

## **Searching in the Literature for Theoretical Dimensions to Support the Modelling of Children's Legal Education**

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### **Abstract**

*The article presents a literature review and the analysis of official European documents and law, in order to establish theoretical dimensions for the modelling of children's legal education. Legal education is necessary for the sustainable development of individuals and their successful integration, from early childhood, into society. A citizen may fully participate in society once they are aware of their rights and duties, thus understanding and respecting the laws, rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of other people. Individuals who are unaware of their rights and freedoms and their boundaries often become victims of crime or offenders of the law. These factors support the need for and the significance of legal education. The analysis showed that, generally, legal education modelling within general education does not receive enough attention, in enabling students and teachers to positively value the necessity of a legal education model within general education. Furthermore, it highlighted the importance of seeing children as members of society, holding the same rights as adults, and of educating such children to become active members of a democratic society.*

**Keywords:** theoretical dimensions, legal education, research, educational modelling.

### **Introduction**

The 21<sup>st</sup> century is characterised by innovative approaches to children and this implies a change in the concept of children's rights; today, children are treated as fully-fledged legal entities, with their own rights and duties (Unicef, 2008; Lundy et al., 2012; Sagatys, 2006). A democratic state is particularly committed to the law and thus a consistent and a clear legal education state policy and of other institutions in this area is essential (Papa, Singhal et al., 2000). The law assists within everyday society: although certain established rights exist, some citizens are not inclined to follow them; consequently, such behaviour results in a variety of crimes and other socially unacceptable behaviour. In order to reduce such destructive occurrences, it is necessary to preserve law as the basis of a stable society (Hafner-Burton & Tsutsui, 2005).

The implementation of legal consciousness in children is not an easy process. The concept combines human knowledge, images and feelings towards law into one whole (Lundy et al., 2012; Slapkauskas, 2004). In analysing legal education as a single concept, it should be noted that no exact definition of this has yet been established, but its constituent parts (law and education) have been researched by specialists in these fields. Scholars such as Newton (2007), Burnham (2003), Fortin (2009), Fischer, Schimmel and Stellman (2003), Vaisvila (2004) and others have outlined the concept of law: its purpose, features and advantages to the wider public, in various aspects. Their statements help to better understand law: not as a theoretical necessity, but as an imperative, with the help of which individuals can protect themselves, their freedoms and rights, in addition to those of other people. The problem of public legal education and training is also tackled in various ways and methods, as the concepts of law and education have a common entity: people (Lundy et al., 2012).

In being educated in school, children are taught mathematics, physics, languages and, in the upper classes, the subject of political science education. However, expertise and knowledge alone is not enough in the effective socialisation of a child. Some children break the law and social norms and will eventually commit a crime.

All children must know how to behave and must understand that they will be punished for the violation of social norms (Unicef, 2008, Anderson & Taylor, 2006; Pekauskas, 2010). Smits (2014) believes that children need to learn how to become well-behaved citizens and should be aware of their responsibilities and rights; not only in their own country, but in other parts of the world also. This is important, as this tendency is becoming global and actualises the necessity of legal education (as opposed to specific or professional legal training), which is provided through education modelling and the creation of legally-orientated future educational programmes. The article examines the literature pertaining to the legal education of children. It also observes related official European documents and looks at European law, in terms of legal education. Finally the authors discuss their findings and draw their conclusions.

### ***The Importance of Legal Education***

Legal education is necessary for the sustainable development of individuals and their successful integration into society from early childhood: this is a period where human beings change rapidly and develop in accordance with various life experiences (Anderson & Taylor, 2006). Being physically weak, immature and inexperienced during this period, children are fully or partly dependent on the adults that surround them: their life and growth depend on the people responsible for their care. Children require shelter, food, education, healthcare, love and protection from abuse, neglect, etc. Regarding their age and maturity, children must be able to exercise their civil, political or other rights within the family, the community and the nation (Lansdown, 2011; Unicef, 2008; Prakapas & Zilinskiene, 2008). Pekauskas (2010) stated that legal education can be considered as a sort of information to society, one of the key means of developing legally educated and honest citizens. A man can fully express himself as a citizen only when he knows not only his rights and duties, but also understands and respects the laws, rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of other people. Individuals that are unaware of their rights and freedoms and, in addition, their boundaries and restrictions, often become victims of crime or offenders of the laws. These factors support the need for and the significance of legal education.

