon or a compass (Moran, 2009) that encourages them to overcome challenges and stress and find hope and resilience in the future.

Several studies emphasize that a clear sense of purpose is vital throughout the whole working life of a teacher as the effectiveness of teachers is determined by the extent to which teachers maintain faith in their profession (Day et al., 2006; Zolli & Healy, 2012; Gordon, 2022). Likewise, Hong (2012) notes that students' needs are met most effectively when they are taught by a positive teacher with a clear professional sense of purpose and confidence.

On the other hand, Tirri (2019) defines a purposeful teacher as someone with a long-term moral commitment to teaching that is both meaningful personally and benefits students, colleagues, and society. Three dimensions are clearly marked in this definition: long-term involvement, personal meaningfulness, and contribution beyond oneself. According to Damon (2003), the beyond-self dimension emphasizes the noble and moral character of purpose.

Scholars emphasize that virtue is also included in the purpose of teachers' activity if they are willing to serve others in their profession (Han, 2015). A virtue-based approach to education can help teachers gain moral experience that allows them to reflect their personal goals in relation to work (Harrison, 2019). The Finnish scholar Tirri (2019) suggests that in this context, moral goals include the projection of personal optimism for the present and the future, as well as commitment and resilience in changing circumstances. Studies conclude that in the teaching profession self-orientation alone does not help an individual to face challenges and cope with them; teacher education also requires an ethical basis and readiness to serve others (Kuusisto & Tirri, 2021).

In our opinion, these findings are also related to the studies of human consciousness, which offer a new approach, drawing attention to the inseparable connection of human consciousness with the environment (Revonsuo, 2009) and justifying the necessity of transformation of human ecological consciousness into ego-eco in life activity (Naess, 1984, 1990, 1995). The theory of deep ecology provides a set of far-sighted messages – to restore the deep and diverse connection of human beings with the world by transforming the current egoistic and anthropocentric tendencies, value orientations, and narrow technocratic consumerism inherent in a human being. In this regard, a new understanding of the connection between the formation of altruism and human experience is also important (Klein, 1957; Nielsen, 2017).

In the context of our research, those studies in which purposefulness is related to the actualization of human potential and the personal level of its structure, which form the phenomenon of the meaning of life (ideals, beliefs, and values), reference points for one's activity, are of particular importance. This level is manifested in moral potential with conscience as an internal barometer for doing the right thing in its center, which guides an individual toward the right action (Shutenko et al., 2022).

Studies on the motives for choosing a teaching profession have revealed that the students who enroll in preschool teacher training programs are dominated by altruistic motives, which include the desire to support the child's development and create changers in society (Balyer & Ozcan, 2014). However, when faced with problems in practical work, experiencing the reality shock (Kim & Cho, 2014), and seeing a significant discrepancy between the imagined and the experienced reality in the first years of professional activity, they often leave the profession (Bergmark et al., 2018;

Gordon, 2022). Several studies have reported that the problems faced by new teachers in the first years of their teaching career are related to insufficient teacher training and a discrepancy between the initial teaching purpose of potential teachers and the reality of life (Thomson et al., 2012; Thomson & McIntyre, 2013). Therefore, considering the practical experience of implementing teacher training programs, special emphasis should be placed on the sustainability of teacher education, paying attention to the professional maturity of teachers as an expression of their sense of purpose (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Kovalevskaya, 2013), because purposefulness appears as an indicator of teacher's professional preparedness and readiness for independent professional activity (Baltušīte, 2013; Jurgena et al., 2019).

Studies on teacher's professional activity also connect purposefulness with teacher's organizational activity in managing the process of learning. It indicates the teacher's methodological preparedness (Madalāne, 2010).

Furthermore, research in the field of purposefulness emphasizes the importance of the social dimension of sustainability and a deeper biopsychosocial understanding of teacher's activity. In this regard, studies have revealed that students' initial understanding of teacher's professional purposefulness is formed in relation to the development of their personal goals and the desire to master their profession; thus, it could help improve the attraction and retention of teachers in the profession (Brunetti, 2001; Gordon, 2022).

