

IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW STRATEGIES OF TEACHING IN LESSONS TO MITIGATE RISKS OF EARLY SCHOOL LEAVERS (ESL)

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ABSTRACT

Aim. To present the development and evaluation of the teacher’s professional competence Programme *Diversification of Educational Methods in Work with Young People at Risk of Early School Leaving*, based on desk research of theoretical literature and programme approbation results.

Methods. The research comprised three phases: Phase I: Theoretical desk research to establish principles for programme development, using primary and secondary data from literature and existing documents. Phase II: The selection of Teaching through Interactions framework and its use in the development of Programme. Phase III: Development of a morphological model, based on Zwicky’s framework, to ensure diverse teaching methods meet the needs of at-risk students. Phase IV: Evalua-

tion of programme implementation through a survey with 14 Likert-scale questions assessing delivery, relevance, and utility.

Results. The developed Programme focuses on three key areas: emotional support, classroom organisation, and learning support, enhancing teachers' abilities to use diverse methods to motivate and engage at-risk students. A Morphological Model of the Lesson was developed as a flexible tool for educators. In 2023, 307 teachers from Latvian comprehensive schools and vocational-technical institutions participated in the programme. Participants highly appreciated the Programme's content, teaching methods, and practical suitability of the handouts.

Conclusions. The findings demonstrate that the Programme is grounded in robust theoretical principles, effectively addresses the need for method diversification, and is well-received by learners. It provides a comprehensive framework for reducing ESL risks by equipping teachers with the tools, strategies, and knowledge needed to create inclusive and supportive learning environments.

Keywords: diversification of educational methods, early school leaving, educators, interactions framework, lesson, morphological model

INTRODUCTION

From the perspective of the European Commission, "early school leaving" (ESL) encompasses all forms of educational and training discontinuation before completing upper secondary education or equivalent vocational training. This phenomenon indicates that, for various reasons, children and young people fail to acquire the skills necessary for career planning and labour market participation. Around 20% of 15-year-olds remain at risk of educational poverty, lacking fundamental skills in literacy, numeracy, or science (European Commission, 2020). The European Union (EU) aims to reduce the proportion of early leavers to less than 9% by 2030 (European Commission, 2023).

Early school leaving is influenced by multiple interrelated factors at individual, socio-economic, school-based, and national levels. Those at risk often face disadvantages linked to personal, social, economic, educational, or family circumstances, which progressively disengage them from education (European Commission, 2015).

Research shows that the interplay of various factors contributes to early school leaving. These include individual needs (e.g., disabilities, psychological issues, academic underachievement), socio-economic background (e.g., migrant status, poverty, workless households), school-based factors (e.g., lack of resources, inadequate guidance, ineffective teaching methods) (Dale, 2010), and national factors (e.g., economic conditions, labour market trends, societal valuation of education).

Individuals at risk often face a combination of these factors. "This phenomenon can be caused by student-based factors such as learning difficulties; socio-cultural factors

related to family background; and institutional factors such as inadequate resources and inappropriate teaching methods” (OECD, 2010, p. 3).

Institutional deficiencies, including negative school climates, insufficient curricula, inflexible teaching practices, and inadequate teacher training, also play a role (Brown et al., 2024, Doll et al., 2013; Morrow & Villodas, 2018; Wood et al., 2017).

To address ESL, early warning systems identify risk factors and enable timely interventions. Warning signs include poor attendance, truancy, low grades, grade repetition, and social-emotional issues. These systems also consider students’ sense of well-being and experiences of bullying or discrimination (European Commission, 2013). In Latvia, policies emphasise monitoring absenteeism. Schools take measures to support students, often collaborating with relevant services (European Commission, 2023).

In Latvia, the ESL rate is 6.7%, among the highest in the EU (Eurostat, 2023). Various factors, including socio-economic, educational, and familial issues, contribute to this rate. For instance, 74% of early leavers attribute their departure to family, social, and economic factors, with 48% citing overcrowded learning environments and 17% inconvenient conditions (OECD, 2020).

Latvia’s policy on ESL has evolved since the early 2000s. In 2002, the Barcelona European Council set education goals for EU Member States, including improving primary education quality and increasing secondary school graduation rates. Latvia, preparing for EU accession in 2004, faced challenges, including insufficient data to assess the extent of ESL. Efforts were made to track non-attending children and identify those not enrolled in school.

Socio-economic factors were identified as significant contributors to ESL. Children from disadvantaged families often perceived education as unnecessary. Initial interventions included tracking absenteeism, conducting home visits, and organising remedial classes. Legislative changes in 2002 strengthened compulsory education regulations.

A 2003 study identified legislative gaps allowing early school leaving despite mandatory education requirements. Emphasising the family’s critical role, the study proposed solutions for strengthening school-family cooperation (Vilciņa et al., 2005).

Subsequent research in 2004 identified factors influencing ESL, such as family-related challenges, insufficient school-parent cooperation, and curricula misaligned with students’ needs (Providus, 2004). These findings led to targeted interventions, including increasing social pedagogue support, aligning curricula with real-life applications, and promoting alternative approaches for at-risk students.