Being of social interest and if converted into a universally binding rule of behaviour, the intention of law is to standardise human behaviour and to combine contrary interests and is necessary for society, in protecting and meeting the social, economic, political, religious, cultural and even biological needs of people (Vaisvila, 2004; Anderson & Taylor, 2006; Unicef, 2008). As a neutral observer of life, law maintains equality amongst all members of society, equally protecting, defending and implementing the needs of all people. Survival and the development of society are determined by the obligation to dispose of certain specified rules regulating relationships, which are dependent upon the stage of the development of society and self-discipline. The more mature society is, the more it frees the individual, in expressing and ensuring the legitimate interests of people. According to Vansevicius (2000), in regulating the behaviour arising from some interests, society secures an increasing human freedom and personal autonomy, ensuring meaningful and harmonious relationships between people. So, as knowledge is gained through learning, it may be stated that legal education provides society with the necessary knowledge to ensure its survival and progress and also creates the conditions within which citizens enjoy a fulfilled life. In living a fully-fledged life within society, it is necessary to exercise one's rights and to assume duties. However, not everyone knows how to do this or how to adapt to the rapid changes in society and the corresponding legal requirements (i.e., the flow of information and changing values) without violating the law. Thus, legal education, which encompasses information, training (learning), counselling and community-based law skills, enables members of society to fill and cover this gap (Anderson & Taylor, 2006; Vansevicius, 2000).

With regards to the issue of legal requirements being considered as the expression of moral principles and norms, the most efficient stage of legal education is the initial stage in childhood, when all the basic moral ideas take the form of moral attitude. During adolescence, while self-awareness is developing, these ideas evolve into a form of beliefs; thus, legal education, which should be implemented during the initial phase of general education, should also be continued throughout the stages of basic and secondary education. A citizen who does not know the content of his freedoms and duties behaves according to his discretion, rather than referring to the established norms of state and society, as he needs to know how to behave and respond in the case of the established norms of behaviour being violated.

### ***Europe 2020***

In the Europe 2020 strategy, there is great emphasis on the education system (European Commission, 2010).

The strategy's programmes provide the means for improving the accessibility of all education levels, increasing youth employment, improving the rate of mobility and ensuring the qualitative requirements of higher education. The key objectives of the programme are to turn lifelong learning and mobility into reality, in order to improve the quality and efficacy of education and to promote equity, active citizenship, creativity and innovation within education and training, across all teaching levels. This document makes it possible for schools and teachers to raise their targets, in terms of each student's, school's or community's needs, taking into account teachers' experience and the available resources. Schools and teachers determine the methods of education planning, the organisation of the educational process, the evaluation of pupils' achievements and progress, the evaluation of information usage methods and the decisions, in terms of the integration, differentiation and individualisation of the curriculum. Schoolteachers are provided with opportunities for the cooperation and formation of an environment, encouraging active learning and the improvement of one's qualifications, in terms of changes to curriculum priorities (Milligan, Moretti & Osreopoulo, 2004).

The purpose of the strategy is to adapt the curriculum so that each pupil, in terms of their needs and abilities, will mature as a person, in developing a civil and national consciousness and gaining the competencies necessary for further learning and a meaningful, active life within modern society. The most important priority of the 2007 strategy was to adapt the curriculum to major personal competencies, particularly in terms of learning ability, citizenship, entrepreneurship and digital literacy. The strategy set out a broad, modern concept of a contemporary curriculum, according to which the curriculum incorporated everything that affects a child's education (learning): experience already gained, subject curriculum, teaching (learning) strategies and methods, evaluation methods in the educational process and in the completion of the programme, teaching (learning) tools and environments and class climate. Thus, in planning education throughout the educational process itself and in evaluating the results of education, all the components of the curriculum should be considered. The development of the modern curriculum focuses not on the contribution of what is taught, but on the expected results and impact: what pupils should learn and the general abilities and attitudes that must be gained in order to successfully integrate into modern society, thus acquiring the necessary basics of lifelong learning.

