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**EFL teachers' attitudes towards teaching cross-curricular topics**  
**MA thesis**

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**TARTU**  
**2013**

## ABSTRACT

Cross-curricular topics have been in the Estonian National curriculum for many years now; including them in lessons has evoked controversial opinions among teachers. Teaching cross-curricular topics in EFL classrooms is a good way to include them in lessons because languages can be means for learning different subjects. Cross-curricular topics help to make learning the language more relevant and offer a chance to include topics that prepare students for real life experiences. There are various different ways how to teach cross-curricular topics and everything does not have to be done in a classroom, a lot can be done outside lessons and through extracurricular activities.

The present thesis looks into teaching cross-curricular topics in English classes. It gives an overview of the cross-curricular topics in the Estonian National Curriculum, the methods and materials used for teaching cross-curricular topics and the attitudes teachers' have towards teaching cross-curricular topics. A survey was conducted among EFL teachers of Estonia to see what are the teachers' attitudes towards teaching cross-curricular topics and how they teach the topics.

Chapter one is based on secondary sources and gives an overview of cross-curricular topics, their development throughout history and their presentation in different educational documents. Various methods for teaching cross-curricular topics and for including them in schools' environment are discussed.

Chapter two introduces the procedure and the results of a research conducted among Estonian EFL teachers. Sample of 90 EFL teachers from different schools in Estonia were questioned. The main aim of the research was to see what the EFL teachers' attitudes towards teaching cross-curricular topics are and to compare the results with other researches done on this topic.

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## INTRODUCTION

The Consortium of Institutions for Development and Research in Education in Europe (CIDREE), defines cross-curricular topics as topics that can best be taught through two or more subjects (CIDREE: 1998 quoted in Luisk and Ots 2010: 11).

According to Jonathan Barnes (2011: 12) “Educators since the beginnings of formal education have been conscious that combined perspectives were required in order to understand aspects of the physical, social or personal world.” Barnes (2011: 12) also refers to Plato who operated along the lines of this idea already more than two millennia ago, when he combined story, physical education and music into the early version of personal, social and health education.

There are eight cross-curricular topics in the current Estonian National Curriculum:

1. Lifelong learning and career planning
2. Environment and sustainable development
3. Civic initiative and enterprise
4. Cultural identity
5. Information environment
6. Technology and innovation
7. Health and safety
8. Values and morality (National Curriculum for Basic Schools 2011: §14).

All of the topics are essential for the students since cross-curricular topics provide them with knowledge and skills necessary for real life situations, for example making career choices and leading a healthy lifestyle. Cross-curricular topics are a way to bring subjects closer to students by including the topics in different lessons. Cross-curricular topics also help to make lessons more interesting and motivating for the students. Teaching cross-

curricular topics should not only be done in lesson but the whole school must try to incorporate the topics into schools' environment and everyday activities. Successful inclusion of cross-curricular topics starts with the schools' management, the whole staff should be involved in preparing schools' documents and curriculum. Cross-curricular topics should be included in schools' curriculum, syllabuses and work plans. The next step for successful teaching of cross-curricular topics lies in co-operation between teachers, schools' management and staff, parents and local organisations. Cross-curricular topics should reflect on the schools values and on teachers' and staff's attitudes.

Previous research in this field has been done, for example a research conducted by Centre for Educational Research and Curriculum Development (2010), articles written by Harro-Loit et al (2007) and Kõiv et al (2010). Usually all teachers of different subjects are questioned and the results have shown that the teachers have difficulty with including cross-curricular topics into their lessons. The teachers questioned usually point out the lack of materials, time, skills and knowledge as problems which prevent them from teaching cross-curricular topics.

Many EFL textbooks already include environmental topics and other cross-curricular topics and they are discussed in language classes and since language can be the means of learning various subjects, including cross-curricular topics into language classes should be easier than including them in other subjects.

The aim of this paper is to find out the Estonian EFL teachers' attitudes towards teaching cross-curricular topics and whether the result differ from the results of previous research done in this field. The results can help us see whether the EFL teachers use their subject's flexibility of choosing content to teach and topics to discuss for teaching cross-curricular topics.

The thesis is organised into two main chapters. The first chapter provides a theoretical overview of cross-curricular topics. Firstly, an overview of cross-curricular topics in Estonian national curricula will be given, and the account of how the concept of cross-curricular topics has developed throughout history and curriculum development is presented. The cross-curricular topics in the current Estonian National Curriculum are discussed. Secondly, an overview of various methods and ways how to teach cross-curricular topics and how to incorporate them into schools' environment and activities will be given. Also, teaching of cross-curricular topics in EFL classrooms will be discussed through an example of teaching the cross-curricular topic "Environment and sustainable development".

The second chapter comprises a research conducted among the EFL teachers of Estonia. Firstly, the method of the research is described and description of the sample is given. Secondly, the results of the research are presented and analysed. Chapter two concludes with some suggestions for further research. The most important findings are summarised in the conclusion, which is followed by the list of references and appendix.

## 1. CROSS-CURRICULAR TOPICS

The Estonian National Curriculum for Basic Schools points out the importance of cross-curricular topics as they “/.../ span numerous subjects, and fields that are priorities for society, and enable creation of an idea of the development of society as a whole, supporting the pupil’s capacity to apply his or her knowledge in different situations“ (National Curriculum for Basic Schools 2011: § 14).

Cross-curricular topics are very important since they reflect some of the major ideas and challenges that face individuals and society, and help make learning relevant. These topics help young people make sense of the world, and learn how to cope with real situations in life for example making career choices and using technology.