Between 2017 and 2023, Latvia implemented the “Support for Reducing Early School Leaving” (PUMPURS) project to create a sustainable system for identifying and supporting at-risk students. The project contributed to the development of a sustainable system of cooperation between the municipality, educational institutions, teachers, support staff and parents or representatives of learners in order to identify early learners at risk of dropping out and provide them with personalised support. A common database was established to ensure regular exchange of information at national,

municipal and educational institution level on learners identified as at risk of dropping out, the preventive measures taken and their results. This provides comprehensive statistics and allows for long-term evaluation of the effectiveness of the measures. Individual support was provided through local authorities to learners who might drop out due to lack of financial resources. The project supported initiatives by youth NGOs to raise the profile of school drop-outs among young people themselves, to reach out to learners through their peers and to involve them in activities.

Educators were offered professional development programmes to enhance their skills. These programmes covered themes such as supportive learning environments, individual and group counselling, teacher competence, youth work with at-risk students, socio-emotional education, handling violence, diversifying educational methods, behaviour strategies, social work with families, and collaborating with parents to reduce early school leaving. These programmes do not provide a holistic approach to solving ESL problems as they are focused on specific areas; therefore, it is important to offer a comprehensive solution. The programme “*Diversifying Educational Methods for ESL Learners*” (called the Programme in the article) developed by the authors of the article offers a complex approach to the organisation of the learning process in the classroom, which contributes to ESL motivation and productive activity. The purpose of the programme: provide teachers with methodological support and increase their capacity to work with young people at risk of early school leaving; improve the knowledge and skills of educators in the application of diverse educational methods, thereby promoting the motivation and ability to learn of young people at risk of early school leaving.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The development of the programme required prior research, so the aim of this paper is to present the development of the programme concept based on an analysis of the theoretical literature and to analyse the outcomes of the programme approval.

In order to achieve the aims of the study, several research questions have been raised:

- RQ1: What are the theoretical principles for Programme development?
- RQ2: In what way does the developed Programme, based on the Teaching through Interactions framework (Interactions framework), provide methodological support to educators in the involvement of young people from the ESL risk group in the learning process?
- RQ3: How to diversify methods to ensure targeted ESL participation in lessons?
- RQ4: How do the teachers assess the Programme content, the developed teaching material and methods?

In order to achieve the set goal, a theoretical and empirical study was conducted in three phases (Figure 1).

Figure 1*Scheme of the Research Process**Source.* Own research.

To answer the first two research questions, theoretical desk research methods by exploring data from existing documents and previous research—secondary data—to gather information over a particular topic (Creswell & Creswell, 2017) have been applied.

Phase I. The Theoretical Principles for the Programme Development

The programme had to answer the question: how can a teacher, by varying methods, implement teaching activities to contribute to reducing the risk of ESL. Early school leaving is influenced by institutional, academic, and personal factors (Birzina et al., 2019), with school factors being dominant in Latvia (Donlevy et al., 2019). The literature analysis focused on:

- Needs of at-risk youth;
- Barriers to educators’ success with ESL;
- Latvia’s normative requirements for education content and organisation.

The scientific literature was searched by use of Scholar.Google.com and Elicit.com. The limiting keyword was “early school leavers” (ESL), thus selecting only literature sources relevant to the target group. Additional keywords were “needs of early school leavers”, “barriers of educators for early school leavers”. As in Latvia, as the school factor is the dominant factor, this was also used as a keyword. To determine the necessary support for ESL in schools, the keywords “emotional support,” “classroom organisation,” and “instructional support” were used, based on the work of Bridget K. Hamre et al. (2013) and Christopher A. Hafen et al. (2015).

For the normative requirements of the Republic of Latvia regarding the content and organisation of education, the primary source would be legislation and official documents provided by the Latvian government and educational authorities.

Phase II. The Selection of Interactions Framework and its Use in the Development of Programme

Based on the fact that the school factor is dominant for ESL in Latvia, teacher-student interaction is crucial. It’s important to understand classroom organisation,

teaching methods, and the social and emotional support students receive. The *Interactions framework* (Hamre et al., 2013; Hafen et al., 2015) offers criteria for evaluating lesson activities, useful for reducing ESL risks. Educators need methodological support for both evaluating and planning lessons. The Programme, based on the *Interactions framework*, focuses on three domains: emotional support, classroom organisation, and instructional support.

Phase III. The Development of Morphological Model for Teaching Methods

Desk research identified barriers to teachers' success with ESL: inappropriate teaching methods, not respecting diverse learning needs, failing to engage learners, and lacking skills in analysing and evaluating their work. To reduce ESL, teachers must use a variety of methods to meet all pupils' needs. A morphological model based on Fritz Zwicky (1969) and the Robert M. Gagné approach to lesson planning was developed to ensure targeted student involvement.

Phase IV. Evaluation of the Implementation of the Programme

To answer the fourth research question, a data collection method—a survey questionnaire—has been applied. The Programme has been implemented in 15 groups of teachers (N=307) in Year 2022. The classes were held remotely on Zoom environment and materials created by the authors were offered for distribution (Inovācijas klase, 2021).

The questionnaire consisted of 14 close-ended questions (using a Likert scale from 1-insufficient; 2-sufficient; 3-good; 4-very good) and one open question. Two questions (work experience in the school and gender) were used to ascertain the teacher's demographic status. Subsequently, the majority of the questions (n=10) were concerned with identifying the course delivery and the performance of the course educators. The content of the programme developed, the relevance of the handouts and the usefulness of the knowledge acquired were the subject of three questions, which will be analysed.

The Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the test reliability ($\alpha=0.73$) shows high internal consistency.

