ACQUISITION OF JEWISH CULTURAL HERITAGE OF LATGALE IN REGIONAL EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS: DISCOURSE OF CULTURAL MEMORY

Ebreju kultūras mantojuma apgūšana Latgales reģiona izglītības iestādēs

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Abstract. In the context of culture and history discourse and sociological analysis the interdisciplinary research reveals the significance of Jewish cultural heritage in the multinational Latgale region. Therefore, there are described topical tools in the research and preservation of Jewish cultural values and evaluated the necessity for acquisition of this culture at regional educational establishments. Prior to holocaust the ethnical group of Jews was one of the largest minorities in Latgale and had significant impact on the socio-economic and cultural development of the region. As a result of the research, it was found out that pupils and students possess knowledge about holocaust, but they have no clue about the life of this minority in Latgale before World War II and nowadays. In order to solve the problem the authors of the article offer to integrate the respective cultural and historical material into the interdisciplinary link because the tool forming memory culture are the contemporary realia – museum exhibits, photos, exhibitions, cultural and historical monuments, former Jewish squares and streets, architectonics of preserved houses, etc. RHEI REGI has created a virtual museum “Jews in Latgale” as an interactive tool offering teachers, museum staff and other interested persons video films, witnessing interviews and other materials.

Keywords: multinational Latgale, Jewish cultural heritage, virtual museum “Jews in Latgale”.

Introduction

In the second half of the 20th century in Latvia in the scientific discourse attention was paid to the regional (local) history despite the fact that the destiny of regions obviously revealed global and national history. The process of forming and strengthening regional identity is a constant and complete research object; besides, it requires a complex approach globalizing the research object. Regional studies are not classical study of local history; it is an interdisciplinary approach in scientific practice levelling out boundaries between sciences and making methodological integration, approbating methods and sources. The history of Jews in Latgale has been mainly researched by the academic staff of Daugavpils University Josīfs Šteimans and Dmitrijs Oļehnovičs, head of Daugavpils and Latgale Museum of Jews (founded in 2007) Josīfs Ročko as well as leading researchers of the Scientific Institute for Regional Studies of Rezekne Higher Education Institution (RHEI REGI).
Material and Methods of Research

In this case the aim of the research in regional studies is to reveal the significance of Jewish cultural heritage in the multinational Latgale region in the context of culture and history discourse and sociological analysis, thus describing topical tools in the research and preservation of Jewish cultural values and evaluated the necessity for acquisition of this culture at regional educational establishments. Prior to holocaust the ethnical group of Jews was one of the largest minorities in Latgale and had significant impact on the socio-economic and cultural development of the region. In several towns of Latgale in the 19th century the number of Jews reached and even exceeded a half of the total population. Nowadays they comprise less than 1% of the population of Latvia. It is a disappearing ethnic group with its cultivated memory culture (social activities of communities, events, regularly visited places holocaust victims, synagogues, cemeteries prove it) and identity without its language.

The number of Jews (Ashkenazi) migrating to Latgale from Central Europe rapidly increased in the end of the 18th century. In 1897 in the territory of Latvia there were living 140 000 representatives of this nationality; and in the 19th century the greatest increase in their number was observed in Latgale (Сапунов 1906: V–XXI). Before World War I (1914) in Latgale there were 80 000 Jews, in total in Latvia – 170 000. In several towns of Latgale their number reached a half of the total population (in Daugavpils – 46%, Rezekne – 54%, Ludza – 54.5%)(Šteimans 2000: 81). After World War I the number of Jews decreased, in the present territory of Latgale in 1920 there were living only 30 311 Jews because they moved to Inland Russia, emigrated to the USA and Palestine. However, in 1920 in Latgale there were 38.1% out of all Jews in Latvia (Šteimans 2000: 81).

In 1935 in Latgale there were living 27 974 representatives of this nationality (4.53% of the total population of the region) and comprise the biggest proportion of Jews in comparison to other regions of Latvia, except Riga (11.34% Jews). The largest number of Jews was in Preili, Kraslava, Ludza, Rezekne, and Daugavpils. Out of almost 28 000 Jews of Latgale 20 000 were killed during World War II.