Teaching cross-curricular topics should not only take place in class a lot can be done outside classes, for instance organising events for students and giving them opportunities to participate in different extracurricular activities. The topics should be included in schools’ learning environment, in after-school projects and creative work. Integrating cross-curricular topics into lessons and school environment can be done in many different ways, starting from just talking about the topics in lessons to organising events, which include the local community and organisations, for example information days about the community, clean-up campaigns, sport competitions and so forth.

Cross-curricular topics are used in Estonia and in other European countries to develop competences from values and judgements to more specific skills and knowledge.

Based on research in different European countries CIDREE (Development and Research in Education in Europe) divides cross-curricular topics into three categories which are related to each other. Firstly, there are topics that are aimed to develop positive behavioural patterns, attitudes and values. These topics cannot be taught through one single subject but have to be taught continuously in many different lessons throughout the study

period. Secondly, topics that develop skills, knowledge and understanding (environmental education, information environment), also cannot be taught in any particular lesson but have to be taught through integrating work at school and experiences gained outside of school and at home. Thirdly, basic skills (social skills, communication skills) which have to be developed in all subjects at school and at home (CIDREE: 1998 quoted in Luisk and Ots 2010: 11).

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union have composed the document “Key Competences for Lifelong Learning” where eight key competences are distinguished. The key competences are:

1. Communication in the mother tongue;
2. Communication in foreign languages;
3. Mathematical competences and basic competences of science and technology;
4. Digital competence;
5. Learning to learn;
6. Social and civic competences;
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship;
8. Cultural awareness and expression.

As globalisation continues and the world is changing rapidly, people need to be ready to adapt and cope with the changes in the world. It is stated by the European Commission: that “education in its dual role, both social and economic, has a key role to play in ensuring that Europe’s citizens acquire the key competences needed to enable them to adapt flexibly to such changes“ (European Commission 2007). Many cross-curricular topics in the Estonian National Curriculum, for example “Technology and innovation”, “Lifelong learning and career planning”, “Civic initiative and entrepreneurship” and “Cultural identity” are related to the key competences for lifelong learning in the European



Reference Framework. Teaching cross-curricular topics and incorporating them into lessons is done all over Europe. For instance in the Finnish National Curriculum for basic schools there are seven cross-curricular topics, which are also related to the key competences for lifelong learning in the European Reference Framework. The cross-curricular topics in the Finnish National Curriculum for basic schools are:

1. Growth as a person
2. Cultural identity and internationalism
3. Media skills and communication
4. Participatory citizenship and entrepreneurship
5. Responsibility for the environment, well-being and a sustainable future
6. Safety and traffic
7. Technology and the individual (Louekoski 2005: para. 7)

### **1.1 Cross-curricular topics in the Estonian National Curriculum**

Cross-curricular topics have been present in Estonian National Curricula since the introduction of the first Estonian National Curriculum. Their importance has gradually risen throughout the curriculum development process.

Cross-curricular ideas were already mentioned in 1921 in the first Estonian National Curriculum for Elementary Schools. It was stated in the curriculum that no school subject can exist independently, that all subjects deal with the same world, but from a different point of view. It was emphasised that the content of other subjects should be taken into account. The general part of the second Estonian National Curriculum (1928) emphasised cross-curricular topics even more. It was stated in the curriculum that moral integration is important to raise persons with a clear world view, a reliable and kind

character and effective capacity. The third curriculum (1937) was more focused on the hidden impact of subjects. It was pointed out how values and general knowledge of the world could be taught in lessons, to help moral and personal development of pupils. During the Soviet period (1944-1991) the Estonian National Curriculum changed along with the priorities of teaching. It was important to teach Russian language and a lot of emphasis was put on mathematics and vocational education in schools of general education. The changes in the curriculum were made according to the Soviet authorities' educational policy and all the documents had to be followed rigorously: therefore, a lot of emphasis was put on single subject teaching. The new Estonian National Curriculum, introduced in 1992, still contained many features of the Soviet curriculum traditions, but the introduction of a general explanatory part that introduced concepts connecting all subjects changed the curriculum a lot and the importance of integration between subjects was again acknowledged (Krull and Mikser 2010: 40-44).

Cross-curricular topics were explicitly included in the Estonian National Curriculum in 1996. There were four topics:

1. Environment
2. Safety in traffic
3. Career planning
4. Informatics and information technology (National Curriculum for Basic and Upper Secondary Schools 1996: §4).

The descriptions and suggestions how to incorporate the cross-curricular topics into lessons were quite scant: the schools had find their own ways to include the topics in their curricula and to teach them.

In 2002 new a National Curriculum was issued and there were four cross-curricular topics:

1. Environment and sustainable development
2. Career planning
3. Information technology and media
4. Safety (National Curriculum for Basic and Upper Secondary schools 2002: §10).

The cross-curricular topics were mostly the same but their goals and learning outcomes were more thoroughly formulated. It was also stated in the national curriculum that cross-curricular topics should not only be taught in lessons but teaching them should take place at school through the schools' environment, documents and the values and attitudes of the school's staff (National Curriculum for Basic and Upper Secondary schools 2002: §10).

In the new Estonian National Curriculum (valid from 6. January 2011) there are eight cross-curricular topics with guidelines and learning outcomes:

1. Lifelong learning and career planning
2. Environment and sustainable development
3. Civic initiative and enterprise
4. Cultural identity
5. Information environment
6. Technology and innovation
7. Health and safety
8. Values and morality (National Curriculum for Basic Schools 2011: §14).