### ***Legal Education via General Education***

Pekauskas (2010) stated that the system of legal education within general education school should be classified into:

- The legal training of teachers
- The legal education of schoolchildren
- The legal education of parents.

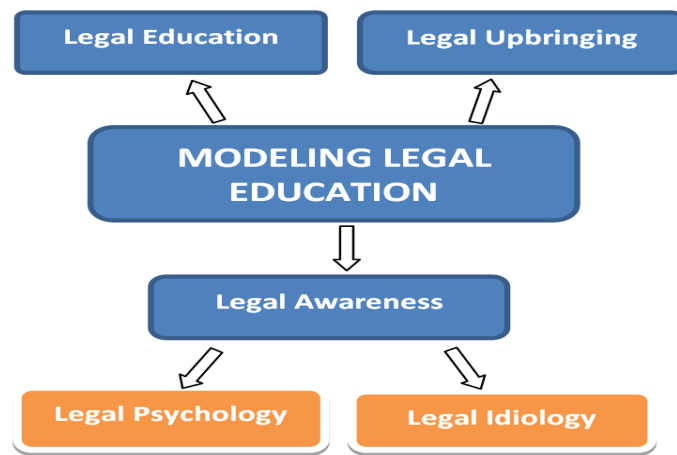
By removing the obstacles that prevent the implementation of legal education, legal knowledge should be available to all children, irrespective of their social position or other circumstances. Furthermore, children should be taught systematically, so that legal education becomes a consistent process (Pekauskas, 2010). As highlighted by Prakapas and Cepaite (2011), this requires a specifically developed methodological framework, tools and working practices. However, there are still issues as to whether teachers receive adequate legal knowledge while studying and whether parents of school-age children are adequately legally educated

Public education is considered a process through which individuals receive opportunities to acquire legal knowledge and skills in order to properly exercise their rights and freedoms within the legal system and to protect and carry out their duties. Public legal education is important in ensuring that society, in understanding its rights, freedoms and responsibilities, better adapts to constantly changing or new laws. Public legal education refers to the rise in legal awareness, the provision of legal information and legal advice (Milligan, Moretti & Osreopoulo, 2004), while legal education is the process through which individuals are able to gain knowledge of law so that they can properly exercise their rights within the legal system, in order to protect them and to help them perform their duties (Kairiene & Dzindzalietiene, 2009).

Legal education is a kind of information for society and is one of the key means of developing legally educated and honest citizens (Pekauskas & Grigaliunaite, 2008). Legal consciousness refers to a system of visual ideas and theories about applicable or desirable law and the compliance of existing laws with justice, which are created by people with certain interests, as well as positive or negative emotions. Various stakeholders experience the applicable laws, assessing these as a protection of their or public interests (Pekauskas & Grigaliunaite, 2008). Legal consciousness consists of two equal structural aspects: legal psychology and legal ideology.

Legal psychology refers to the feelings and experiences that people have when directly confronted with the activities of various state institutions, through the development and application of laws made by such institutions in protecting or restricting the rights of individuals. Legal ideology is a reasoned, conscious human approach to the current and preferred law, which develops into rules and a variety of legal relations (Pekauskas & Grigaliunaite, 2008).

Based on the above, we can state that legal education, legal consciousness, legal psychology and legal ideology, when combined into a single process, constitute legal education modelling (see Figure 1). Legal education modelling is concerned with the structure of lessons regarding the education of human rights, organisational methods, the nature of pedagogical communication and relationships. It is a model that provides direction to the educational process, orientating both individuals and communities to a certain result, is influenced by the decisions of state-level institutions and consists of 'participants', work stages, elements, components of a teacher's professionalism and qualitative changes.



**Figure 1: Covering Factor of Modelling Legal Education.**

In modelling legal education with regards to general education schools, it is important to consider the specific and consistent patterns and characteristics typical of the various age groups. Svedas (1999) outlined the groups of legal education as being pre-school age, young school age, middle school age and senior school age. This indicates that legal education within schools takes place in different forms: verbal, visual, practical, etc. It is essential to work differently with children in each age group; i.e., by choosing the most appropriate form of education, be it a game, a lecture, a contest, an afternoon get-together, a quiz or a school trip. One of the major teaching methods within legal education is the creation of problematic situations. In this, learners choose an idea and base their behaviour and activity around the chosen idea.