The obtained data have been analysed in the SPSS environment of the Programme for Quantitative Data Processing, obtaining descriptive statistics indicators: Mean, Mode, Standard Deviation.

The survey has been carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science Republic of Latvia. Respondents' participation in the study was voluntary. The questionnaire was anonymous, the respondents cannot be identified by the information provided in the questionnaire. The data has been used only in an aggregated

form for the purpose of the study. The implementer of the project “*Expert services related to the implementation of the professional competence development programme “Diversification of educational methods in work with students at risk of early school leaving”*” was the State Service of Education Quality, an institution subordinated by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of Latvia, whose Procurement Commission Regulation regulates legal and ethical issues of the project, including project’s quality monitoring, effectiveness assessment, personal data protection, compliance with European Commission directives, etc. Requirements and procedure related to ethical issues of the project have been approved by protocol No. 1 on September 28, 2021.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are discussed in the context of the research questions.

What are the Theoretical Principles for the Programme Development?

Results of desk research of the theoretical principles used in the development of the Programme concerns the needs of young people at risk of ESL, barriers to educators’ success in working with ESL, and the normative requirements of the Republic of Latvia on the content and organisation of education.

The Needs of Early School Leavers

The needs of ESL are diverse and multifaceted, encompassing academic, social, emotional, and practical aspects. These needs indicate a range of requirements and support that should be considered to address the diverse challenges faced by students who leave school early (Table 1).

Table 1
Main Aspects of the Needs of ESL

Aspects	Description
Individual needs	ESL students may experience disabilities, psychological issues, academic underachievement, and mental health challenges (Jimerson et al., 2000). Institutional factors, such as family, school, and community influence, shape attitudes and expectations (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). A sense of belonging and bullying/cyberbullying impact student performance (Schleicher, 2018). Biographical-subjective factors, including personal experiences and motivations, further influence dropout risks (Guerrero Puerta, 2023).

School-based factors	Inadequate resources, guidance, and teaching methods contribute to school leaving (Rumberger & Lim, 2008; EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020). Positive school climates, supportive teacher-student relationships, and clear expectations foster student engagement (Thapa et al., 2013). Academic performance and early success are key predictors of retention (Jimerson et al., 2000; González-Rodríguez et al., 2019)..
Socio-economic background	Socio-economic conditions, including poverty, migrant status, work-less households, and geographic location, are significant determinants of educational outcomes (European Commission, 2017; 2022). Disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds create barriers to achievement and elevate the risk of dropout among vulnerable groups.

Source. Own research.

Unsuccessful relationships with educators increase stress, depression, and negative school experiences, alienating students (Ingul et al., 2019; Baker & Bishop, 2015). Emotional support from teachers reduces stress and fosters belonging, crucial for at-risk students (Murberg & Bru, 2009). Controlling teaching methods diminish engagement, motivation, and success, leading to dropout risks (Filippello et al., 2019; Fiorilli et al., 2019).

Socio-affective factors and education quality are pivotal in early school leaving (Opre et al., 2016). Successful curriculum reforms depend on the psychological climate and positive teacher-student relationships (Hattie & Zierer, 2017). Supportive interactions boost self-confidence and personal growth (Tankersley et al., 2016), aligning with the socio-emotional learning (SEL) framework (Agliati et al., 2020).

Early school leaving results from interconnected personal, social, economic, educational, and family factors, leading to cumulative disadvantages (European Commission, 2015). Addressing these requires a systemic approach integrating emotional, organisational, and instructional support. A holistic understanding and targeted interventions can help create supportive learning environments to mitigate early school leaving.

Barriers to Educators’ Success in Working with ESL

The literature analysis identified barriers to teachers’ success in ESL. Influencing barriers could be classified concerned with such problems as: knowing student’s individuality; diversification of teaching methods; sharing experience with colleagues, parents and community; promoting personal development (Table 2).

Table 2*Main Aspects of the Barriers to Educators' Success in Working with ESL*

Aspects	Description
Knowing student's individuality	Ignoring diverse learning needs and lacking engagement strategies heighten ESL risks (Dorila, 2017). Teachers' heavy workloads, administrative demands, and burnout impede personalised support and student relationships (Roorda et al., 2011). Negative stereotypes and biases against at-risk students, such as those from low-income families, influence educators' perceptions (Battin-Pearson et al., 2000).
Diversification of teaching methods	Inadequate teaching methods and materials increase ESL risks. Teachers face resource shortages and large classes, limiting personalised learning (Brown et al., 2022). Large classes hinder addressing individual needs, especially for at-risk students (European Commission, 2017).
Sharing experience with colleagues, parents, and community	Insufficient collaboration among educators, support staff, and community stakeholders hinders addressing dropout warning signs. Active engagement from stakeholders is essential to mitigate ESL risks (European Commission, 2020).
Promoting personal development	Teachers often lack skills to analyse performance and evaluate methods for ESL. Limited training in ESL prevention strategies makes supporting at-risk students challenging (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2020).

Source. Own research.

Educators face challenges in supporting at-risk students, including providing emotional support, diversifying methods, and fostering positive interactions (Thapa et al., 2013). Teachers often stick to familiar methods due to psychological inertia and lack of systemic understanding (Guthrie et al., 2007). Ineffective interactions contribute to disengagement and emotional distress, key ESL factors (Ingul et al., 2019).