Since 1791 Latgale has been one of the Jewish forced settlement territories in the Russian Empire. Just as elsewhere in Europe they were living in kahals, since 1844 – in communities mainly as an autonomous ethnic group, with its traditions, religion, language, culture, etc., a reasonable administrative, organizational and mediatiorial mechanism (tax collection system, court, education, etc.). Jews in Latgale preserved their religious and national identity, kahals and communities became significant centres for Tora Studies. Small traders and craftsmen learnt the Latgalian language along with Polish, German or Russian. During the print ban period (1865–1904) Jews were participating in the illegal publishing and delivery of Latgalian books (Bukšs 1976: 148)

In the times of the Russian Empire they were allowed to register as townsmen, but also most all registered as small-citizens or traders (the ukaz of
1779), later on they held a significant position in the town authorities. A Jewish trader, small-trader – the most frequent visitor in peasants’ households till 1940. Trading, buying up (milk, cattle, meat, eggs, grain) and selling were mutually advantageous conditions as an irreplaceable part of the rural household. Very rarely Market Days in Latgale took place on Saturdays because on this day Jews had the Sabbath.

In each town of Latgale Jewish traders and manufacturers dynasties were forming (Bobe 2006: 202). They successfully operated in manufacturing and export which in the 1920’s ensured accumulation of currency in the state.

The first Jewish hospital was created in Daugavpils, which was the first medical institution in Latgale (1866). In Daugavpils, Kraslava, Karsava and other places the doctors of this nationality were the first ones and quite often the only ones. In many places in Latgale Jews opened the only pharmacies (Stranga 2008: 309). The large number of schools, synagogues, public organizations, press publications in Yiddish proves that in Latgale in the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century there was very favourable environment for the existence and development of this minority.

In the beginning of the 20th century Jewish traditions and culture formed a part of the multinational space in Latgale, which was developing in the coexistence with the components of Latvian, Russian, Polish cultures. J.Šteimans indicated that “in Riga and Kurzeme Jews did not have so strong relations with Jewish culture centres as in Latgale. (…) Jews in Latgale maintained constant contacts with rabbis from Vilnius and Minsk (…)“ (Šteimans 2000: 8). It influenced not only the religious life of Jews in Latgale, but also: “The lifestyle of Jews in Latgale was more conservative than in other regions of Latvia. (…) The traditional daily life with its specific notions and spiritual values was real power in Latgale “ (Barkahans 2008: 10). Jews implemented their cultural autonomy in belief and education — the centres of their cultural public life were preaching-houses and synagogues. In cultural life musicians and actors demonstrated themselves, Jews had their own press publications in Yiddish. Prominent Jewish artists come from Latgale: sculptor Naums Aronsons, director Solomons Mihoelss, composer Oskars Stroks, film directors Frīdrihs Ermlers, Aleksandrs Stolpers, painter Marks Rotko, conductor Marks Lavri, literary scientist and writer Jurijs Tiņanovs, etc. Towns in Latgale nowadays still have Jewish architectural monuments – wooden and stone living houses, bank and enterprise premises, synagogues. A range of toponyms are related to this nationality: Žīdu kalņiņš (Hill of Jews), Žīda gruovs (Ditch of Jews), Gorebovniki (forest); hydronyms: Židovka, Ķīpka, Zamka (Kovaļevska 1997: 6–7).

The Jewish culture in Latgale has always functioned as autonomous cultural space. From the point of view of semiotics culture is a set of collective intellect and memory, a transindividual mechanism of text/information, storage, transfer (informative memory) and creativity (creative memory, for example, art). Storage and transfer are ensured by constant texts or single codes, or definite regularities in changing codes (Лотман 2002). Each culture determines its paradigm of
remembering and forgetting, which might change in the course of time, and the forgotten information can regain its status of significant information in the format of a documentary constant or an artistic text. Creative memory or artistic texts function as information depository, they are always generators, meanings are not stored there, but develop. They not only help decipher, but generate new texts. It is an extremely complex situation if a text significantly differing from the respective immanent base comes into memory, thus, one lacks traditions and any codes to decipher it. In such cases the simultaneous mechanism of text creation makes a pause, prepares for perception, and then explosion of creativity follows urging enrichment of cultural memory. Cultures develop more dynamically if texts created in an alien tradition periodically come into its memory in abundance (Лотман 2002). Memory is actively involved in cultural text creation. In semiotics a system of texts in single culture is called semiosphere (Лотман 1992). Therefore, the Jewish culture in Latgale is a semiotic individuality or a semiosphere with definite boundaries being aware of and taking care of its cultural difference. A mechanism of bilingual relations is typical for the boundaries of such culture space when the internal language is used for translation of the information of cultures domineering in the territory of others and vice versa. The boundaries of the semiosphere are filtrated, adapted to the external and turned into the internal material of the respective semiosphere. As it has already been mentioned in relation to memory, the boundary relations of different semiotic systems are oriented to creation of new texts and systems.