According to the Estonian National Curriculum (2011) cross-curricular topics should not only be taught in lessons. Schools should consider cross-curricular topics when preparing their development plans, curricula and syllabuses. Cross-curricular topics should be taken into account when developing schools' mental, social and physical environment. This could be done through the schools' values and teachers' attitudes towards work and

learning. The teachers should familiarise themselves with the cross-curricular topics in the National Curriculum and try to include them into their lessons as much as possible. Teachers are not expected to teach all the cross-curricular topics in their subject as some topics are easier to incorporate into some subjects than others.

In the following part the author is going to give an overview of the cross-curricular topics in the National Curriculum for Basic Schools (2011: Appendix 12) and the National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools (2011: Appendix 13).

“Lifelong learning and career planning” for basic school strives to shape pupils’ personalities and understanding to prepare them for lifelong learning and making career choices. Different professions and fields of activities and their importance are introduced to pupils. In upper secondary school the topic “Lifelong learning and career planning” helps a student to make choices independently, to analyse their skills and interests and to value lifelong learning as a part of their career planning. Laws and regulations, further education and training possibilities should be introduced to students so that they are able to make decisions according to their learning outcomes and experiences.

“Environment and sustainable development” for basic school should firstly introduce nature to pupils. Secondly, pupils should understand and value nature, the importance of protecting it and the effect of their activities to nature. Thirdly, the local environmental issues should be discussed and pupils should be encouraged to propose solutions. Through that pupils should start taking responsibility and learn how to act in an environment-friendly manner, supporting sustainable development. The National Curriculum points out field trips as a suitable teaching method, so that pupils can get into direct contact with nature. In higher stages of study methods like project work, role plays, group and pair work are suggested in order to encourage discussions and develop critical thinking. In upper secondary schools students should understand nature as a whole and human dependence on

natural resources. Pupils should develop personal environmental opinions and try to offer solutions at personal, social and global levels. Pupils should learn how to think critically and make environmental decisions taking into account modern and scientific developments.

“Civic initiative and enterprise” for basic school strives to introduce communal life arrangements, cooperation, civic initiative, volunteer activities to pupils so that they are raised to be responsible and active citizens who have the skills to participate in the decision-making processes. Pupils should be taught how to protect their rights and to understand their obligations and responsibilities. Pupils should learn the difference between the public, private and non-profit sectors and the role of business in society. The National Curriculum advises to cooperate with different local institutions, so that pupils become familiar with the local life and learn how to participate in it. In upper secondary schools, the topic aims to shape pupils into active members of society who understand how different sectors function and who are ready to be active and participate. Through project work and extracurricular activities pupils should be taught to think critically, to analyse processes in society and to be motivated to take part in political and economical decision-making processes.

“Cultural identity” for basic school is taught through introduction of different cultures. Pupils are first taught about their culture and then it is explained that people from other cultures have different customs and traditions, to increase pupils’ tolerance and broaden their views. Secondly, the topic strives to shape positive attitudes towards different cultures and encourages curiosity and interest in other cultures and customs. Thirdly, the topic should help students understand that their strong cultural identity will help them understand other cultures better. The methods for teaching “Cultural identity” suggested in the National Curriculum are project work and organising cultural events in school or in the

local area. Upper secondary school pupils are guided to understand themselves as carriers of culture, learn and appreciate cultural heritage and what changes and affects cultures. Students should also be encouraged to have respectful and tolerant attitude towards other cultures.

“Information environment” guides pupils to be aware of the information environment and able to find their way in it. Pupils should be taught to differentiate meaningful information from meaningless and know how to find the right information. Appropriate communication skills in the Internet and public media should also be discussed. Upper secondary school students should be guided to analyse the information they get from different sources, make the right decisions based upon their findings and understand the importance of media’s role in society.

“Technology and innovation” strives to raise people who are able to use modern technology and who are open to innovation and new solutions. Firstly, pupils should be taught how to use technology through different assignments which teach them to use computers and the Internet. Secondly, pupils should be encouraged to use different technological methods in group work and individual assignments in various subjects. Upper secondary school students are guided to analyse the effects of technology on modern society. The students are also encouraged to use information and communication technology to solve problems and make learning and working more effective.

“Health and safety” aims to raise people who are mentally, emotionally, socially and physically healthy. Pupils should be taught to be aware of the risks surrounding them and how to avoid the risks and lead a healthy life. The main study methods advised in the National Curriculum are stories, discussions, group work, demonstrations, role play, extracurricular projects and prevention programs, so that the pupils can participate actively in the learning process. In upper secondary level the cross-curricular topic guides students

to analyse and assess risks and their behaviour. The students are also taught to recognise risky behaviour, how to deal with it and where to find help. The study methods should be project work, guiding younger pupils of their school or living area to promote safe and healthy lifestyles.

“Values and morality” guides pupils to behave politely and appropriately to a situation, to understand values and moral principles in society and to making responsible choices. The pupils should, through different activities, learn to respect others and understand that all people are different. In higher level, various world views and religions should be introduced to pupils; through this their tolerance and understanding should be developed. The teaching methods should include discussions and behaviour analysis, pupils should learn to monitor their actions and analyse them. In upper secondary level, the main purpose of the cross-curricular topic is to develop students’ critical thinking and analytical skills. The students are guided to understand and respect different views, but also to make their own choices and justify them. It is advised in the National Curriculum that students should be able to participate in democratic discussions and be involved in schools’ management.

The National Curriculum gives a lot of guidelines and ideas how to teach cross-curricular topics. There are topics for each school level alongside methods how to teach each cross-curricular topic. The National Curriculum advises to start teaching and incorporating cross-curricular topics into the school environment already at the first school level, indicating that each topic can be taught from early school years. The ideas in the National Curriculum are not only for teaching the cross-curricular topics in classrooms but a lot of extracurricular activities and activities for the whole school are proposed. The National Curriculum also encourages co-operation between school and other schools, local organisations and parents. Incorporating cross-curricular topics into lessons and school

events creates possibilities for extensive co-operation, it also helps to motivate students and make lessons more relevant bringing the facts studied at school closer to everyday life.