In order to facilitate the formation of a sense of purpose in future teachers, it is important to highlight and evaluate the factors that influence the development of purposefulness: the need to achieve a goal, identifying and setting one's own goals, choosing means to achieve the goal, drawing up a specific life plan for oneself, using means to achieve one's goals, and implementation of a specific action plan (Jurgena et al., 2019).

So far, the opinions of prospective preschool teachers about teacher purposefulness have not been studied sufficiently (Jurgena et al., 2019). Therefore, we have focused on the study of this issue.

The pedagogical activity of the institutions of higher education forms an educational environment in which the readiness of future specialists for professional activity develops. Readiness for professional activity consists of a set of qualities, which is the result of the accumulated positive experience and the successful internal potential of pedagogical activity, as well as the state of resources for purposeful activity (Baltušīte, 2013). Therefore, it is important to find out the opinions of students to identify pre-service preschool teachers' understanding of purposefulness in pedagogical activity.

## **Methodology**

In order to identify the opinions of prospective preschool teachers on purposefulness, the research methodology includes a theoretical method – the analysis of scientific literature, and an empirical method – a student survey, using a survey questionnaire developed and adapted in Latvia (Bernande, 2013).

The survey questionnaire included 35 closed-ended items–statements and two open-ended questions. The closed-response items of the questionnaire were designed according to a 5-point Likert scale, with responses ranging from 1 – *strongly disagree* to 5 – *strongly agree*.

The survey was conducted in 2023. The participants of the study were 271 first-year part-time students from the University of Latvia – pre-service preschool teachers. There were students with very different life and work experience among the respondents, which could significantly affect the results of the study; therefore, for detailed study, the respondents were divided into groups according to various characteristics: previous education (general secondary, vocational, higher), age, total work experience, and pedagogical work experience. Three groups were created depending on the age of the students: group I – 19–25 years, II – 26–34 years, and III – 35 years and over. The average age of the respondents was 31.6.

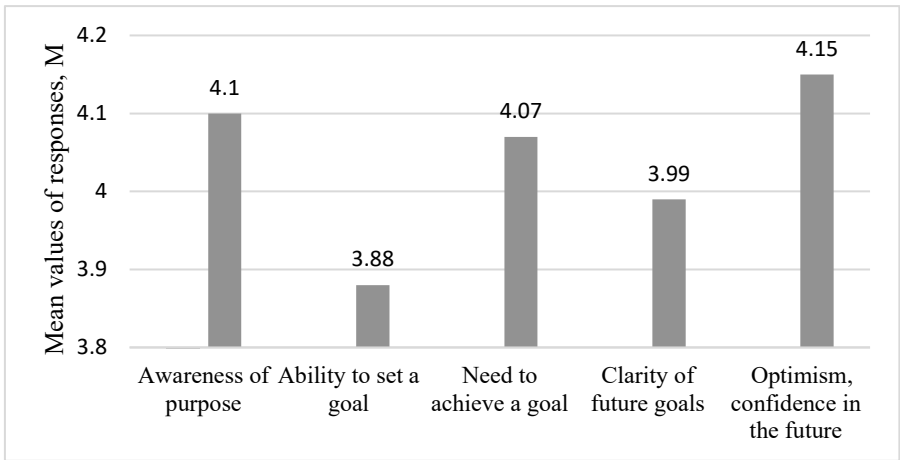
The questionnaire was made using Google Docs. The survey was conducted online. Students’ participation in the survey was voluntary; the anonymity of the survey was guaranteed. The distribution of empirical data did not correspond to the normal distribution; therefore, non-parametric statistical analysis methods were used to process the empirical data: Spearman’s rank correlation and Kruskal Wallis Test.

The reliability (inter-item consistency) of the questionnaire (for closed-ended items) according to Cronbach alpha was 0.91.