Latvia lacks any researches what the Jewish culture has borrowed from Latgalian Latvians and vice versa, mainly due to the holocaust there have been preserved almost no evidence about the dynamics of the ‘own’ and ‘alien’ relations. In the semiosphere of Jewish culture in Latgale it could certainly be noticed in wooden architecture, craftsmen, holiday traditions, etc. Each culture has its own internal organization; it also constitutes its external part, disorganized environment and the type of disorganization. In the Latvian culture space in Latgale comparative structures respect the difference of the Jewish culture semiosphere, its well-arranged and constant structure, contradistinguishing themselves as quite weak or even poorly arranged culture space. In the beginning of the 20th century in the Latgalian periodicals (“Auseklis” [“The Morning Star”]) there were found publicistic-didactic articles where Latgalian vices are highlighted on the background of the Jewish virtues: “Paguons un naticīgs žīdīs tās aizkaunēj latvītē. Vai koju, kod un kas ir vēlējis žīdu, ka viņš šabatā, sovā svatdinā kū pērktu vai pērdušu?” [“Pagans and disbelieving Jews bring shame to Latvians. I am asking who and when has seen a Jew who on Sabbath, its Sunday, would buy or sell something?] (Vorguļš 1907: 2).

A dialogue of cultures always creates new information dialogising culture in semiospheres; unfortunately, currently it is possible to identify it only in the semiotic systems of the Latgalian culture (folklore, literature, publicistics of the beginning of the 20th century), only till holocaust because afterwards the number of the representatives of Jewish culture has become very small and still continues
decreasing, thus, the systems belonging to the semiosphere of Jewish culture have come into the periphery of the Latgalian culture semiosphere, supposedly, for the time being. Besides, as a product of interaction between two various cultures these systems have become obsolete and preserve and also inherit information mainly containing stereotypes which cannot be reconstructed by authentic material because of the lack of informative (life/mode of life of Jews in Latgale till holocaust), and creative memory texts (new fiction and publicistics on this theme do not appear). According to the semiotician Juris Lotman reconstruction always means creation of a new system/language (Lotman 1992). The elements of semiospheres substructures transform; however, preserving the principle of invariance. Consequently we inherit a steady stereotypes circulating among Latgalians, for example, in relation to the Jews’ special attitude towards religion, family, business; there is always at least tiny relation to objective substructures of informative memory in the semiosphere of Jewish culture.

Creative memory – the texts of Latgalian folklore and fiction preserve and develop the interaction between cultures in the most vivid way. They reflect the image of the Jew with the features characterizing the other (values, traditions, anthropologically different outlook, different clothing style, weird behaviour and features of character), rarely as the alien because the representatives of this nationality are acquainted in their otherness and accepted during a long period of time in a close contact. The Jewish belief seems alien; in this regard nowadays in Latgale there are still circulating stories about ritual murders, bleeding Christians, etc. In folklore there are hyperbolized Jews’ general human features, exaggerated stinginess, thrift, slynyness, persistence, cowardice, naivety, verbosity, shape of the beard and nose, etc.

In Latgale the ethnonym žyds (žeids, žids) [Jew] is widely spread in Latgalian paremies; it is commonly included into a comparative structure, image function (object of comparison): Čeikst kai nasmārāti żeida roti [Squeak as ungreased Jewish carriage] (Opincâne, 2000: 14), referring features of Jews to a representative of another (own) nationality: bāg kai žeics nu krysta [runs away as a Jew from a cross] (LKF 1268 295); ar capuri ād kai žeids [eats as a Jew in a hat] (LKF 640 398); turīs kūpā kai žydi [keep together as Jews] (Latkovskis 1967: 28), etc. Such constructions prove the emphasis of the similar, not different and the presence of positive humour.