## **1.2 Teaching cross-curricular topics**

It is stated in the National Curriculum that including cross-curricular topics in lessons depends on how closely the subject field is related to the topic (National Curriculum for Basic Schools 2011: §14). According to Barnes (2011: 265) teachers and schools should find the balance and know when it is possible and necessary to incorporate cross-curricular topics into lessons and when it is best to just teach the subject: “At times, de-contextualized, didactic approaches are the best way to maintain a sense of challenge, introduce and develop certain subject skills, teach important facts /.../. Sometimes a wholly cross-curricular approach seems the only way to address a theme.”

### **1.2.1 Incorporating cross-curricular topics into schools' learning environment**

Including cross-curricular topics into lessons depends a lot on the subject and sometimes more can be done outside lessons, through the school environment, for example creating appropriate learning environment, organising events and working together with the local community and different organisations. Jaani and Luisk (2010: 137) indicate that it is important to include work plans for teaching cross-curricular topics, whether in class or as extracurricular activities, into school's curriculum and overall teaching goals. This gives the school and teachers an opportunity to cooperate when creating syllabuses for teaching cross-curricular topics.



According to Jaani and Luisk (2010: 157-159) engaging teachers into preparing schools' curricula, work plans and syllabuses is a way of encouraging teachers to analyse their work and make plans with their colleagues on how to cooperate when teaching cross-curricular topics. Jaani and Luisk's research showed that most schools engage their teachers into the process of preparing school's documents, and cross-curricular topics are present in most schools' curricula and work plans. Their research also indicated that generally all possibilities for including teaching cross-curricular topics are mentioned in schools' curricula. Teaching cross-curricular topics is mostly meant to be done in lessons, but ways of incorporating the topics into the schools learning environment are also mentioned in the documents. Jaani and Luisk suggest schools putting together a plan for teaching cross-curricular topics, helping to clarify the purpose and outcomes of the process.

Jaani and Luisk (2010: 159-166) also assessed schools' values: how they are indicated in schools' documents and rules; how the values are dealt with in everyday work. They found that when schools' values are connected with the cross-curricular topics, the results and effects on schools' activities and work are the strongest. For instance, when a school values a person as an individual it is reflected in the teachers' attitudes. Furthermore Jaani and Luisk recommend taking a particular cross-curricular topic and emphasising it during a period; for example, one term the topic "Environment and sustainable development" is a priority and the whole school works with that topic through different activities and methods. Schools' values are a very efficient way of affecting students' behaviour and teaching them important skills as well as shaping their understanding of the world.

According to the international survey conducted by CIDREE, pupils' experience of cross-curricular topics varied according to the values and priorities of individual schools,

to the resources available and to the commitment, expertise, values and confidence of individual teachers. Successful implementation of cross-curricular topics needs well described visions and goals and the whole personnel has to be familiar with them; the school has to set goals for cognitive, personal and social development of their pupils, the decision making has to be participative (CIDREE 2005: 9).

Toikka-Tamm (2010: 12) suggests that schools' personnel should all be incorporated into teaching cross-curricular topics, especially when teaching the topic "Lifelong learning and career planning". First of all the school's personnel can teach and encourage students by being role models and supporting students when they have questions or interests relating to some specific profession. Secondly, a schools' psychologist should work with classes, organise different tests and give guidance.

An important person for every class is their form master who knows the students and their families and keeps up with the students' individual development and who can help to incorporate cross-curricular topics into extracurricular activities and students' free time. Toikka-Tamm (2010: 15) points out in her article that a form master can quite easily incorporate teaching cross-curricular topics into her or his duties. For instance, a form master can choose places to visit during field trips and excursions. When choosing a place, it would be a good idea, to connect the trip with a cross-curricular topic. Another possibility to teach and talk about cross-curricular topics is form master's lessons where he or she can choose topics to discuss and invite guests to perform. A form master can also cooperate with families, by discussing cross-curricular topics at parent teacher conferences and class meetings.

Koolme and Kull (2010: 126) introduce several extracurricular activities and events which schools can organise and which support teaching cross-curricular topics. Some of these events are easier to manage, when the school has partner organisations and works

together with former students. For teaching the topic “Lifelong learning and career planning”, Koolme and Kull suggest arranging meetings with people of different professions as well as with representatives of organisations and schools which can give career advice to students. For teaching the “Environment and sustainable development” it could mean campaigns that draw the students’ attention to the topic, for example a local clean-up campaign or recycling project at school. To encourage students’ initiative, it is advised to organise fairs where the students can sell their handmade products to collect money for an event at school. School newspaper, student firms and student council are good and efficient ways to teach the topic “Civic initiative and entrepreneurship”. Being always included in managing school events is a good practice for the students and a way of teaching cross-curricular topics. Thus, when schools are preparing their annual work plans and event schedules, it would be useful to involve students, so that they can get positive experiences and learn cross-curricular topics. School events can also help teach the cross-curricular topic “Cultural identity” by celebrating national holidays and traditional holidays known from folklore. Folklore can be discussed in different lessons; folk art can be emulated and taught in arts and crafts lessons and folk dance in physical education. All of these topics connected to culture can also be taught in after school clubs. For teaching the cross-curricular topic “Information environment” Koolme and Kull point out school newspapers and school websites, which give a good opportunity to pupils to learn the topic. Newspapers and websites can also be made in different subjects, for instance a blog where students post their homework assignments or a class newspaper done in different languages.