Systemic support is essential. Teachers need training to build relationships, manage dynamics, and tailor instruction (Baker & Bishop, 2015). Many lack training in social-emotional learning methods that foster engagement (Agliati et al., 2020). Addressing ESL requires integrating engagement, achievement, and well-being to promote better outcomes and opportunities for disadvantaged groups (European Commission, 2022).

In summary, reducing ESL requires equipping educators with resources, training, and support to create varied, inclusive lessons that address at-risk students' needs, fostering engagement and improving outcomes.

The Normative Requirements of the Republic of Latvia on the Content and Organisation of Education

The legislation and official policy documents relevant to ESL are described in Table 3.

Table 3
The Normative Documents of the Republic of Latvia

Documents	Description
Law on Education	The Law on Education (Latvijas Republikas Saeima, 1999) outlines the principles, objectives, and organisation of Latvia’s education system. It defines the rights and responsibilities of educational institutions, teachers, pupils, and stakeholders, covering general, vocational, higher education, and lifelong learning.
National Development Plan	The National Development Plan (Center, Cross-Sectorial Coordination, 2020) is a strategic document that sets out the priorities, goals, and measures for improving the quality and accessibility of education in Latvia. The NAP typically covers a specified period, outlining long-term objectives and short-term action plans.
Curriculum Standards	Curriculum standards define learning objectives, content, and assessment criteria for various subjects and grades. In Latvia, the Ministry of Education and Science develops and updates standards. Examples: National Standard for Basic Education and Sample Plans for Basic Education Programmes (Cabinet of Ministers, 2018) and Regulations Regarding the State General Secondary Education Standard and Model General Secondary Education Programmes (Cabinet of Ministers, 2019).
Regulations on School Organization and Management	These regulations govern the organisation and management of educational institutions, including schools and preschools.
Inclusive Education Policy	Inclusive education policies outline strategies and measures for promoting the inclusion of students with diverse learning needs, including those with disabilities, special educational needs, or from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Source. Own research.

These documents are crucial for shaping Latvia’s education system, guiding decisions, and ensuring quality. Latvia’s framework emphasises a supportive, inclusive, and competence-based environment. Teachers need professional development and systemic support to address challenges and meet the needs of at-risk students. Research highlights school-related factors like lack of motivation, negative environments, inadequate support, and ineffective methods.

The Skola 2030 reform aims to equip students with skills for a changing world, highlighting the need for new teaching approaches. Key risks include unrecognised student potential and insufficient interventions, affecting motivation and engagement. Factors contributing to ESL include poor task quality, non-compliance with standards, negative reputations, and teaching challenges.

Desk research suggests that effective teaching for ESL requires diverse yet cohesive methods tailored to specific student needs. Teachers must demonstrate high professionalism and adaptability in designing lessons. The research empha-

sises the teacher's role in fostering engagement and addressing classroom-level challenges, as school-related factors are among the primary contributors to ESL in Latvia. Designing a programme to address ESL needs requires more than an outline of methods; it necessitates a synthetic approach. This ensures lessons align with ESL requirements, respect diverse needs, and achieve targeted outcomes. The Teaching through Interactions framework (Hamre et al., 2013; Hafen et al., 2015) was chosen to guide this process, enabling teachers to create effective and responsive learning environments.

IN WHAT WAY DOES THE DEVELOPED PROGRAMME, BASED ON THE INTERACTIONS FRAMEWORK, PROVIDE METHODOLOGICAL SUPPORT TO EDUCATORS IN THE INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE FROM THE ESL RISK GROUP IN THE LEARNING PROCESS?

The Teaching through Interactions Framework

The *Interactions Framework* (Hamre et al., 2013; Hafen et al., 2015) outlines criteria for assessing classroom activities aimed at mitigating ESL risks. It evaluates prevention strategies across three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organisation, and Instructional Support (Figure 2).

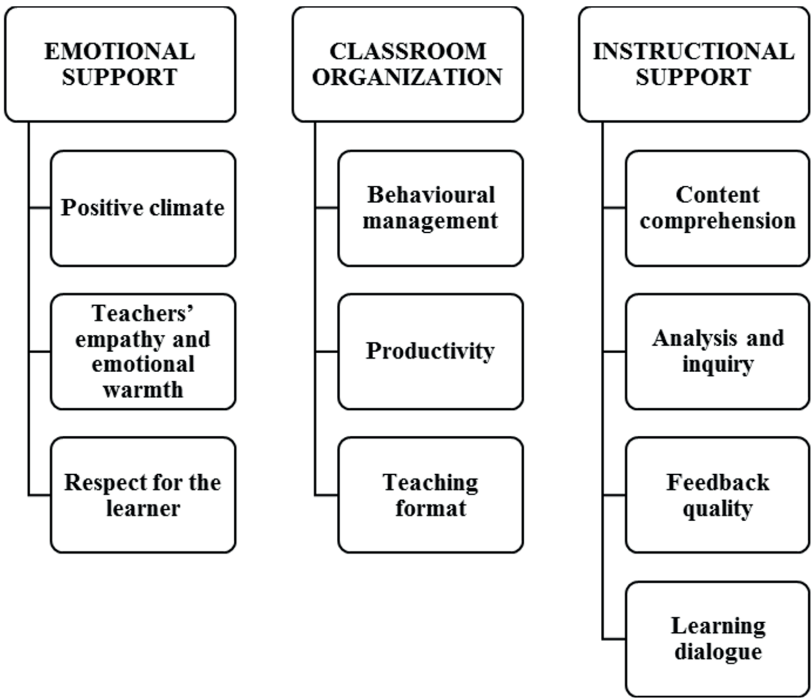
Emotional Support emphasises fostering a positive climate through strong teacher-student bonds characterised by warmth, respect, and empathy. Teachers play a key role in meeting students' academic, social-emotional, and developmental needs by encouraging autonomy, valuing opinions, and making learning relevant to students' experiences.