In Latgalian folksongs and literature usually there are emphasized the peculiarities of the Jews’ appearance and behaviour (accent on the otherness), vividly revealed stereotypes related to this nationality, for example, Jews’ unwillingness to have earthwork (Latkovskis 1967: 28), special attitude or way of speaking. Frequent use of the ethnonym and persons’ names typical for Jews in a diminutive form (Ābrameņš, Jankeleits, Odumiņš) signalize about a positive stylistic expression. In Latgalian beliefs a Jew met on one’s way is a herald of success or happiness.

During World War II and afterwards the number of texts transmitting such types and stereotypes significantly decreased, as well as the types and stereotypes.
Jews are mainly attributed a specific way of speaking and stinginess, obviously finding inspiration in folklore or drama texts of the beginning of the 20th century (Apšeniece 1993: 138–139).

In order to make communicate two various semiospheres being non-isomorphic to each other the third binding element of a higher level being isomorphic to both is needed. In a dialogue between Latgalian Jewish and Latvian cultures territorial identity, supposedly, becomes such element or substructure – regardless whether the openness of the boundaries of the semiospheres is based on the interest in the recognizable/own or the other/alien. The information is more actively transmitted by the culture being on a higher level in its development. The order of the diaspora maintained for centuries, continuous activity to strengthen their moral, cultural and social positions lets the Jewish minority reach a high level of development cultivating its particularity externally, thus, it dominates in transmission at least in a definite historical period.

Transformation of transmitted texts/meanings in the Latgalian Latvians semiosphere to a large extent take the positions of misleading stereotypes proving the lower level of the receipt culture. However, on the other hand, mutual exchange of information between so different cultures ensures mutual textual creativity, e.g., development. In communication the semiospheres of two different cultures hybridize, become unique in the attitude towards isomorphic or related cultures. Thus, it can be asserted that the multinational region of Latgale has its unique culture due to local Jews as well.

Results and Discussion

After holocaust the culture of the Jews in Latgale has become the culture without its language, its native speakers comprise the mass of Russian speaking people in the region. Such cultures without language are characterized by striving to preserve information about the order/cycle, not its/their disarrangement, about laws, not their violations. The primary and most significant text in such cultures is a calendar as well as customs and rituals fixed in it – for preservation in collective memory. It is the culture oriented not towards creation of new texts, but to reproduction of the old texts created old time ago for ever. Writing is not needed here, scrupulous observation of traditions is crucial. Such cultures sacralise memory, studiously maintain their cult places. J. Lotmans asserts that such cultures are future-oriented (observation of a certain annual cycle), and nothing shows they could not exist.

The culture of Jews in Latgale is still autonomous; it is preserved by the communities because the number of its native speakers is tiny having an obvious tendency to decrease. Traditions, rituals and symbols are in the centre of the semiospheres; out of all texts the most significant one is a calendar, the existing texts do not claim anymore for a dialogue or passing the boundaries of the semiospheres towards the semiospheres of the majority culture. Such cultural dialogue does not exist anymore. The processes of the restoration of the Jewish cultural elements, which have come to the Latgalian cultural space periphery and
have initiated booming creation of texts long time ago, not even mentioning creation of new texts, practically have ceased, except the discourse of the informative memory of holocaust history. The preservation of the remains of the Jewish cultural semiospheres and at the same time the preservation of the peculiarities of our culture is endangered.

In order to facilitate formation of the public understanding and remembrance culture it is needed to explore and analyze the existing state followed by long-term educational work at various layers of the society. One of the sources reflecting the factors of the remembrance culture in the environment of Latgale population is the regional press. The press as one of the “elements influencing the public opinion system” (Jowett, 1999, 279) disseminates information, actualizes current problems, and reflects historical facts in the context of the respective events. The press analyzes, evaluates, comments and interprets the depicted topical issues and events not to satisfy the demand of the society (audience, readers) for specific narrative texts, but also to provide guidelines for creation of the remembrance culture. Thus, the regional press reveals indicators related to the Jewish culture, traditions, history, holocaust, anti-Semitism, remembrance of genocide victims in Latgale. Forming a dialogue with readers and attracting readers’ attention to specific problems the press also chooses the respective communicative content and emotional context.


