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# ENVIRONMENT FOR MEANINGFUL DEVELOPMENT OF READING LITERACY IN PRE-SCHOOL

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## Abstract

*At a time when the scope and influence of information technologies are rapidly increasing, the development of reading literacy becomes a challenge for teachers. Pre-school teachers have a special role in the development of reading literacy, because children display interest in the written text and the information it holds already in pre-school. It is thus important that the child's first encounter with text be pleasant and exciting, personally significant and applicable for reaching one's goals and satisfying one's needs in everyday life. Hence, the development of reading literacy in pre-school ought to be meaningful, which cannot be ensured in a traditional, teacher-focused learning environment. That is why the paper summarises the best practical experience in a meaningful development of reading literacy. The conclusion is reached that a meaningful development of reading literacy occurs in an environment specially designed by teachers with constructivism as its theoretical basis.*

***Key words:*** *meaningful development of reading literacy in pre-school, environment for meaningful development of reading literacy in pre-school, expert interviews, constructive learning environment*

## Introduction

Reading literacy has been posited in Europe as one of the basic competences of the twenty-first century European lifelong learning, the development whereof starts in pre-school and is further improved throughout the process of lifelong learning (Council and Commission joint progress report of 2010 on the implementation of the work program: Education and Training 2010, 2010). Basic competences in the European system of basic competences are defined as knowledge, skills and attitudes (Improving Competences for the 21st century. Programme in European cooperation in school, 2008) expressing a demand to pay more attention, along with knowledge acquisition, in the process of learning to competence development and a positive attitude as well as to focus on 'real life' solutions. Hence, as regards the development of reading literacy, along with the knowledge on how to connect sounds in a word, it is necessary to emphasise the skill of understanding what one reads as

well as enhancing a skilled and interested reader's position. This means that reading literacy is to be characterised as knowledge, competences and attitudes, and its development must be related to children's everyday life and the surrounding environment. Hence the process of reading literacy development ought to be regarded as a meaningful one.

Meaningful development of reading literacy in pre-school can only occur in a holistic, flexible, knowledge, competence and attitude based learning environment (Improving Competences for the 21st century. Programme in European cooperation in school, 2008), the task whereof is not just to teach the techniques of reading but to raise the motivation to read for all children. However, insufficient attention is attributed to the discussions on the theoretical basis of this kind of environment; there is a lack of studies on how to create the learning environment in pre-school for a meaningful development of reading literacy. Accordingly, the aim of the present article is to examine the examples of the best experiences of teachers in Latvia in creating the environment for a meaningful development of reading literacy and set the theoretical basis of this kind of environment.

## Meaningful development of reading literacy

Attitudes and meaning in the 21st century education are recognised as particularly significant; for instance, Salīte, Pipere and Grišāne (1998), as well as Belousa (2010; Belousa & Stakle, 2010) regard attitudes and meaning as metacontent, emphasising that it is a content component in sustainable education and thus also a component of sustainable reading literacy development in pre-school.

The necessity for a meaningful development of reading literacy in pre-school became especially urgent in the late 1990s conditioned by three reasons. (1) The extension of the understanding of text (Alexander & Fox, 2004) that was facilitated by the growth of the alternative text forms in the contemporary society – apart from the traditional book and periodical text, pre-schoolers more and more often encounter internet resources, advertisement texts, posters, labels, instructions for using different appliances, rules of table games and other texts accessible in their everyday life environment (Alexander & Jetton, 2003). These alternative, everyday life related text forms become a significant material for the development of reading literacy, which is just as valuable as books and periodicals. (2) A meaningful development of reading literacy gains significance as modern society has extended its understanding of the factors affecting this process. The view that the development of reading literacy is determined by children's knowledge, abilities, socio-cultural context as well as learning environment is supplemented by an opinion that it is also affected by the child's personal motivation, interest and a positive attitude towards reading (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). Therefore, in the development of reading literacy, the formation of the child's position as a personally interested reader becomes important. (3) The need for a meaningful development of reading literacy in pre-school is determined by the extension of the understanding of the process of reading – in the 21st century reading literacy development is regarded not just as psychological and physiological processes but also as a process related to social, economic, political and culture aspects as well as attitudes and values (Kerka, 2003; Helminga, 2006; Ntiri, 2009). It means that reading literacy has be-

come an instrument by means of which a child may cognise the external world and oneself, deal with significant issues, communicate with others and enjoy oneself (Kerka, 2003); it has turned into an opportunity to understand and apply those forms of written language that are offered by the respective community and/or which are significant for the child (Johansone, 2003). Hence, the process of reading literacy development is growing into a competence to be developed as a lifelong process (Alexander & Fox, 2004).