Research Results

The results of the study provide an insight into the opinions of prospective preschool teachers in Latvia regarding teacher purposefulness. The survey results show that the future preschool teachers’ assessment of their purposefulness and the factors characterizing it, including the means to achieve their goals, is generally high. There are no statistically significant differences depending on whether the studies of pedagogy were started immediately after obtaining secondary education or after previously obtained higher education in a field not related to pedagogy. The mean values of the responses ( $M = 3.88 - 4.15$ ,  $SD = 0.79 - 0.85$ ) indicate that most of the students believe that they are always/ almost always aware of the purpose of their activity and the need to achieve it in order to look to the future with confidence, so they are purposeful (Figure 1).

Figure 1  
*Students’ Assessment of Their Purposefulness ( $1 \leq M \leq 5$ )*



The distribution of responses according to a 5-point scale shows that most of the respondents (69 %) believe that they always know how to set a goal; a similar number of the respondents (71 %) indicated that they clearly knew their future goals.

However, the high degree of purposefulness expressed in the survey responses can be evaluated as relative. This is evidenced by respondents' answers to the open-ended question about their greatest achievement in life. For most respondents, their biggest achievement so far is related to their family ("*creating my family*", "*my children*", "*building the family home*") or entering university ("*For 20 years, I couldn't pluck up my spirit to get higher education and now I'm on my way to achieve my goal*", "*enrolling in university and having confidence in myself that I'll be able to graduate*"). Only 25 % of the respondents confidently claim that their achievement is also important to others ("*creating a home nursery by providing babysitting services*", "*taking care of the children who have lost their parents*", "*raising a son to be a smart, sincere person*").

Spearman's rank correlation test allows us to conclude that a large number of students understand their purposefulness as a potential skill. This statement is confirmed by the following: a) a weak relationship between the items that describe students' purposefulness skills and responsibility, independence in action,  $r(271) = .22 - .26$ ; b) weak relationship between purposefulness skills and purposeful planning of achievement,  $r(271) = .20 - .22$ . Similarly, there is a weak relationship between responsibility, independence, and purposeful planning of achievement,  $r(271) = .25$ . Such weak correlations do not indicate the existence of true purposefulness.

A high degree of coherence can be seen between the students' sense of purpose and what the students have learned about purposefulness in their studies of pedagogy. It is significant that the optimistic view of the survey participants on the future ( $M = 4.15$ ,  $SD = 0.91$ ) correlates well with the statement that the study process at the university develops optimism and a positive attitude in students ( $M = 4.06$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ); the correlation is moderately high,  $r(271) = .39$ . There is a high correlation,  $r(271) = .43 - .53$  between students' ability to achieve the goals set for themselves and the courage and self-regulations skills gained in the study process. Consequently, we can conclude that the students' responses confirm the usefulness of the studies of pedagogy in developing student purposefulness.

Differences in opinions are mainly due to the large age range of the respondents and different life experiences. The Kruskal Wallis Test was used to compare the goals and attitudes of the three age groups. A characteristic tendency was identified – the indicators of purposefulness increase along with the increase in life experience. The differences between all age groups are statistically significant (Table 1).

Next, the study focused on how students evaluate various means used to achieve goals, and how important they are in their studies at university. The high mean values indicate that the students consider all the means mentioned in the survey questionnaire to be important, without differentiating them. Knowledge ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD = 0.74$ ) and the ability to plan, analyze, and reach conclusions ( $M = 4.39$ ,  $SD = 0.68$ ) have high mean ratings, and the rating of connections and friends ( $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = 1.14$ ) is only a little lower. As to the latter, the relatively large standard deviation should be taken into account as it indicates the diversity of opinions.