Classroom Organisation focuses on creating an effective learning environment. This includes clear behavioural expectations, strategies to manage misbehaviour, and maximising instructional time. Teachers can enhance engagement through well-structured lessons, promoting active participation, and clearly communicating learning objectives.

Instructional Support targets strategies to deepen understanding. Teachers help students grasp content frameworks, promote higher-order thinking through analysis and problem-solving, and provide quality feedback to extend learning and encourage participation. Structured discussions and guided questions foster communication skills and inclusivity.

By addressing these domains, teachers can create a supportive, organised, and engaging environment, enhancing students' learning experiences and reducing ESL risks.

Figure 2
Teaching through Interactions Framework for Assessment of ESL Risk Prevention Activities (Adapted by Hamre et al. [2013] and Hafen et al. [2015])



Source. Own research.

The *Interactions Framework* (Hamre et al., 2013; Hafen et al., 2015) supports ESL prevention by emphasising emotional support, classroom organisation, and instructional strategies. It promotes engagement and reduces dropout risks by fostering positive climates, effective classroom management, and diverse teaching methods. This structured model helps educators address the complex needs of at-risk students while aligning with Latvia’s educational reforms. By integrating this framework, the Programme equips teachers with tools to create inclusive, competence-based learning environments, enhancing interactions and improving educational outcomes (Tankersley et al., 2016; Gergov, 2019).

The Developed Programme “Diversification of Educational Methods in Work with Young People at Risk of Early School Leaving” for Teachers

The Programme offers an innovative approach to teaching methods to prevent early school leaving. It aims to improve educators’ knowledge and skills in diverse

methods, enhancing motivation and learning for at-risk youth. The Programme provides methodological support and increases teachers' capacity to engage students at risk of early school leaving, based on the Interactions framework. Based on the analysis of scientific literature in compliance with the methodological principles of programme development, the Programme (Figure 3) has been structured according to 6 domains:

- *students' psychoemotional needs and behaviour management* (a psychoemotional description of teenagers and youth in the dropout risk group (Steinberg, 2014; Curtis, 2015) and methodological support for promoting positive cooperation and creating a favourable emotional environment at school lessons (Filipello et al., 2019; Ingul et al., 2019);
- *the learning format* for work with dropout risk youth (student interests and promoting engagement levels (Purēns, 2015), and the morphological lesson analysis model elaborated by the authors for diversifying teaching methods);
- *importance of personalised learning* in the problem-centred approach (the methods for creating a deliberate attitude and interest (Jonina, 2017);
- *methodological support* for the acquisition of the syllabus (the structuring of information using diverse reading strategies (Osborne, 2021), as well as a graphic organiser of information, mnemonics, and association (Baddeley, 2017; Athuraliya, 2021);
- *creating motivating formative evaluation and feedback* using concept maps (Race, 2019; Logins et al., 2020);
- *modelling and evaluation of a lesson* using Bloom's and SOLO taxonomies for formulating learning outcomes when modelling a lesson (Gagné et al., 2005), as well as a teacher and student interaction model for the evaluation of activities for dropout prevention activities (Hafen et al., 2015).

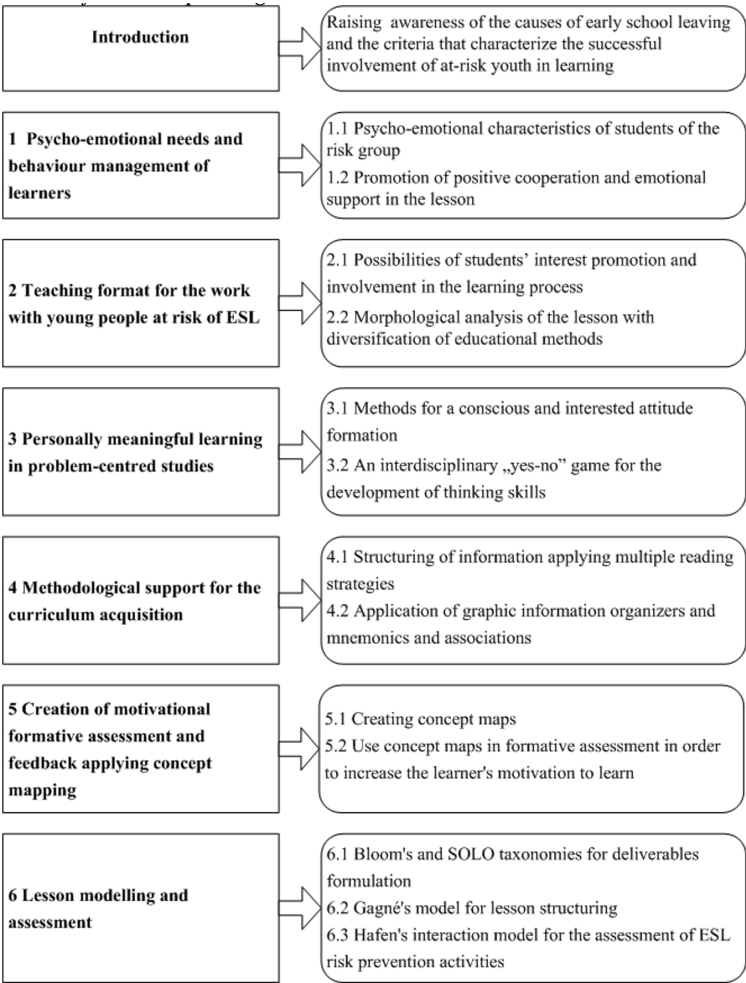
The Programme covers the psycho-emotional needs of young people and adolescents, emphasising the importance of creating a positive classroom climate and fostering respectful teacher-student relationships. This helps learners feel respected and valued.