The notion of a meaningful reading literacy is used by, for instance, Vale (1995), Gutknecht (1991), Goodman (1996), etc. They consider the development of reading literacy to be meaningful if it is determined by the child's interests or a personally felt need. In such cases, the initiative for reading literacy acquisition proceeds from the child as he/she learns to read meaningfully, i.e. being aware of the importance of reading in his/her everyday life, using it to achieve his/her goals, world cognition, cooperation, enjoyment, new emotional experiences, etc. A meaningful reading literacy entails the development of the child's attitude towards reading as an exciting and personally useful activity instead of just learning letters, combining sounds in syllables, words and sentences and understanding them. In the 20th century, reading literacy was measured by the correctness of reading, speed, understanding and expressivity (Ptičkina, 1999) whereas, in the 21st century, it is possible to talk about a new perspective on the development of reading literacy marked by the focus on the formation of the child's attitude towards reading apart from reading technique and understanding of text. Hence, at the time when, on the one hand, reading has become a significant life competence in a knowledge based society, on the other – books are seriously challenged by information technologies, one's attitude towards reading is acknowledged as an important component of reading literacy as it greatly affects sustainable reading literacy development, i.e. development towards personal and community future.

Hence, the traditional view that what matters in the development of reading literacy is knowledge and competences determined by external standards and provided by the teacher according to his/her own opinions and programme demands but are not related to real life and child's prior experience has been replaced by the view that reading literacy acquisition ought to be initiated by the child and reading literacy must be applicable in real action and be personally significant (Belousa, 2010; Zariņa, 2010). This means that, for a meaningful development of reading literacy in pre-school, a special learning environment must be formed on the basis of the paradigm of learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995), the child's development oriented or humane paradigm (Амонашвили, 1995; Alijevs, 2005), the 'new environment' paradigm (Sterling, 1996), the paradigm of meaningful development (Ясвин, 2001).

What concerns the theoretical basis of the learning environment designed for a meaningful development of reading literacy, it is essential to study the existing experience of pre-school teachers in the formation of this learning environment because, despite the lack of a theoretical basis of the learning environment designed for a meaningful development of reading literacy in Latvia, there are teachers who, proceeding from their teaching experience and personal initiative, are working on the formation of this kind of environment in their groups.

## Data collection

Qualitative research methodology was selected in the present article for studying the best experience examples in the formation of the learning environment for a meaningful development of reading literacy because it is inductive, helps understand and account for the learning environment designed for meaningful development of reading literacy and discern teachers' subjective experience (Gelo, Braakmann, & Benetka, 2008).

The present research is focused on the following question: *What features are characteristic of the learning environment created by teachers-experts for a meaningful development of reading literacy?*

To gain the information concerning the set question, a semi-structured expert interview has been selected as the data collection method in the present research, i.e. the questions prepared for the interview were relocated or adjusted in line with the experts' answers (Bogner & Menz, 2005; Meuser & Nagel 2005; Geske & Grīnfelds, 2006; Scheibelhofer, 2007; Litting, 2008). Studying and summarizing the practical experience constructed in the professional action of experts provided an opportunity to make out the features of the learning environment created by the experts for a meaningful development of reading literacy.

## Participants

According to Litting (2008), the status of an expert in each particular case is defined by the researcher in accordance with the question set for the research. In this case, the status of an expert was determined by the following criteria: (1) at least five years of teaching experience in pre-school; (2) teaching course and/or classes, and/or seminars for pre-school teachers concerning the issues of reading literacy development; (3) references from children's parents and/or colleagues and/or administration confirming teacher's experience in a meaningful development of reading literacy; (4) mentorship of practical teaching placement for students and reflection of the teacher's experience of teaching reading literacy in students' practical placement materials; (5) research on issues related to reading literacy in pre-school in bachelor, master, doctoral theses and/or research publications; (6) participation in projects related to the development of reading literacy in pre-school.

Expert interview sampling was made by using the non-probable snowball method, i.e. the interviewed experts suggest experts for further interviews (Kroplijs & Raščevska, 2004; Geske & Grīnfelds, 2006; Kristapsone, 2008). This method was selected because it enhances an opportunity to find among pre-school teachers those who in their groups create learning environment suitable for a meaningful development of reading literacy.