The situations, based on the experiences of others or imaginary people (taken from literature or journalistic articles, etc.), can be also used within the legal education system. This material, provided in the form of problematic situations and feature and documentary films dealing with legal problems such as enforcement of the law, may be used in achieving the goals of legal education. Middle-school children may become acquainted with police activity, the nature of police work and the rights and duties of police officers. It is also appropriate to clarify responsibility for any violations of law and the rights and duties of this age group, including how to protect one's self and prevent crime. Referring to primary education, Prakapas and Cepaite (2011) noted that, at this stage, the development of a child's self-confidence and social tolerance is of major importance and the basics of positive relationships with other people are highlighted. Initial legal knowledge is provided through lessons covering knowledge of the world, the Lithuanian language and moral education. During such lessons, it is stressed that all people should be given equal treatment, in that their dignity, rights and freedom are respected and developed. In addition, general human values are presented, such as forbearance, tolerance and respect for others, in attempting to help children to recognise that they are unique individuals with their own rights.

In senior classes, legal education is successfully integrated both within the classroom and in the form of extra-curricular activities (class meetings, various campaigns, forums, projects and other traditional and non-traditional events).

The essence of the law programme is a comprehensive knowledge of all issues regulated by law, which are relevant to everybody in society. Such knowledge includes information about the nature of law, legal principles, personal and property rights, consumer rights, labour relations, law violations and legal liability procedures (Halloun, 2004).

The aim of the basic education plans is to provide guidelines for the development of the school curriculum and plan the learning environment, in terms of the learning needs of schoolchildren. They are also used to determine the minimum number of lessons required in the implementation of educational programmes. The school curriculum is shaped by selecting and adapting the curriculum to the objectives of schools, in addition to society values and the specific learning needs of schoolchildren. The formation of the school curriculum and the development of school education plans are based on information from education monitoring, the evaluation of pupils' achievements and progress in the process of education, the research of achievements, self-assessment data and the external assessment of schools' performance. In shaping the curriculum, schools are able to make decisions on separate subjects and implement the provided measures.

Prakapas and Cepaite (2011) asserted that, in conveying a certain curriculum, it is extremely important to choose a suitable method of delivery. They indicated that unique and non-traditional teaching methods, usually based on humanistic psychology and pedagogy, can be found in educational scientific literature. Such choice enables the discussion of creative thinking and critical circumstances, independence, the ability to communicate and cooperate and other qualities necessary in 21<sup>st</sup> century society. A legal education model should be based on the structure of the legal system. Legal consciousness refers to a system of visual ideas and theories about existing or desirable law, compliance of the applicable law with justice and the positive or negative emotions experienced by various stakeholders, when faced with applicable laws (Pekauskas, 2010).

### **Modelling Legal Education**

The modelling of legal education is also dependent upon the involvement of parents and pupils in the process. As already mentioned, family is a very important aspect of children's socialisation. Pekauskas (2010) noted that the reasons for children's delinquent behaviour are often attributed to parents paying insufficient attention to their child, showing little interest in them and their needs in their free time. Thus, the legal education of parents has an important place within the system of legal education and there are different methods of parental legal education: group education (i.e., meetings or lectures) and individual education (interviews or consulting). The latter are usually applied to parents who avoid meetings and are disinterested in school life. It is important that legal education classes take place on a regular basis and, in talking with parents individually, the content of conversation is dependent upon the specific behaviour of a particular juvenile. The following issues should be discussed with parents: children's public order offences, improper parenting facts, violation of parental rules and new laws, etc.