To ensure that all the cross-curricular topics in the National Curriculum are being taught and applied at school, it is best to encourage cooperation between teachers and

school management. When different groups work together, they can share ideas and make sure that work is done to teach cross-curricular topics and that it has results.

Harro-Loit et al (2007: 20-22) indicate that teaching cross-curricular topics is a multilevel process, and to ensure its success, a synergy between different levels must take place. A lesson is a concrete level where a base can be given to the competences that are learnt, and also where reflection and revision of the competences learnt elsewhere can take place. The school environment is a place where the learnt competences can be tested and used by students; this can be done, for instance, by organising events and solving conflict situations. The broader environment that still includes school is extracurricular activities, field trips, events with partner organisations and parents. Finally there is a level that does not include school but where students still learn cross-curricular topics. That includes all the activities the students are involved in after school; student's free time activities; time spent with parents and friends. Cooperation with parents is very important since learning cross-curricular topics takes place everywhere not only at school, teachers have to take this into account and try to channel the students' experiences so that the effect of them is positive. In some age groups the experiences gained outside school tend to become more important to the students than the knowledge obtained at school. It is essential that parents respect schools' values and teachers in order to work together when shaping their children into decent adults.

### **1.2.2 Teaching cross-curricular topics in lessons**

Various ways of teaching cross-curricular topics in lessons are already indicated in the Estonian National curriculum (see chapter 1.1). Different authors also suggest several ways of teaching cross-curricular topics in lessons.

Tiisvelt (2010: 107) points out that teachers can incorporate cross-curricular topics into their lessons through using different methods. For instance, using active learning and projects help students to develop their organising and cooperative skills as well as the ability to think and decide autonomously. When teachers use these kinds of methods regularly, they can guide their students towards lifelong learning, while giving them a chance to be enterprising and innovative. Asking students to do research on the Internet and prepare presentations is a way to teach and develop their technical skills and learn to find their way in the information environment (2010: 107).

According to a research on applying cross-curricular topics, conducted by the Centre for Educational Research and Curriculum Development (2010: 12), the most widely used strategies for teaching cross-curricular topics are including the topics in lessons and teaching them together with subjects. Teachers sometimes spend a whole lesson on teaching a cross-curricular topic. For including cross-curricular topics in lessons teachers use various resources for obtaining materials and information: half of the teachers questioned sometimes used the help of specialists or field trips for teaching cross-curricular topics but the most common sources of information are the Internet, newspapers and magazines. The research did not show any differences in the strategies for teaching different cross-curricular topics. The most frequently used teaching methods are discussions, watching films, practical assignments and pair and group work. Lectures are considered to be the least effective for teaching cross-curricular topics.

The National Curriculum also offers several opportunities for teaching cross-curricular topics in EFL classrooms. The subjects that are presented in the National Curriculum for teaching foreign languages give teachers many different options to incorporate cross-curricular topics into their lessons. The thematic areas for teaching foreign languages in the National Curriculum for Basic Schools are:

- Learning and working;
- Estonia my home;
- Countries and their culture;
- Daily life. Learning and working;
- Spare time;
- Me and others;
- My home and surroundings (National Curriculum for Basic Schools 2011: Appendix 2).

The thematic areas for teaching foreign languages in the National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools are:

- Education and work;
- The individual and society;
- Environment and technology;
- Estonia and the world;
- Culture and artistic creativity (National Curriculum for Upper Secondary Schools 2011: Appendix 2).

In addition to using different methods for teaching cross-curricular topics in lessons, learning content in EFL classes can also be used for teaching all cross-curricular topics. Some of the thematic areas given above can even be connected with several cross-curricular topics. For example, a thematic area in the National Curriculum for Basic Schools, “Estonia – my home” gives opportunities to discuss cross-curricular topics “Environment and sustainable development”, “Cultural identity” and “Values and morality”. A thematic area for Upper Secondary Schools, “The individual and society” can be connected with all cross-curricular topics.

Ugur (2009), points out that teaching cross-curricular topics is a good way to urge and establish co-operation between teachers and school staff and also between school and local organisations. Co-operation is also an efficient way to guarantee that all cross-curricular topics in the National Curriculum are covered. Ugur suggests that teachers share cross-curricular topics between them, so that there are little groups that specialise in certain cross-curricular topic and teachers would choose a topic that can be best discussed in their lessons, thus making sure that all the cross-curricular topics are learned and dealt with in different classes.

Harro-Loit et al (2007: 22-23) also explain that in order to be taken seriously, learning cross-curricular topics should be somehow assessed and feedback should be given to students. They do not recommend giving marks; they suggest giving oral feedback, meaning explanations to students about their strengths and weak points. For successful assessment process a criterion of assessment should be established. Learning cross-curricular topics can also be evaluated by looking at the big picture, that is, how have students' values changed, as indicted changes in their motivation and in the overall school environment.

Cross-curricular topics can be included in lessons through various methods and materials. For successful teaching and learning of cross-curricular topics, it is advised to encourage co-operation between teachers and give feedback and assess the students' efforts.

### **1.2.3 Teaching the cross-curricular topic “Environment and sustainable development” in EFL classrooms**

Western consumerism has brought upon us an environmental crisis, in spite of the fact that environmental awareness has been a key issue which has been discussed for decades. Through many discussions and researches a conclusion has been made that in guaranteeing sustainable development, education has the key role (Kasekamp 2008: 3). A variety of environmental problems affects the entire world, so it is very important to educate young people on environmental issues and raise their awareness of the problems. Many organisations have been created to protect the environment; furthermore the term “environmental education” is widely discussed all over the world.