In the course of the research nine experts were selected and nine interviews were produced. Detailed characteristics of the interviewed experts are given in Table 1. As the table makes obvious, apart from the work experience, the status of each expert in the formation of learning environment for a meaningful development of reading literacy in pre-school is confirmed by at least three of the above mentioned criteria.

Table 1. Characteristics of the interviewees

| | Age | Represented region | Experience of work (years) | Teaching courses/classes/seminars | Parents/colleagues/administration references | Mentoring practical placement of students | Authorship of research and methodical materials | Project participant |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Zane | 53 | Latgale | 30 | X | X | | X | |
| Ilga | 28 | Latgale | 8 | X | X | X | | |
| Gaļina | 52 | Latgale | 23 | | X | X | | X |
| Liene | 45 | Latgale | 16 | | X | X | | X |
| Sanita | 56 | Zemgale | 26 | X | | X | X | X |
| Elga | 59 | Zemgale | 27 | X | X | X | X | X |
| Nataļja | 57 | Zemgale | 32 | X | X | X | X | X |
| Guna | 38 | Kurzeme | 14 | X | X | X | | |
| Daina | 61 | Rīga | 36 | X | X | X | | X |

Agreement upon the most convenient time and place of an interview with the experts was reached by the phone. All the interviews were organised in an informal environment unrelated to the experts' place of work. The shortest interview ran for 44 minutes, the longest – 76 minutes. The experts were asked 15 basic questions concerning their personal experience in designing the learning environment for a meaningful development of reading literacy. The questions were asked about the creation of the learning environment and what in this environment invites the children to get engaged in reading literacy development as well as about the role of the teacher in the creation of the learning environment for a meaningful development of reading literacy. All the interview texts were audio taped, transcribed and analysed with qualitative analysis methods, i.e. they were coded and themes were set according to the codes (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006).

## Results

The results are presented by highlighting three major themes: (1) reading material in an environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy; (2) motivating children in the learning environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy; (3) teacher's professional competence in the learning environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy. These themes are further described in detail.

### Reading material in an environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy

Reading material is an important component of the learning environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy – the various letters, words, sentences and texts created in the group and available to the children. Reading material is aimed at the formation of the child's understanding of reading as a personally interesting, useful and exciting

action and is based on (1) children's interests, (2) children's needs and is (3) personally significant for them.

### *Children's interest based reading material*

The reading material used in the experts' groups is determined by the children's interests instead of external standards or the one that *"the teacher finds it easy to draw, stick and make" (Liene)*. New ideas for compiling the reading material are gained by the experts from the children as they are the ones who are best aware of their interests. For instance, Guna tells that she makes the reading material proceeding from the observation of the children's actions. As the children's interests are diverse and changing, and they are interested in everything that is new, Daina prepares different reading materials for each group of children. Besides, it is important for this material not to be static but to change depending on the everyday life situation and the children's interests revealed in these situations.

### *Children's needs based reading material*

According to Sanita, *"What suits Jānis does not suit Pēteris"*. Therefore the reading material must be diverse, so that the children may put it to active use; it must be related to their everyday life, for instance, letters that may be used as dolls – taken to sleep, fed, buried in the sand. The reading material must be such that the children may gain from it the information they need, e.g. menus, posters, billboards, ads, etc. Gaļina tells that the books given to the group *"must be attractive, with interesting illustrations, with little text below making it possible to guess what it is about"*. This kind of a book may be read by the children who do not possess reading literacy yet, as they may look at the pictures and tell about them. These are books that make all children feel successful readers. The reading materials ought to be placed within an easy reach for children – where they most often play or pass by. Nataļja tells about this by using a metaphor of strawberries: *"If strawberries are in the fridge, we do not fancy them as much as if they deliciously smell in a bowl on the table. Then it is impossible to pass by without trying them"*. Yet Sanita thinks that there should be no exaggeration. If on *"each table it says 'a table', on each chair it says 'a chair', on each switch – 'a switch' and so on, that is too much. Everything is so mixed that the children get wary of the excess of information"*. Especially, the excess of information may overwhelm younger children and children from ethnic minority families. Hence, the major aim in the experts' groups is the reading material related to the particular needs of children instead of a diversity of the material conditioned by external standards or correspondence with the demands set for the visual decoration of the group interior.