Legal education is a common subject of two disciplines; namely, law and science of education (Papa, Singhal, Law & Pant, 2000). The structural elements of legal education are as follows:

- Legal knowledge (legislation, legal categories, definitions, general principles of law, sources of law and social norms). The factors surrounding law or legislative procedures, which are the basis of the rise of legal norms, people's beliefs and interests, are considered to be the source of law and accurately reveal the meaning of the term *source*. Secondly, they refer to the various cognitive sources surrounding law or anything that enables us to perceive law. Finally, the source of law has long been understood as the form of self-assessment or the expression of legal norms, although the term *source* used in this sense has serious opponents. Thus, the will of the legislator, the treatise of jurisprudence and customary law can all be equally named as sources of law. The source of law is a theory, an idea and legislation on the basis of which law arises and legal rules are formed. One of the most important sources of law within democratic states is legislations adopted by parliaments and democracies adopt legislation.
- Legal assessment: an understanding and construction of the facts (circle situational problems, classification of facts, legal assessment (legal, illegal)
- The practical implementation of legal knowledge: legal provisions, perception of legal decision, legal reasoning competence.

To conclude, the basic elements of legal education modelling in general education schools can be distinguished by a) the legal training of teachers, b) the legal education of schoolchildren, c) legal parental education.

It should be noted that the majority of researchers (Pekauskas, 2010; Prakapas and Cepaite, 2011; Pekauskas and Grigaliunaite, 2008; Braslauskiene and Smitiene, 2001; Fortin, 2009) highlighted how the legal training of teachers and their positive attitude towards this work is part of the success of legal education modelling.

As a result, teachers who work with schoolchildren face another challenge, in that they must update their existing legal knowledge, referring to the innovations and issues in regards to legal regulations. Thus, teachers must be interested in national law, aspects of legal social care, child custody and the protection of children's rights.

Legal education is becoming increasingly popular and largely focuses on providing specialised knowledge of law through the submission of legal knowledge and problem-solving models. The aim of the school programme is to implement legal knowledge in order to accelerate the understanding of law amongst the school community and to improve the functioning of the justice system and society itself (Sossin, 2013). The system of education and child welfare is being reformed on the basis of the experience of various European countries, international treaties and the principles of humanity, democracy, nationality, regeneration and openness to change. Since the beginning of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the world has experienced significant cultural, political, economic and ecological change and so education is faced with a very important and challenging role, in preparing young people for such changes. A rethinking of school goals is required; i.e., what is important in teaching schoolchildren, what skills and attitudes they need to acquire and how the role of teacher is changing, along with the goals of education. The strategic documents pertaining to education within the European Union state that individuals should renew competencies and link them with new educational content based on the analysis of knowledge, its critical evaluation and practical use associated with the solution of problems in different life situations, rather than conveyance or the takeover of knowledge (Motiejuniene and Zadeikaite, 2009). One of the most important goals of education is to help individuals and society respond to key challenges of the present, as well as taking advantage of opportunities (Gudzinskiene & Railiene, 2012).

As previously mentioned, legal education is a rather new term, so, in order to gain an insight into its meaning, it is necessary to discuss the different meanings of these words; i.e., what education and law mean and how these words are related and defined by different authors. According to Prakapas (2010), in the scientific literature of recent years, attention is placed on the examination of legal education as an integral, although not clearly defined, phenomenon, as legal education itself is associated with the two disciplines of law and science of education. Education of personality is a long, purposeful and lifelong process, probably beginning with the birth of a child, and refers to never-ending personal maturity (Reingarde, Vasiliauskaite & Erentaite, 2010). The extent of educational interaction is significant, as it includes cultivation, education, learning, training, nurturing and formation and provides a scheme of education in which education is closely linked with development and performance.

Both the individual and institutional aspects of development are significant and meaningful in promoting the development of human beings. It is recognised that *education, as an integral part of the socialisation process*, changes the moral principles and public consciousness of individuals and thus it is important to consider not only the importance of individuals but also the importance of institutional educations in shaping individual moral values. These must be developed and enriched in line with changing cultural values, thus encouraging individuals to perceive and understand the phenomenon of change within society (Halloun, 2004). Socialisation is understood as active learning in which children learn to be fully-fledged members of society. The author distinguishes two aspects of children's socialisation:

- *socialisation while suppressing*: refers to when a child is treated as inferior and is often told what to do. Various penalties for the slightest violation are applied, while communication is usually by means of gestures rather than words
- *socialisation while taking part*: refers to when communication takes place though the means of dialogue; the child is given the freedom of action. A safe and stimulating environment is created, common operational objectives are raised and communication is emphasised.