The domineering keyword is “Jews” (90% of analyzed texts), but such indicators as “anti-Semitism“, “rabbi” are not found in these sources. The texts have a single contextual function — to actualize the themes of the Jewish history, holocaust, anti-Semitism in Latvia (including Latgale) basing on the facts, eyewitnesses’ memories and interviews. By their content the dominating texts inform about the history of the Jewish minority and holocaust. Quite often the articles are illustrated by the photos of the 1930’s reflecting Jews and the moments of their daily life in pre-war Latgale, thus, creating a sharp contrast between the content of the text informing about killing Jews and the photos of their peaceful life. Expressing the attitude towards the reflected event, some photos are commented by a journalist. Texts informing about the holocaust memorial and remembrance events are thematically closely interrelated with history and remembrance of holocaust. There is a comparatively small number of articles on Jewish traditions un cultural events in Latgale as well as texts informing about
projects facilitating remembrance culture and events educating the youth. They are short and concentrated informing about educational activities and projects aimed at facilitation of youth tolerance towards minorities. The articles actualize the topic about the role of educational establishments in facilitating an intercultural dialogue and bringing up a friendly and consolidated new generation.

In 2011 the authors of this article, leading researchers of RHEI REGI, have provided questionnaires to the pupils and students of Rezekne City to find out the knowledge of the youth about the minority being so significant for the culture of Latgale. There were included 214 respondents: 107 pupils of the 9th and 12th grade of Rezekne State Gymnasium and Rezekne Secondary School No.6, 107 students of the 2nd and 3rd year of all four faculties Rezekne Higher Education Institution. Basing on the results of the questionnaire placed on the homepage of the virtual museum “Jews in Latgale” (www.regionalistika.lv) it can be concluded that the acquisition of the holocaust theme at school shall be started by the description of the pre-holocaust history of Jews in Latgale emphasizing their great contribution into the development of regional economy, culture, education and other fields.

The results of the questionnaire prove that pupils and students have knowledge about holocaust, but they lack any notion about the life of this minority in Latgale before World War II and nowadays.

The surveyed youth:
- is interested in the neighbours ethnical identity, only 9% of the respondents do not know what nationalities are represented around them;
- communicate with Jews (19% of respondents) despite the tiny proportion of this minority in Rezekne (according to the data of the community – 27 persons);
- do not conflict due to national diversity, only 1% of the respondents acknowledge that they have been involved in ethic conflicts with Jews, 6% have done that rarely;
- mainly is aware of the notions – fascism (30% of respondents); holocaust and genocide (27%), anti-Semitism (15%); racism (1%), but the notion shoah (from Ivrit ‘disaster, catastrophe’) is known only to 2 respondents. The notions mentioned above are mainly acquired at the educational establishments (24%); on TV and radio (20%); in the Internet (18%), in books (16%); in the press (13%), in the family (8%);
- is informed about holocaust victims places in Latgale, only 18% of the respondents do not know or are not interested in such remembrance places in their neighbourhoods;
- is less aware of Jewish pre-holocaust cultural monuments or evidence in their neighbourhoods, 39% of respondents do not know or are not interested in Jewish preaching houses, living houses, etc. in their neighbourhoods;
- is not able to identify a representative of a Jewish nationality according to some outer features, only 9% of respondents acknowledge that Jews have special appearance (hair, skin colour, form of nose). Indication of such peculiarities proves the steadiness of stereotypes because such features can be attributed to the representatives of other nationalities as well;
- does not know anything about the language of Jews in Latgale region – neither historically, nor in the contemporary context (82% of respondents); it has objective reasons as the Jews in Latgale, who in the pre-holocaust period were talking in Yiddish, as well as in Russian, Polish, Latvian, Latgalian and German, joined the Russian-speaking community during the Soviet times. Culture without language in the version of Latgalian Jews does not demonstrate the loss of the ethnic identity (they consistently maintain their traditions), but, unfortunately, only in their own eyes. The fact that the pupils and students in Rezekne are not informed about the significance of Yiddish and Ivrit in history of local Jews and Latgalian culture (taking into consideration at least the existence of holocaust, Jewish grave monuments in Latgale cities and villages) prove the drawbacks of the curriculum/syllabus;