### *Personally significant reading material*

The experts in their groups involve the children and their parents in creating the reading material, for instance, the children *"circle and colour the letters of Mum and Dad, draw*

*faces, arms and legs on them and attach them around the room" (Liene)*, they make booklets with recipes of food cooked at home. Parents make books about the child's name, write messages and sentiments. Gaļina says that *"these are the books children love most, they even take them to bed to read before falling asleep"*. This kind of reading material is connected with the children's experience; therefore, they remember the text, read or recite it by heart to each other, to the teacher and parents. Instead of focusing on mistakes when reading this material, its content is more emphasised, because the child should realise that it is interesting to read. A personally interested attitude towards reading, in turn, will make the child wish to learn to do it correctly.

## Motivating children in the learning environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy

It is important in the learning environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy to motivate the children to develop reading literacy. The experts do that by (1) assuming the position of an equal partner of cooperation with children, (2) enhancing the children's interest in the written text, (3) acknowledging the children's achievement and proceeding from it, emphasising the process of reading literacy development, (4) proceeding from the social, culture and language experiences of the children's families.

### *Teacher as an equal partner of cooperation*

In the interviewed experts' groups, the children are motivated to learn reading by cooperating with the teacher as an equal partner in the activities based on the children's interests and needs. For instance, when Guna sees that boys start playing with toy cars that have letters stuck to them, she comes up and gets involved in the game. *"We are driving on the table, taking one letter to another and let's see what we've got"*. Thus, the experts, instead of choosing for cooperation the situations according to their own views, observe the children and start cooperation when they show an interest in the reading material.

### *Enhancing interest in the text*

To motivate the children to learn to read, the experts use table games, motion games with the written text displayed in the room, create situations during game classes in which the children develop a wish and a need to read and invite the children to read the calendar to check who has a name-day today, etc. According to the experts, it is important to arouse the children's interest in a book. Their experience shows that it is determined by the content of the book that suits the children and that they find personally significant, with the language matching their prior experience and a suitable time for reading. For instance, Elga considers that the time is unsuitable for reading *"when the child is hungry or tired, or has an exciting game in front"*, while Liene tells that with small children she reads and plays out short texts

with one plot line, but, to the children from ethnic minority families, she explains the most complex words before reading.

### *Acknowledging the children's achievement and proceeding from their achievement, emphasising the process of reading literacy development*

Nataļja points out that acknowledging achievement and proceeding from it is especially important with those children who find it difficult to read. She acknowledges that she "*would not say that the child does not read but support and positively evaluate those actions that he/she does which would lead to reading"*. It is obvious here that the experts relate acknowledgment of the children's achievement to the process of reading literacy development. Ilga thinks that the children are motivated to learn to read not by setting a concrete outcome with a common deadline for all but by an opportunity to learn in game activities and situations related to everyday life. *"Learning to read does not happen like it does at school – on Tuesdays we have maths, on Wednesdays – drawing, on Thursdays – language. Working one day a week is something but much more productive is working for the whole day in an informal environment. The child does not even realise that he/she is actually learning to read"*. Yet emphasising the process in the learning environment created by the experts for a meaningful development of reading literacy does not mean that no demands are set for reading literacy development – in this environment the teacher must assume responsibility both for the children learning to read at their own individual pace and for the formation of a personally interested attitude towards reading.

### *Using family experience*

The experts use the social, cultural and language experience of the children's families, yet they admit that teachers find this experience inconvenient because it differs so much. To respect the family experience, the teachers must change their own views and get adapted also when parents have very specific preferences for the books they want their children to read. Sanita is sure that the teacher is not allowed to say: *"This is wrong, your Mum or your Dad were wrong"*. Family experience is personally significant for children because it is their own prior experience; therefore it seems right for them. Using this experience and proceeding from it, the children are motivated to learn to read recognising the personal meaning of reading.

## Teacher's professional competence in the learning environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy

For the formation of the learning environment for a meaningful development of reading literacy, the teacher's professional competence is of a great importance; it entails knowl-

edge and skills of creating this kind of learning environment as well as the teacher's personal attitude.

### *Attitude of personal involvement*

Apart from the professional knowledge, the teacher's personally interested attitude is very significant for a meaningful development of reading literacy since teachers are not controlled in their everyday work and the pre-school programme of learning is flexible and suggests a free choice of work forms, methods and materials that seem more useful. According to Liene, *"you may do whatever you choose. For instance, you may just give children something to colour and sit around, everything happens according to the programme – you have given them worksheets and pencils"*. Hence, if a teacher fulfils programme requirements, he/she can help a child to master the reading technique but reading literacy development, in this case, has little to do with meaning and the formation of the child's interested personal attitude towards reading. When telling about what helps them develop reading literacy of children, the experts mention *"love towards children and a wish to give them something"*, *"a personal interest in this process"*, *"the human factor"* and *"the wisdom of the heart"*. It follows from the above stated that a teacher is able to help children become aware of the meaning of reading and form their attitude towards the reading material only if he/she comes forth with his/her own attitude and is aware of the sense of his/her work.