Positive cooperation and reinforcement of desired behaviour are crucial for organising the classroom effectively. The Programme also explores teaching formats that promote student involvement and diversify educational methods.

Learning support focuses on personally meaningful learning and content support. It addresses learners' needs for self-determination and higher-order thinking skills, offering methods to structure information for better understanding, memorisation, and use.

Feedback and learning dialogue are essential for learning support. The Programme demonstrates an original approach to making feedback motivating through concept mapping. The concluding topic integrates all previous content, applying it to meet new educational standards and mitigate ESL risks.

Figure 3
Content of the Developed Programme



Source. Own research.

How to Diversify Methods to Ensure Targeted ESL Participation in Lessons?

To engage early school leavers and reduce dropout risks, various strategies are proposed. Toshova et al. (2019) advocate for integrated, outcome-oriented methods. Lopez and Schroeder (2008) recommend tailoring lessons to students' learning styles. Murray and Mitchell (2016) stress positive teacher-student relationships and relevant content. Liepiņa and Rutka (2021) highlight creating a safe environment and fostering

cooperation with parents and colleagues. Combining these strategies can effectively engage at-risk students.

The morphological model for working with ESL youth is presented in a table 6 (Appendix), with lesson elements vertically and corresponding methods horizontally. Teachers can add or specify methods. Methods can be used in various lesson phases. The model aims to showcase method variety and encourage experimentation.

- The teacher is offered the following steps for the developed tool application in lesson planning.
- Formulate the achievable result of the lesson.
- In compliance with the result to be achieved, choose a method from the table for each stage of the lesson, consider the possibility of implementing the lesson not in the classroom, but outside it, think about the application of digital tools.
- Specify the use of the chosen methods in the context of the tasks to be performed by the learners.
- Assess the planning of the lesson from the point of view of the use of the emotional stimuli and strengthen and improve the use of emotional stimuli.
- Foresee the possible undesirable behaviour of students in class and choose methods for its correction.

The selection of methods for the structural elements of the lesson can be made in two ways—as a deliberate, purposeful choice or as a random unintentional choice. When choosing consciously, the teacher assesses the suitability of the method for the introduction of the learning topic, acquisition of the achievable result, students' motivation and learning skills, the specific learning environment, time frame and other conditions. This approach makes it possible to more comprehensively assess the usefulness of the methods applied and more carefully coordinate the elements of the lesson in its overall development. However, at the same time, the teacher has the opportunity to stick to the usual methods and create a lesson plan not by the method assessment, but by following the call of personal experience. Therefore, the authors of the model offer to try a random selection of methods, which can be done with eyes closed by naming a table cell in each row of the table—A, B, C or another, and when you open your eyes, find out which method has been chosen. In this approach, the inadequacy of the chosen methods to the specifics of the subject, the achievable result or other circumstances may be revealed. This approach allows teachers to either stick to familiar methods or experiment with new ones, fostering a dynamic and engaging learning environment.

The Morphological Model of the Lesson provides a structured framework for diversifying teaching methods, aligning with Latvia's competence-based education reforms (Skola 2030, 2019). It encourages systematic lesson planning by considering emotional, organisational, and instructional factors (Zwicky, 1969). The model uses Robert Gagné's nine-event model (Gagné et al., 2005), which includes three phases: raising awareness, comprehension, and reflection.

In the awareness phase, teachers draw learners’ attention, communicate achievable results, and activate prior knowledge. The comprehension phase involves presenting new content, guiding learning, supporting, enabling content use, and providing feedback. The reflection phase focuses on assessing performance and promoting transfer/generalisation.

For engaging at-risk youth, following this sequence helps maintain interest and achieve desired outcomes. The model’s structural elements are defined by time, space, and interaction, making it adaptable to various teaching contexts. This approach supports collaboration, critical thinking, and adaptability, essential for modern education.

How do the Teachers Assess the Programme Content, the Developed Teaching Material and Methods?

To answer this research question, responses from 307 teachers were analysed, including 303 women and 4 men. The participants’ work experience varied: 11 (3.6%) had up to 1 year, 25 (8.1%) had 2-5 years, 35 (11.4%) had 6-10 years, 68 (22.1%) had 11-20 years, and 168 (54.7%) had 21 or more years.

Table 4 presents descriptive statistics for questions assessing the suitability of the programme content and handout materials for practical application.