Stapp (1969: 33) gives the following definition: “Environmental education is aimed at producing a citizenry that is knowledgeable concerning the biophysical environment and its associated problems, aware of how to help solve these problems, and motivated to work toward their solution.” The aim of environmental education is to teach or draw attention to natural environments and how they function. It is also important to encourage discussion that aims at protecting the environment. Cates and Jacobs (1999: 47) highlight that environmental education does not have to be included in every lesson, every reading passage, every group discussion, the recommendation they give is that environmental education should be a regular and consistent part of the curriculum. Schools should value the environment and nature and emphasise the importance of protecting the environment, for example through various campaigns for cleaning the local parks and recycling rubbish. The teachers should also discuss the topics with their students and be good role models.

Environmental education is included into curricula in many countries in Scandinavia, Europe and America. The cross-curricular topic “Environment and



sustainable development” is also present in the Estonian National Curriculum which indicates that through different subjects, „/.../ students should be shaped into socially active, responsible and environmentally aware people who preserve and protect the environment and value sustainability and who are ready to find solutions to the problems of the environment and human development.” (National Curriculum for Basic Schools 2011: Appendix 12).

Teaching environmental issues cannot be done in all lessons, the topic cannot be connected with all subjects. According to Kasekamp’s (2008: 38) research done among the teachers in the region of Lääne-Virumaa on the topic of teaching the cross-curricular topic “Environment and sustainable development”, 36% of the teachers of nature and sciences, 43% of the teachers of languages and history and 31% of the teachers of arts and crafts said that they do not include the cross-curricular topic “Environment and sustainable development” into their lessons. Indeed it can be difficult in some subjects, but as can be seen from the result of Kasekamp’s research, it is possible and most of the teachers do it in most of the subjects.

A strong claim that the EFL classroom is the right place for discussing and studying environmental issues has been made by various writers. Nkwetisama (2011), Gaith and Saban (1994) and Stempleski (1993) state that incorporating environmental themes into language classes is a good source of motivation for students, since it is an issue which is important and it enhances classroom interaction. Another reason for including environmental topics in language classes mentioned by Stempleski (1993) and Cates (1990) is that it provides a rich source of content and motivates students, because environmental problems are real issues which provide meaningful content for language classes.

Various methods have been suggested by different authors for incorporating environmental problems into language classes and raising environmental awareness in the EFL classroom. Cates (1990: 40) recommends using environmental topics when preparing reading texts, dialogues and discussion exercises. He also explains that environmental issues can be included in English lessons, even with students who are just starting to learn the foreign language, by using environmental topics when learning new sounds and incorporating environmental issues into grammar exercises. Cates gives an example where students are taught the environmental issues of the past, present and future (ibid.). As students get better in the foreign language, they can be asked to discuss the reasons and effects of environmental problems and forecast the future problems and solutions.

Gaith and Shaaban (1994: 58) draw attention to several appropriate themes to include in EFL lessons: rain forest destruction, pollution, and animal extinction. They also consider environmental topics motivating, useful for enhancing classroom discussions and developing students' skills of critical thinking. Using environmental topics in EFL classrooms is also a good way to link other subjects to language learning. Environmental issues concern history, mathematics, science and other subjects which, through environmental topics, can be discussed in language classrooms (Stempleski 1993).

Cates (1990: 45) claims that environmental education is for many teachers a shift from passive to active learning. Using environmental topics in class is a good way to experiment with class simulations and role plays to get students actively involved and express their opinions and views on the topic. Nkwetisama (2011: 114) also emphasises the use of communicative approach when teaching environmental issues. Since language learning is linked to communicative competence, it is necessary to talk and exchange ideas in a language class and environmental issues are a good source of discussion topics.

For including environmental topics in English lessons proper materials are needed. Nowadays most coursebooks already contain units related to environmental education, but it is usually one unit per book - for example, the coursebook "Upstream pre-intermediate" (Evans and Dooley 2012: 29-37) where the unit consists of reading, listening, speaking, writing activities and grammar exercises on the topics of endangered species, global warming and environmental organisations. The coursebook "Upstream level B1+" (Evans and Dooley 2012: 16-25) has a similar unit with several different speaking and writing activities, grammar and vocabulary exercises on the topics of endangered species and protecting them; protecting the environment; and environmentally friendly behaviour. This coursebook furthermore contains several additional reading activities on ecologically friendly behaviour. To raise students' awareness of environmental issues these topics should be discussed more often than just with one unit per coursebook.

Several authors suggest various ways how to find and create materials for environmental education. Cates and Jacobs (1999: 46) propose cooperating with different organisations and using materials they provide by simplifying them for students. Cates (1990: 45) recommends using available videos, television programs, newspaper and magazine articles and creating materials around them; this can be time consuming but allows providing materials which take the students' needs and competence levels into consideration. According to a research on applying cross-curricular topics, conducted by the Centre for Educational Research and Curriculum Development (2010: 128) the main sources of information and materials for teaching cross-curricular topics as reported by Estonian teachers are newspapers, magazines and the Internet. Kasekamp (2008: 12) points out several different ways of teaching environmental topics; she suggests using different games which encourage students to discuss environmental issues in a playful manner. Another method that Kasekamp (2008: 12-13) suggests is learning outside; this is good

because students can really get close to nature and learn how to analyse and discuss things they see. Yet another way of teaching environmental topics is participating in different projects: the projects can be international, which is a good way also to practice English; the projects can be between different schools in Estonia or between different classes in a school. Teaching through projects is also a very effective way of incorporating many cross-curricular topics into one assignment. Although Kasekamp's research paper focuses on teaching environmental topics in subjects related to nature, it is possible to carry out all those things in English, as the games and trips outside can be connection points between teaching English and environmental education.