- does not know about the religion of Jews in Latgale (82% of respondents), although exactly religious traditions still keep this ethnic group alive, at least in Rezekne and Daugavpils, although they read Tora in Russian. 4% of respondents acknowledge that Jews in Latgale does not have their own religion, but a majority out of 15% of respondents, who assert that local Jews have their own religion, cannot name it (the variants of answers show, for example, Muslim religion) or write it correctly:

- has the same attitude towards Jews as the other population of Latgale (63%), special favour towards them is felt by 9% of respondents, but 4% have a rejecting attitude To a large extent such attitude can be explained by functioning of steady ethic stereotypes (stinginess of Jews, excessive thrift, etc.) or personal dissent, not related to ethic origin.

Several problems of acquiring the theme of holocaust were actualized in the first seminar “Jewish Cultural Memory at Educational and Cultural Establishments in Latgale Region” on 09.12.2011 at Rezekne Higher Education Institution, where the virtual museum “Jews in Latgale” was presented. Among the participants there were the teachers of history and museum staff of the region who acknowledged that:

- teachers lack any materials about the history and culture of Jews in Latgale before holocaust;
- thus pupils have no clear motivation for acquisition of holocaust-related themes because Jews are not associated with the minorities who are living or have been living in the region;
- the museums of Latgale lack materials about the Jewish culture in Latgale and respective tourism routes.

**Conclusions**

In this context a question is put forward – What elements of historical memory among the third post-war generation in Latgale are the basis of the understanding of the notions associatively related to the destinies of the Eastern Europe Jews in World War II - holocaust, shoa, genocide, anti-Semitism? Overall, the research and analysis of the current situation confirmed the fact identified
before – the theme of holocaust at schools and higher education institution in Latgale region shall be started by an excursus into the history and culture of Jews in Latgale. The virtual museum can help make such excursus. The virtual museum is created by RHEI REGI using the financial support of Friedrich Ebert’s Foundation on the basis of field research. Registered users (teachers and museum staff – partners can become users) can watch a video film about Jews in Rezekne, but all interested persons can get acquainted with witnessing interviews; photos and their descriptions in Latvian and English.

The homepage of the virtual museum contains the materials of the regional museums, REGI cooperation partners, exposition materials and tourism routes. However, the tools forming cultural memory are not only respective historical materials having unambiguous significance, but also realia by which they should be visually supplemented, for example, museum expositions, exhibitions, historical and cultural monuments, former Jewish squares and streets, architectonics of preserved houses, etc. The Green Synagogue of Rezekne, one of the oldest wooden synagogues in the Baltics, is located in the city centre at the market place. It is distinguishable due to its location and specific architecture. In the semiosphere of the Jewish culture in Latgale the dynamics of still functioning texts, interaction with the texts of majority culture are provided by refection on the history of holocaust and description of Jewish cultural monuments – synagogues, cemeteries, houses in the historical and contemporary context (restoration projects, maintenance opportunities) – in books, periodicals, media. However, cultural objects and texts about them have not been noticed. This fact proves the lack of initiative not only among teachers, parents, and the whole society in educating the youth, but, unfortunately, also the low cultural level of the youth itself. The themes about Jewish history and culture, holocaust, anti-Semitism are mainly acquired at the lessons of history, but they can be integrated into the lessons of history of culture, literature, religion studies, and others, upbringing classes, project weeks, scientific works of secondary school pupils, thus arousing interest and initiative to explore by themselves the history of the region (town, village), the ethnic composition in Latgale more than sixty years ago and compare it the current situation, to explore the history, traditions and culture of the disappeared Jewish minority, to reveal the architectonic peculiarities of Jewish houses, etc. Pupils can be also successfully attracted to the research of the respective materials in the press helping reveal that the Jewish cultural heritage is a part of the ethnically diverse national and territorial identity of Latgale.

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**DZĪVESSPĒKA KONCEPTA ADAPTĀCIJA SABIEDRĪBAS VESELĪBAI**

The concept of resilience- the scientific adaptation for society health

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**Abstract.** The main idea of the paper to indicate the factors of resilience indicators. The task of the research - a theoretical analysis of the latest research resilience factors and resilience risk factors and to analyze the theory of the intervention of positive psychology and development programs. Based on quantitative methods (narrative content analysis) recognise