These models describe the family and school relationships; i.e., interaction between parent-child and teacher-pupil. When the second model of socialisation prevails, children learn to adequately assess, experience more positive than negative emotions, have better social skills, deeper and fuller moral norms and a better concept of understanding.

Their behaviour is characterised by a smaller gap between the actual moral behaviour and the availability of moral knowledge (Fischer, Schimmel & Stellman, 2003). In the process of socialisation, individual personal values are combined with the necessary expression of environmental values. It is concerned with looking for the most successful opportunities for self-expression and the development of personality. In defining the concept of rights, it is important to note that this humanistic idea (the realised interests of people) is turned into a universally binding rule of conduct (rule of law) and, finally, into the reality of human behaviour (relations) (Masandukaite, 2004). According to Dambrauskiene (2004), the term *law*, in a legal sense, is used as a measure (criterion) of the assessment of a person's social behaviour (lawful or unlawful). Referring to the law, it establishes which behaviours are allowed (and therefore legitimate) and those that are prohibited (illegal) and what the possible consequences (penalties) of unauthorised behaviour (offences) are. In terms of the scientific aspect of law and referring to the characteristics of law as a social phenomenon, a law is generally defined as the whole of state-imposed or sanctioned and compulsory behaviour rules (norms) supervised by the state (Halloun, 2004).

### ***Law versus Human Rights***

According to Vaisvila (2000), the term *law* is not unambiguous: we have human rights, natural rights, object laws (legislative framework), positive laws (developed by the country) and subjective rights (permissible behaviour, created by a particular person, in performing duties). The law is a social interest converted into a universally binding rule of conduct and is designed to standardise the behaviour of people in order to reconcile divergent interests.

Law is a measure of freedom, the norm of justice and the means of public agreement and compromise. The concept of law should help to determine legal and illegal human behaviour and all the associated consequences. The rule of laws is considered to be the formally captured criterion of the general legal behaviour determining the legally permitted and protected behaviour and the boundaries of such behaviour. The rule of laws, as a general rule of behaviour, does not directly regulate human behaviour, but does it concern certain aspects of social life (Vansevicius, 2000).

The practice of law (enforcement) runs in this direction, implementing the principles of justice and legitimacy and revealing the benefits for both the individual and society. It not only refers to the activity of the state, but also of society, intended both to ascertain for law offences and to exercise the prevention of such offences (Papa & Singhal et al., 2000).

### ***Discussion***

Legal education is not widely researched, but, according to Vaisvila (2000), such education has a systematic, positive impact on legal consciousness, as the initial element of legal culture. Vaisvila's goal was not just to provide information on legal behaviour, but also to instil personal determination to behave legally and personal motivation conducive to legitimate behaviour, in developing a coherent, socialised personality in terms of thoughts and behaviour. According to the author, this is an undertaking for family and educational institutions, in teaching the basics of law in schools and influencing such behaviour through the media and the study of law literature (legal self-education). The practice of law (enforcement), implementing the principles of legitimacy and justice and revealing their benefits to both the individual and society, has a positive impact on this matter. It is not only a state activity but also a societal activity, intended to clarify offences and implement the prevention of such offences (Fischer, Schimmel & Stellman, 2003).

Legal education is closely linked with moral, social, political, economic and civil education. In our developing modern society, the major goal is the education of a comprehensive (harmonious) personality based on human values. However, educational objectives and content are changing, but still maintain the same desired goal. Regarding the development of industry, information technologies, etc., it is important to develop comprehensive human beings who are able to work creatively and, if necessary, can easily change matters; thus, they must be able to use the latest information tools in order to actively participate in social life (Fortin, 2009). According to Slapkauskas (2004), the legal curriculum is represented by the following fields:

- Man: his nature and needs, freedoms and rights
- Society: human activities and relations, the control of these relations, law and order
- State: conception, democratic values and principles, dangers that they may face, the legislative, the executive, the judiciary authority and the citizen as a participant of state-building and governance.