**Table 1***Comparison of Respondents' Purposefulness and Attitude by Age Groups*

| Item                                         | Age group | Mean | SD   | Mean Rank | Chi-Square | df | p      |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------|------|------|-----------|------------|----|--------|
| Ability to set a goal                        | I         | 3.60 | 0.80 | 109.61    | 13.56      | 2  | .001   |
|                                              | II        | 3.88 | 0.72 | 135.25    |            |    |        |
|                                              | III       | 4.02 | 0.79 | 150.03    |            |    |        |
| Clarity of future goals                      | I         | 3.57 | 1.02 | 103.90    | 16.64      | 2  | < .001 |
|                                              | II        | 4.11 | 0.92 | 145.86    |            |    |        |
|                                              | III       | 4.14 | 0.82 | 146.93    |            |    |        |
| Self-feeling at university and in the family | I         | 3.69 | 0.87 | 109.10    | 15.99      | 2  | < .001 |
|                                              | II        | 3.99 | 0.71 | 131.44    |            |    |        |
|                                              | III       | 4.20 | 0.73 | 152.46    |            |    |        |
| Taking responsibility                        | I         | 3.34 | 0.85 | 92.88     | 31.68      | 2  | < .001 |
|                                              | II        | 3.93 | 0.76 | 143.09    |            |    |        |
|                                              | III       | 4.06 | 0.75 | 154.19    |            |    |        |

In order to examine the students' learning style more closely, we used the distribution of the respondents according to three parameters – the students' age, total work experience, and teaching experience. In all cases, the influence of life experience and work experience can be seen – with the increase in the length of work experience and student's age, the understanding of purposefulness is deeper and broader. A comparison of the choice of means depending on the length of respondents' work experience using Kruskal Wallis Test shows significant differences concerning items 1, 2, 4, and 5; no differences have been found for item 3 (Table 2). Thus, in all age groups, there is a large proportion of students for whom the advice of other people (connections, friends) is important.

**Table 2***Comparison of the Choice of Means Depending on the Length of Respondents' Work Experience*

|                   | 1<br>Work<br>experience | 2<br>Knowledge | 3<br>Connections,<br>friends | 4<br>Ability to<br>plan, analyze,<br>and draw<br>conclusions | 5<br>Personal<br>abilities,<br>talent |
|-------------------|-------------------------|----------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| <i>Chi-Square</i> | 8.24                    | 6.81           | .05                          | 11.59                                                        | 16.60                                 |
| <i>df</i>         | 2                       | 2              | 2                            | 2                                                            | 2                                     |
| <i>p</i>          | .016*                   | .033*          | .975                         | .003*                                                        | < .001*                               |

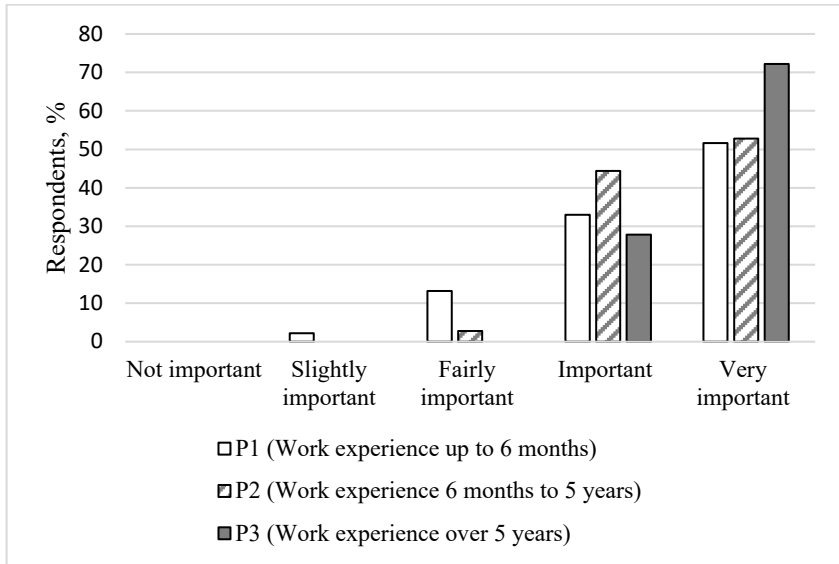
\* Correlation is statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ )

Regarding knowledge, which is undoubtedly the basis for purposeful achievement, it appears that it is least valued by younger students ( $M = 4.28$ ). Older respondents rate it more highly ( $M = 4.53$ ;  $M = 4.45$ ). There is a pronounced increase in the assessment of knowledge as the length of students' teaching experience increases. Figure 2 shows that there are some students from group P1 (2 %,  $n = 4$ ) who believe that knowledge is "slightly important", while 13 % from group P1 and 3 % from Group P2 have chosen the response "fairly important". In contrast, everyone from group P3, comprising the

respondents with more than 5 years of teaching experience, considers knowledge to be an essential means, having chosen the responses “important” (28 %) and “very important” (72 %).