Table 4
Assessment of the Suitability of the Programme Content and Handout Support Materials for Practical Application

Questions	M	Mdn	Mo	SD
Q1. How do you evaluate the suitability of the course handouts for practical application?	3.7	4	4	.519
Q2. How do you evaluate the methods used in the course sessions?	3.5	3	3	.560
Q3. How do you evaluate the quality of the on-line remote sessions of the course?	3.7	4	4	.494
Q4. How do you evaluate the usefulness of the knowledge and skills acquired in the program for your future work?	3.4	4	4	.657
Q5. How do you evaluate the overall content of the program?	3.5	4	4	.579
Q 12.How do you evaluate the organizational process of the courses?	3.8	4	4	.438

Note. Questions 6-11 are not included as they relate only to the evaluation of the professionalism of course educators.

Source. Own research.

The survey evaluated the course implementation, with particular focus on programme content and organisational process. Participants rated the course handouts (Q1) and overall content (Q5) highly, with median and mode scores of 4 and mean scores of 3.7 and 3.5, respectively, indicating the materials were suitable for practical application and met expectations.

The methods used in sessions (Q2) received slightly lower scores, with median and mode of 3 and a mean of 3.5, suggesting moderate suitability and room for improvement in delivery methods. Online remote sessions (Q3) and the usefulness of acquired knowledge and skills (Q4) were rated highly, with median and mode scores of 4. However, Q4 showed more variability, highlighting the need for consistent practical application.

The organisational process (Q12) received high ratings, with median and mode scores of 4 and the lowest variability, indicating strong agreement and positive feedback. This consistency, along with high ratings for Q1 and Q5, reflects a well-structured and effectively managed programme.

Overall, the combined evaluation of content and organisational process (Q5 and Q12) shows high participant satisfaction. This feedback provides valuable insights for developers to maintain and enhance course strengths, ensuring both content and delivery methods meet participants' needs.

The results of the open question show that from the point of the audience, the courses have been with a practical orientation, and both their content and the handouts have been very thoughtful, valuable and useful. A summary of some of the quotes is shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Teachers' (T) Quotes on Course Content, Materials, Methods and Future Use

Category	Quotes from teacher (T) responses
Evaluation of content and handouts	T35: <i>Thank you for the valuable courses. I will definitely use both the theoretical and practical aspects in my work.</i>
	T57: <i>As a new teacher, I gained a lot of valuable information</i>
	T202: <i>For me, who am just starting to work at Pumpurs, these materials will be useful.</i>
	T138: <i>Thank you for the ideas, the initiative and the modern perspective in your daily work with your students!</i>
	T155: <i>I had the opportunity to refresh what I have learnt during my studies and to get new ideas which I will definitely try in practice.</i>
	T212: <i>Thoughtful content of lectures, lots of handouts, recommended web addresses.</i>
Evaluation of teaching methods and tools used	T216: <i>Well prepared, well organised courses, very well developed materials.</i>
	T32: <i>I liked the variety of methods offered.</i>
	T158: <i>I really appreciated the combination of theory and hands-on opportunities in the digital environment.</i>
	T185: <i>Ideas, plans, methods — this would be useful for every teacher who works with children on a daily basis.</i>

Category	Quotes from teacher (T) responses
Assessment of future perspective	T138: <i>Thank you for your ideas, initiative and modern outlook in your daily work with students!</i>
	T155: <i>I had the opportunity to refresh what I have learnt during my studies, and also to take away new ideas that I will definitely try out in practice.</i>
	T185: <i>It would be useful for any teacher who works with children on a daily basis.</i>
	T307: <i>To continue to share my experiences, thus supporting and encouraging my colleagues in their daily work in schools.</i>

Source. Own research.

It means participants found the courses useful, inspiring, and practical, offering various ideas and methods for daily work with students, including those who have dropped out. Overall, the programme content, teaching materials, and methods received positive evaluations.

At the same time, participants expressed some concerns regarding the course duration (*T38, T46: The course could be extended to 3 days, as 2 days included too much information. By the end of the course, it was difficult to process the information*), the selection of course groups (*T50: Conduct courses separately, creating groups for primary school, secondary school, and vocational school teachers*), and the course organisation (*T176: It would be preferable to receive the necessary printable materials before the course*).

CONCLUSIONS

The development of the Programme involved a theoretical study of the personal, institutional, and academic needs of ESL students and the barriers teachers face in the learning process. Since the school factor is the primary influence on ESL in Latvia, improving teacher-student collaboration became a key focus. The *Teaching through Interactions* framework (Hamre et al., 2013; Hafen et al., 2015) was adopted as a valuable tool for assessing classroom performance and reducing ESL risks. This framework highlights three key areas of teacher-student interaction: emotional support, classroom organization, and instructional strategies.

Unlike traditional professional development programmes that address specific challenges, this Programme provides a comprehensive approach to lesson organisation, integrating diverse teaching methods to meet ESL needs. It covers all three interaction domains—emotional, organisational, and instructional—ensuring a holistic approach to supporting at-risk students. Additionally, the Programme’s preventive measures aim to reduce the likelihood of students becoming ESL.

The strategies, ideas, and methods presented are practical for any teacher working with students, equipping educators to create inclusive, supportive, and effective learning environments tailored to diverse needs.

To support teachers in using diverse methods tailored to lesson outcomes, tasks, and specific situations, a morphological model by Muraškovska, Vimba, Birziņa, and Pigozne (*Inovācijas klase*, 2021) was developed. This universal model applies to all subjects and age groups, offering flexibility and fostering teacher creativity. The model promotes a systemic approach to engaging ESL students, emphasising method diversification as a means to actively involve them in learning.