### *Professional skills*

The teacher's ability to observe, reflect, evaluate, improvise and react flexibly is important for the formation of the learning environment for a meaningful development of reading literacy. What concerns observation, reflection and evaluation, the experts admit that, in the process of a meaningful development of reading literacy, it is important for the teacher *"to feel, see and understand"*. Elga, for instance, tells that she even makes video records of situations that arise in the process of reading literacy development in order *"to catch what the children find to be the easiest way. Because I realise that all children can be taught to read but you may teach in a difficult or in an easy way"*. Hence, by evaluating, reflecting on and contemplating the observed situations, the experts are looking for ways to teach each child to read in an easy way. As to the ability to improvise and react flexibly, Ilga tells that, for her, it is important *"to keep our eyes and ears open, see what is happening around us and suggest various activities in real everyday life situations, because learning to read is all around us"*. A teacher's skill to improvise and react flexibly determines a meaningful development of reading literacy, that is, the extent to which this occurs naturally, by using the information that exists in the surrounding environment and revealing to the child the significance of this information in his/her life. Though the experts agree that higher education is a compulsory requirement for pre-school teachers, they consider attitude important

in their work as well. According to Zane, *"it is not the paper that counts but what the teacher is like inside"*.

The features of the learning environment designed for a meaningful development of reading literacy are summarised in Table 1.

Table 2. Best practice examples for a meaningful development of reading literacy

| | |
|---|---|
| **Reading material in the learning environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy** | |
| **Matching children's interests** | • related to children's games and other everyday life activities<br>• different in each group<br>• changed and supplemented according to everyday life situations and children's actions |
| **Matching children's needs** | • matching diverse children's actions<br>• related to everyday life<br>• containing information that children find attractive and useful<br>• with big, bright illustrations and small text amount<br>• placed where children can easily notice and reach it<br>• matching children's age group and language development level |
| **Personally significant** | • created by children<br>• created by parents<br>• matching children's prior (social, cultural) experience<br>• content oriented |
| **Motivating in the learning environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy** | |
| **Teacher as an equal cooperation partner** | • observing children acting and adjusting the activities chosen by children for reading literacy development<br>• teacher's involvement in activities initiated by children for reading literacy development |
| **Arousing interest in the text suggested for reading** | • reading literacy development in game activities<br>• reading the information that children find useful and meaningful<br>• reading books that match children's age group, language development level and are personally significant for them<br>• choosing the right time for reading |
| **Evaluating children's achievement and proceeding from achievement** | • recognising and acknowledging each child's achievement in reading literacy development<br>• achievement based evaluation of reading literacy development |
| **Emphasising the process of reading literacy development** | • opportunity for everybody to learn at one's own pace<br>• opportunity to get involved in reading literacy development activities throughout all day<br>• using activities based on children's interest and a notion of reading as an exciting and useful activity |
| **Using family experience** | • using the language experience gained in the family in the activities selected for reading literacy development<br>• using the social experience gained in the family in the activities selected for reading literacy development<br>• using the culture experience gained in the family in the activities selected for reading literacy development |

*Sequel to Table 2 see on p. 78.*

*Sequel to Table 2.*

| **Teacher's professional competence in the learning environment designed for a meaningful development of reading literacy** | |
|---|---|
| **Attitude of personal involvement** | • personal involvement and responsibility for the child to develop an interest in reading as well as a wish and a need to read |
| **Professional skills** | • skill of observing children's action, interests and needs to notice when and how children are ready for reading literacy development<br>• skill of reflecting on the process of reading literacy development, evaluating its personal significance for children and suitability to their needs and interests<br>• skill of evaluating the process of reading literacy development in order to orient it towards children's achievement<br>• skill of improvising when using everyday life situations for reading literacy development<br>• skill of reacting flexibly when using children's initiative for reading literacy development |

## Discussion

Best practice examples suggest that the environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy is personally significant for the child and uses a varied reading material which is topical for the children and related to their everyday life. In such an environment, the children are motivated to develop their reading literacy by accepting and supporting their initiative, grounding the development of reading literacy in the children's past experiences and organising it through active involvement in a natural environment and natural situations which are related to the real life. Thus, it becomes possible to conclude that the learning environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy corresponds to the theoretical basis of constructivism and can therefore be regarded as a constructive learning environment (Brooks & Brooks, 1993; Driscoll, 1994; Murphy, 1997).