### **1.3 Teachers' attitudes towards teaching cross-curricular topics**

It can be assumed that most parents, employers and politicians are concerned about and interested in the cross-curricular topics. For their own benefit they find cross-curricular topics to be highly important, since they are interested in healthy and decent adults, sophisticated and clever future citizens and employees who are capable of living in a modern society. Teachers also think that in principle, cross-curricular topics are essential for students, and a natural part of everyday school life (Kõiv 2012).

According to a research conducted by the Centre for Educational Research and Curriculum Development (2010: 123-128) most Estonian teachers have included cross-curricular topics in their lessons since the topics were added to the Estonian National Curriculum in 1996. The research also indicated, however, that language teachers have included cross-curricular topics in their lessons less than other teachers. The teachers who filled the questionnaire for the Centre for Educational Research and Curriculum Development were asked how often they included cross-curricular topics into a ninth grade

lesson. The results showed that cross-curricular topics are most often discussed once a term or once a month. The cross-curricular topics that are taught most often are “Environment and sustainable development” and “Health and safety”. The topics that was taught the least is “Lifelong learning and career planning”.

Although teachers understand and point out the importance of teaching cross-curricular topics, they face many problems when implementing them at school, as also indicated by the international research done in 27 countries by CIDREE (CIDREE 2005: 8-9). Firstly, the teachers do not have enough time to include cross-curricular topics into their lessons, as pressure on school timetables and overload of the curriculum seem to be the main issues of concern in many countries. Usually, only a very small amount of curriculum time is available for a whole range of cross-curricular material. Secondly, the research showed that many teachers lack self-confidence for teaching cross-curricular topics. This problem is caused by teachers not having sufficient content knowledge and their inability of employing a range of teaching and learning approaches appropriate for the topic. Some teachers also referred to the absence of the necessary specialist training. Thirdly, teaching cross-curricular topics often requires active teaching methods, which according to many teachers (*ibid.*) are difficult to realise, since the groups are often too big. Their subjects have to be taught and there is not enough time to spend on teaching cross-curricular topics. Furthermore, the teachers questioned often insisted on the dominance of subject principles in structuring pupils' learning and this makes teaching the topics across different subjects very difficult.

Kõiv, Lamesoo and Luisk (2010) have also done research among Estonian teachers. According to the interviews they have conducted, there are four types of problems with including cross-curricular topics in lessons (*ibid.* 9-10). Firstly, the teachers find the role of cross-curricular topics in teaching unclear. The teachers are not sure how often they have

to incorporate cross-curricular topics into their lessons and whether they have to include all the topics. The teachers questioned often admitted that cross-curricular topics in the National Curriculum are confusing to them and they found the topics unnecessary. Secondly, the teachers are disturbed by the formulation of the cross-curricular topics in the National Curriculum, as they resent the excessive use of foreign words. The teachers pointed out that because of the wording, young teachers and students might be unable to understand the meaning of cross-curricular topics. The third problem for the teachers was the lack of time. The teachers were worried about the time they have to spend on looking for and preparing materials. Preparing and teaching cross-curricular topics also takes teachers' time on the account of getting ready for the national examinations. The fourth problem for the teachers was the lack of knowledge and materials. The teachers agreed that they definitely need extra courses on the contents of cross-curricular topics and on how to teach these topics.

Another research was conducted in Estonian schools to find out the current situation of teaching the cross-curricular topic "Information technology and media" (Laanpere et al 2008: 2). The problems indicated by teacher corroborated those in the interviews done by Kõiv, Lamesoo and Luisk (2010). The main issue seems to be the lack of time and of the skills. Teachers pointed out that the curriculum and syllabuses are very voluminous and they do not have enough time to include other topics into their lessons. The teachers were concerned about their skills concerning information technology and they often felt that their students knew more about the issues pertaining to the topic. Because of that, they requested extra courses and materials to teach the topic. The teachers also highlighted that schools often do not have the necessary equipment for teaching computer skills and using information technology in their classes (Laanpere et al 2008: 35).

Harro-Loit et al (2007: 22) state that one of the problems in teaching cross-curricular topics is not really the lack of available materials but that the materials are not of good quality and there are often a lot of materials on one topic and very few on some other topic. Another problem with the materials is the lack of skills teachers have for using them in class. For the solution Harro-Loit et al (2007: 22) propose putting together groups of specialists who are qualified to compose materials and methods for teaching cross-curricular topics and adding courses on cross-curricular topics to teacher-training.

According to Kasekamp's (2008: 34-40) research on teaching "Environment and sustainable development" by teachers in the Lääne-Virumaa region, only 30% of the teachers questioned include cross-curricular topics in their syllabuses. Teachers of creative subjects (arts and crafts) tend to include cross-curricular topics in their syllabuses more than the teachers of other subjects. As in the research papers cited above, the teachers of Lääne-Virumaa also point out that they need to concentrate on their subjects, so that the students pass their national examinations and due to this, the teachers do not have enough time to teach cross-curricular topics and it remains of secondary importance to them. Kasekamp also lists other reasons for not teaching "Environment and sustainable development": for example, lack of materials and lack of knowledge of the environment and nature. However, although teachers claimed they do not have the time, materials and necessary skills to teach cross-curricular topics, almost 60% of them still consider those topics to be important.