**Figure 2**

*Importance of Knowledge Depending on Respondents’ Teaching Experience*



For now, the question why many students do not properly appreciate knowledge as a means of achieving their goal in the process of acquiring the teaching profession remains open. To some extent, the answer is provided by the analysis of correlations, which indicates that the respondents have a narrow view on the role of knowledge in life activity and in the formation of various skills and attitudes. This is confirmed by a weak relationship between attitude indicators (2–5) and knowledge (1),  $r(271) = .16 - .28$ . At the same time, there is a close relationship between individual attitude indicators,  $r(271) = .40 - .46$  (Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Correlations Between Some Items Characterizing Purposefulness (Spearman’s rho)*

|                                | 1    | 2    | 3    | 4    |
|--------------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| 1 Knowledge                    | 1.00 |      |      |      |
| 2 Positive self-feeling        | .24* | 1.00 |      |      |
| 3 Responsibility, independence | .27* | .40* | 1.00 |      |
| 4 Ability to manage emotions   | .16* | .32* | .27* | 1.00 |
| 5 Taking responsibility        | .28* | .46* | .46* | .41* |

\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The correlation analysis also shows the students’ understanding of the importance of teacher’s sense of purpose in the pedagogical work, which corresponds to the basic principles of pedagogy and the knowledge gained in the first year of studies. In all age

groups, there is a close relationship between the ability to set a goal, the need to achieve it, and a responsible attitude,  $r(271) = .38 - .45$ . At the same time, there are characteristic differences depending on the life experience of the respondents. Younger students (group I) do not show a clear vision of future goals and demonstrate ambiguous assessment of the means to achieve their goals. In group II, there is a moderately close correlation between the clarity of future goals and knowledge as the main means of achieving them,  $r(271) = .25$ . Group III demonstrates the closest relationship between knowledge and achieving a future goal,  $r(271) = .37$ .

### Discussion

The results obtained in the study show that, in general, prospective teachers consider themselves to be responsible and independent individuals, who are aware of the purpose of their activities, know how to set their goals, choose suitable means to achieve these goals, and implement them in appropriate situations. At the same time, overconfident self-assessment of one's skills was found. It indicates a pragmatic approach to achieving goals focused on the needs of the current moment.

The data obtained in the study imply that the prospective teachers' understanding of purposefulness, as well as the awareness of how their purposefulness could manifest itself in the pedagogical activity, is formed through self-experience. Therefore, for part-time students, most of whom already work at preschool institutions and conduct classes, the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired and evaluated in their life activity have become personally significant values. The study clearly proves that students' understanding of purposefulness is related to their life experiences. It is a pedagogical condition as it indicates subject's activity, if we rely on the opinion that experience is understood as an active, autonomous (personal) educational process, which, as a self-reflexive mechanism, guides (process) and completes (product) the relationships between the human being and the world. Experience as a relational phenomenon leads to an accumulated set of experiences that dramatically changes the relationship between an individual and the surrounding world and, ideally, is constantly optimized (Giese, 2010, p. 75). On the other hand, students' self-experience involves the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired and evaluated in life activity, which have become personally significant values (Brigmane, 2014).

As to pre-service preschool teachers' understanding of their greatest achievement in life, the importance of self-expression in the formation of purposefulness, and the connection with teacher's professional activity, our study provides additional arguments for the discussion concerning the need to pay particular attention to the problems of self-awareness in the training of teachers.

The results of the study show students' self-orientation in the sense of purposefulness; at present, they are less inclined to serve others. By directing students to eco-centric thinking in the study process, which emphasizes that individual's self-actualization should not negatively affect the self-actualization of other people (Naess, 1995), it would be possible to incite love in people and stimulate efforts to maintain a holistic view of the interrelationship between humans and the environment.