Best practice examples observed in preschool groups for a meaningful development of reading literacy align with the idea that in a constructive learning environment (1) the child uses the acquired knowledge and skills for reaching personally meaningful aims (Wilson & Cole, 1991; Murphy, 1997), (2) valuing every child's initiative and personal activity is of crucial importance (Wilson & Cole, 1991; Honebein, 1996; Murphy, 1997), (3) the child's family experience and cultural context are built upon (Cummins, 1986; Tracey & Young, 2007), (4) situations related to the children's real life and authentic reading materials are used (Jonassen, 1999b; Koohang, 2009), (5) cooperation is promoted (Jonassen, 1999b; Koohang, 2009), (6) the children are supported and the necessary help is provided (Jonassen, 1999b; Koohang, 2009), (7) the children's achievements are appreciated and feedback is ensured (Jonassen,1999b; Koohang, 2009), (8) a reading material which corresponds to the children's abilities, interests and needs is created (Jonassen, 1999b; Koohang, 2009).

When creating a constructive learning environment, the teachers should not only know how to teach reading and be able to teach reading; they also need a competence which includes a combination of dynamic features, skills and attitudes (Kennedy, Hyland, & Ryan, 2009). It means that, with regard to the environment for a meaningful development of reading literacy, the perspective on the teacher's professional competence is related not only to

knowledge and understanding about the process of the development of reading literacy but also to the teacher's values, experience of creating mutual relationships and personal attitude, which determine the willingness to do one's duty with quality (Jarvis, 1985).

Along with the conclusions drawn about a constructive learning environment, the best practice examples described in the study also suggest several significant features of a constructive learning environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy in pre-school. (1) In the constructive learning environment, the teacher's ideas for creating a new reading material are basically gained from observing the children's everyday life actions. This material, thus, in the group is supplemented according to the children's interests revealed in particular situations, (2) the reading material matches the children's language development level and is placed within an easy reach nearby the zone of games; (3) both the children and their parents are involved in creating the reading material; (4) the teacher adapts to the development of reading literacy those activities and games that are initiated by the children in everyday situations; (5) the time for reading is specially selected and for ethnic minority and younger children the books for reading are chosen according to their language aptitude; (6) the teacher is personally interested in the children being involved in the process of reading literacy development willingly; (7) the teacher observes and proceeding from observation, flexibly reacts and improvises, creating diverse situations for reading literacy development in everyday life situations, reflects and evaluates his/her own and children's action and attitude.

The best practice examples used in the study reveal that a meaningful reading literacy should be developed in a constructive learning environment and that the teachers who are working in pre-school groups in Latvia have accumulated experiences of creating such an environment.

## Conclusions

A meaningful development of reading literacy entails the technique of reading, understanding of the text and the development of the child's interest towards reading. At the time of a rapid development of information technologies that offer children varied entertainment and opportunities of leisure, a meaningful development of reading literacy in pre-school is especially important to form the notion of reading as an exciting activity and arouse a desire and a need to use reading for reaching personally significant aims as well as develop the position of interested readers. Despite the fact that the theoretical basis of the learning environment created for a meaningful development of reading literacy is only under discussion at present, the pre-school teachers who search for opportunities of arousing the children's positive attitude towards reading are forming this kind of environment intuitively.

The major precondition that helps teachers–experts design the learning environment suitable for a meaningful development of reading literacy in pre-school is their personal willingness to make it possible for the child to learn to read with ease and enthusiasm. Experts' personal attitude also helps develop the reading material that matches the children's interests and motivates the children to learn to read in a meaningful way.

An assessment of the learning environment designed for a meaningful development of reading literacy in the context of constructivism and a constructive learning environment indicates that the learning environment intuitively created by the experts complies with the features of a constructive learning environment and reveals a number of practical aspects of the formation of this kind of environment. Hence, the present paper proves that the theoretical framework of the learning environment designed for a meaningful development of reading literacy is related to constructivism.

The present research may be used as the basis of further research on the degree of compliance of the learning environment designed for the development of reading literacy in pre-school to the experts' experience in the creation of a constructive learning environment for a meaningful development of reading literacy.

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