By enabling teachers to combine methods intentionally or creatively, the model enhances student interest and participation. Designed for working with at-risk youth, it helps educators generate innovative lesson strategies, fostering engagement and reducing the risk of early school leaving.

Previous professional development programmes addressed specific aspects of ESL issues. However, the Programme offers a holistic approach, integrating emotional support, classroom organisation, and instructional strategies—key challenges for educators. Course participants highly valued its practical application and resources. The Programme effectively supports teachers in assessing and improving classroom activities, making it a valuable tool for mitigating the risks of early school leaving.

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APPENDIX

Table 6

The Morphological Model of the Lesson for the Working with Young People at risk of ESL Developed by Muraškovska, Vimba, Birziņa, and Pigozne (Inovācijas klase, 2021).

Structural No	element of the les- son/ educational method	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Raising awareness	A tricky question, a riddle	An intriguing fact, demonstration, video	A mini-test on what is already known or what has previously been learned	Brainstorm, 4 corners	Associations on the topic	Questions about the topic, Big question	Defining deliverables
	Comprehension	Work with the text: Insert method, Delphi method, reading in roles, questions and answers	Interactive lecture, exercises	Graphic organisers (e.g. mind map, table, Venn diagram)	Problem- solving	Game, roleplay	Situational analysis	Research, laboratory work, experiment
	Application	Practical tasks: station method, training centres, gallery method	Competition, tournament	Discussion, debates	Essay, argumentative essay	Creative work: collage, graffiti, fairy tale, game, presentation, poster	Creation of tasks	Project, operational project
	Feedback	Project, operational project	Stop of answers	Expert opinion, peer assessment	Discussion of unanswered questions	Learning conversation	Skill sheets, self-assessment	3P comment (paslavē, pajautā, piedāvā) (<i>praise, ask, propose</i>)
	Reflection	Rule of thumb method	Exit ticket	Unfinished sentences, treasure chest	“Twitter wall”, Mind map	Free writing, diary	Cognitive autobiography	Portfolio

No	Structural element of the lesson/ educational method	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
	Digital tools	For questions and surveys: Slido, Tricider	For communication: Zoom, LiveBoard, Jitsi, Discord, Moodle	For simulations: Phet Simulations	For Infographics creation: Canva, Infogram, Visio, Lucidchart, Piktochart, Vengage Miro	For flowchart creation: Visio, Lucidchart, Miro	For work presentation and comments: Padlet	For formative evaluation and reflection: Socrative, Quizizz, Pickers, Kahoot
	Class environment	Class	School: corridor, canteen, library, yard	Another educational establishment, museum	Natural environment: meadow, forest, river, lake, sea, nature trails	City: Park, street, parks, squares	Institutions, organizations, enterprises	Digital environment in distance learning
	Resources of emotional stimuli	Learning content: engaging subject, mysterious phenomenon, unexpected/contradictory facts/opinions, causal account, historical aspect, beautiful illustrations	Educational activities: physical movements, self-expression activities, new types of activities, trying out, freedom of choice of activities, activity guaranteeing success, activities focused on aesthetic process and/or results	Educator's personalities: appearance, movements, gestures, manner of speaking, vitality, enthusiasm, interest in the subject	Interaction: favourable communication, cultivation of traditions, teamwork, competition, principles of safety-promoting cooperation, opportunities for giving and receiving support/praise, trying out roles in a group, exchanging opinions and respecting	Environment: functional and modern design, imaginative, inspiring interior elements, music and works of art, balanced information environment, possibilities of dynamic environment transformation, privacy possibilities	Teaching materials: information and communication technologies, aesthetic, easy-to-use information resources, practically useful, structured handouts, new tools	Learning outcomes: satisfying task completion, practically applicable product, shareable result, victory, good grade, prize, surprise award, publicizing success, additional opportunities

Structural element of the lesson/ educational method	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Methods of behaviour correction (by the behavioural goal)	Attention attraction: eye contact; personal address; standing by; non-verbal signals - gestures; positive behaviour assessment; written instructions; provision of opportunities for positive attention, e.g., asking for help, involving in the organization of the learning process	Distraction: demarcation; unexpected behaviour; changing the environmental conditions and the situation in which the behaviour is raised, change; shifting the focus of attention - an unexpected question or joke; change of activity, dynamic pauses	Revenge and anger: reflection and discussion of students' emotions; showing support and care; help, application of calming strategies; breathing exercises, drawing, writing.	Avoidance: learners have the opportunity to choose a behaviour model, thus making his choice conscious; possibility to be responsible for the consequences of the choice; individual agreement; assessment of positive behaviour	Safety: showing personal and positive attention - personal greeting, personalized approach and workplace; listening to learners; demonstration of equal treatment, compassion and care; assessment of interest and achievement	Power: warning; termination of unwanted behaviour; segregation; turning destructive behaviour into constructive behaviour - to take responsibility for the consequences of one's actions, improve the situation, mitigate the consequences of destructive behaviour; solving of situations takes place individually and not publicly; points system	Avoidance of failures: disregard of unwanted behaviour; promotion and materialization of achievements; reinforcement of desired behaviour; facilitation of requirements, change of methods; acceptance of mistakes; focusing only on the learner's actions and not on the personality; encouragement and emphasis of the learner's strengths

Source. Own research.