As to the importance of conscience – the moral potential of personality – in the purposeful orientation of human activity to the good, Klein's findings that altruism is the opposite of egoism, and human conscience, including caring for others, is a natural ability that can be overshadowed by the internalization of society (superego) are important. Internalization leads to the dictates of superego and contradictions with the

dictates of conscience. Adverse experiences can influence the emergence of altruistic impulses (Klein, 1957). This could be related to scholars' findings that the harmful totems that exist in contemporary society, such as the principle of self-interest, suppress altruistic impulses because we are positioned to place self-cognition in a selfish direction of self-confidence, reinforcing the ideal of self-interest, which migrates to society as a cultural norm (Nielsen, 2017).

In the context of our study, it is possible that adverse life experiences could have influenced altruistic tendencies in the formation of students' understanding of purposefulness.

If we assume that prospective teachers' understanding of a purposeful, good, efficient, and smart teacher (Pipere et al., 2022) is formed during their studies of pedagogy, which the students evaluate positively, then anthropocentrism and the egoistic understanding of the importance of values indicate unsustainability between the students' initial goals and the reality of teachers' professional work, as well as a partial understanding of the close link between knowledge and the formation of self-experience (Madalane, 2010, pp. 25–26; Salīte et al., 2009).

Regarding the connection between students' understanding of purposefulness and their personal goals, the discussion could focus on the finding of the study that students' initial understanding of teacher's professional purposefulness is formed in connection with the development of their personal goals, which also corresponds to the conclusions of other studies (Brunetti, 2001; Gordon, 2022), but self-orientation dominates in this understanding, while the dimension of teacher's work – an investment outside oneself, which, according to Kuusisto and Tirri (2021), marks the dominant of sustainability in the teaching profession, is less pronounced. Therefore, the issue of reorienting pre-service preschool teachers to solving problems related to sustainability remains relevant.

The study shows that some students do not understand the holistic nature of the formation of teacher's purposeful activity, which would help them arrive at a sustainable and inclusive wisdom of life (Salīte et al., 2009) and would correspond to the sustainability aspect in the science of pedagogy (Žogla, 2019).

### **The Limitations of the Study**

Since the empirical research refers to studying the opinions of the first-year students from the University of Latvia enrolled in the studies of preschool education, the authors of the article do not attempt to evaluate and interpret it in a wider context.

The study reveals the opinions of the first-year students, prospective preschool teachers, on teacher purposefulness, and it can be used as the basis for further research on the implementation of teacher training approaches at the institutions of higher education.

The results of the study show that it is necessary to carry out further interdisciplinary research concerning the experience of the formation of purposefulness and its connection with the training of preschool teachers.

### **Conclusions**

Being a general psychological personality trait, purposefulness is formed and developed in the self-experience of pre-service teachers. Purposefulness constitutes the basis of students' life activity and ensures success in their studies and future teaching

career. Life experience contributes to the formation of prospective teachers' sense of purpose, which is proven by students' subjective understanding of the essence of purposefulness. The formation of purposefulness is based on the goals of students' daily life activities, the function of which is the self-created life path plan and its implementation.

The results of the study show that the awareness of future preschool teachers of what their purposefulness might be in the role of a teacher is based on experience and self-experience in life activity. This research finding actualizes Vygotsky's (1984, p. 148) idea that the internalization and externalization of human cognitive processes take place as a purposeful interaction of the subject with the object with the help of the means (tools) involved. The development of a human being as an individual and personality is the interaction of two relatively autonomous but inextricably linked development plans – the natural (biological) and the socio-dialectical ones.

The students' responses show that most of them understand the personal and social goals of the teaching profession in terms of sustainability, and their initial understanding of teacher's professional goals is formed in connection with the development of their personal goals.

The current research provides a new perspective and an opportunity for further studies of teacher training in the aspect of sustainability from a broader angle involving the interaction of different processes, which would be a holistic view on the development of complex phenomena and their interaction.

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