Sakalauskas (2000) stated how legal education, as a means of public awareness, is one of the most important tools in developing legally educated and honest citizens and that this activity should be initially focused on the younger generation. It is also pointed out that early legal education should be orientated towards pedagogically neglected children prone to violations of law and should be delivered by police officers. Thus, it is believed that children should be legally educated prior to any events that cause negative legal consequences. Legal education is necessary not only after the law is violated, but before children and youth enter society as young adults, where the law will govern their relationships. Educational institutions must attempt to create a system that protects children from social problems and thus prevents them from committing crimes. However, as Pekauskas (2010) noted, the comprehensive measures that lead to the effective social development of each child are not always applied, in solving problems. Such a system should help a child to cope in difficult situations and should arm them with the capacity to make the right decisions within any social environment. An increasing crime rate amongst schoolchildren reveals gaps in legal education: such children have failed to internalise moral ideas and principles and laws are not the internal determinants of their behaviour. These pupils are thus violating the moral principles and laws and this becomes their normal behaviour. In order to educate such children properly, their negative views on morality and the pursuance of laws must be changed.

In the modern world, the understanding and awareness of man (and child) is a feature of a responsible society (Cesoniene & Biciukiene, 2009). Moreover, young people's knowledge of their fundamental rights and freedoms is not only a duty, but also a right: such rights are implemented at birth and thus all should have access to a legal educational programme. In the member-states of the European Council, human rights are not only declared, but are also an integral part of the legal system. Such rights should become a part of pupils' legal education and the education of human rights is an important and long-term contribution, with regards to the prevention of the violation of human rights (Jonyniene, Bartkute & Butvilas, 2011). Legal knowledge is one of the means of preventing delinquent behaviour and the purpose of legal education is to promote and educate juveniles to respect the law, as the basis of allowing society to function normally. In addition, the formation of positive attitudes and beliefs is attributed to legal education (Pekauskas, 2010).

According to Zaleskiene and Prakapas (2008), legal education has a systematic and positive impact on legal consciousness as an initial element of the legal culture, which aims to develop the will and determination to act lawfully and promotes personal motivation to behave lawfully. Jonyniene and Wearn (2006), who conducted comparative research on the significance of children's rights and their implementation in educational institutions, stated that school may be seen as the most influential institution after family, determining a child's development and socialisation through their knowledge of cultural and social values. Furthermore, the techniques of formal child education are applied when pupils practice various interactive derivatives (academic, social, psychomotor, cooperation and competition): through this, they gain an understanding of social concepts and values. School purposefully influences children's progress during the major stages of development and determines many children's social, cognitive and cultural characteristics. It is noted that school is a beneficial institution in exploring the issue of children's rights.

According to Pekauskas (2010), legal knowledge helps schoolchildren to orientate within their social environment. The moral principles and norms of personality are not internalised until they are followed up in the personal lives of children; thus, the norms of the law can be treated as the expression of moral principles and norms. The author emphasises that such norms should be learned in school and that, the more effective the means of legal education, the greater moral personality is instilled in youngsters. It is important to take into consideration that the main goal of legal education is not a list of laws or the acquisition of rules, but the ability to apply legal knowledge in real-life situations. Freeman (2011) stated that it is extremely important to find the right balance between children's rights and freedoms and the expectations of parents and teachers. According to the author, rights are important as they promote honour and respect dignity, providing significance for the integrity of humanity. Rights are important in our lives, as they enable us to respect other people and help us to understand what order and justice is. Human rights, including the rights of children, encompass civil, political, social and economic rights (Freeman, 2006).

### **Conclusion**

A theoretical analysis of the literature revealed that legal education modelling, one of the functions of the highlighted objectives, provides direction in the educational process, in orientating individuals and communities towards a particular result.



The content of legal education in general education schools incorporates different aspects of formal and non-formal education relating to pupils' activities, while curriculum guidelines represent education, community life, extra-curricular activities, communication and cooperation with the local community. The integral nature of legal knowledge and the spread of such knowledge are often determined by a particular teacher's activity, in terms of theoretical knowledge and practical legal competencies.

The analysis of scientific literature showed that legal education modelling in general education schools does not receive enough attention; thus, students and teachers would positively value the implementation of a legal education model for general education programmes. In analysing the documents regulating children's rights, it was emphasised that children are members of society and have the same rights as others. It is thus extremely important to teach children their rights and duties in school, in seeking to ensure that they become active members of a democratic society, able to protect their interests, becoming full-fledged citizens and respecting the law and other people.

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