According to a research conducted by the Centre for Educational Research and Curriculum Development among teachers of different subjects in Estonia (2010: 14), the teachers who know more about the content of certain cross-curricular topics are more motivated to teach the topic and are more interested in the topic themselves. The research showed the importance of offering teachers the possibility to take different courses on

cross-curricular topics. The research also proved that most of the interviewed teachers are interested in teaching cross-curricular topics and find it important. The teachers indicated, however, that more work should be done in their subjects to teach cross-curricular topics, as including them in different lessons helps to motivate students and shape positive attitudes towards the subject and the teachers.

The same research also assessed how various conditions in schools affect teaching of cross-curricular topics. Not many teachers questioned admitted that they had had to cancel teaching cross-curricular topics because of the lack of resources. However, a lot of them still pointed out that the lack of materials, technical equipment as well as their insufficient skills and knowledge hinder teaching cross-curricular topics. The research showed two types of circumstances which hinder teaching cross-curricular topics. Firstly, there are conscious circumstances which are: lack of money, resources and time; the differences between the families' and school's values; little support from the government, leading to the lack of training courses, the salary that is not motivating; and the constant changes in the relevant documents and curriculum. Secondly, there are also circumstances that are unconscious: the uncertain role of cross-curricular topics in the curriculum; the complicated formulation of cross-curricular topics in the curriculum; the impossibility of including cross-curricular topics in some subjects; the lack of time because of the national examinations; and insufficient communication between teachers and school's management (The Centre for Educational Research and Curriculum Development 2010: 16).

Teachers interviewed for the same research also claimed that cross-curricular topics are actually not anything new to them as they had talked about the topics and included them in lessons already before cross-curricular topics were added to the Estonian National Curriculum. Due to that, the teachers do not need to add them specifically into their work plans and syllabuses. Only 24% of the teachers questioned said that they set specific goals



and learning outcomes for cross-curricular topics (Centre for Educational Research and Curriculum Development 2010: 69-70).

Thus the various research papers this author has used to find out about teachers' attitudes towards teaching cross-curricular topics all tend to give similar results in Europe as well as in Estonia. The teachers questioned for different research papers mostly agree that including cross-curricular topics in lessons and school events is necessary and helps to improve studying and the environment in school. However, these teachers also face many problems with the cross-curricular topics.

## **2. RESEARCH METHODS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

A survey was conducted for this MA thesis among EFL teachers of Estonia to find out their views on including cross-curricular topics into their lessons. A questionnaire was composed by the author to find out how cross-curricular topics are taught in Estonian schools, how often they are included in lessons and what are the teachers' attitudes towards teaching cross-curricular topics. The results of the survey are going to be discussed and compared with previous researches done on this issue and to see if EFL teachers' attitudes towards including cross-curricular topics in their lessons are more positive and if they find including the topics in their lesson easier than teachers of other subjects.

### **2.1 Research methods and data collection**

The research methodology consists of a questionnaire (Appendix), composed by the author of the paper and based on the viewpoints of different authors and researches, pointed out in the theoretical part of the paper. Questions 13-16 were taken from a research

paper conducted by Centre for Educational research and Curriculum Development (2010: 560-561) so as to compare the EFL teachers' answers with the teachers who participated in the research conducted by Centre for Educational research and Curriculum Development.

With the questionnaire the author aimed to find out:

1. general information about the teachers questioned and their experiences in teaching cross-curricular topics (Q1-5);
2. the teachers' attitudes towards including cross-curricular topics in their lessons (Q6-10);
3. how often the teachers incorporate cross-curricular topics into their lessons (Q11-12);
4. how the teachers teach cross-curricular topics, what kind of methods and materials they use (Q13-16).

With questions 1-5 the author learned whether the answering teachers work in a town school or a country school, the teachers' age group, the subjects they teach and the forms they teach in and whether they have ever had any experiences teaching cross-curricular topics. With questions 6-9 the teachers were asked about their opinions on the necessity of cross-curricular topics and whether it is possible and easier to include cross-curricular topics in EFL classrooms. With questions 10-12 the teachers were asked about the frequency of including cross-curricular topics into their lessons and how often are certain topics included in studying English. With questions 13-16 the teachers were asked about the methods, materials and information channels they use for teaching cross-curricular topics.

The participants asked to fill in the questionnaire were EFL teachers from different Estonian schools. According to EHIS (Estonian Education Information System) in 2011, the number of EFL teachers working in Estonian schools was 1679. Total of 90 EFL

teachers from different Estonian schools filled in the questionnaire, which is 5.4% of the EFL teachers in Estonia. As the answers of the teachers questioned do not vary significantly, the results of the research can be considered fairly representative of all EFL teachers of Estonia.

The teachers in the sample teach different age groups, from primary to upper secondary school. Although the teachers questioned teach different age groups it is difficult to differentiate their answers according to the levels they teach in because most of the teachers teach in two levels, primary school and basic school; some teachers even teach students in all three levels, primary school, basic school and upper secondary school. Most of the teachers, who filled in the questionnaire, were EFL teachers but 7 teachers (7.8% of the sample) were primary school teachers who also teach English. 9 teachers (10% of the sample) also teach another subject, which in most cases was German but Spanish, French, mathematics, social studies, computer skills and geography were also the subjects taught by the EFL teachers questioned.

The teachers who filled in the questionnaire were asked to indicate whether they teach in a small town with only one school or a bigger town with more than one school. Most of the teachers questioned, 62 which is 68.9% of the sample, teach in a town with more than one school: 28 teachers (31% of the sample) teach in a small town with just one school. Most of the teachers questioned answered positively to Q5: *Have you had any experience teaching cross-curricular topics?* Only 7 teachers (7.8% of the sample) answered negatively to the question. The fact that the teachers teach different age groups and are from towns and villages gives a broader view of how cross-curricular topics are included in lessons in different levels of English classes. The diverse sample helps to see whether and how the teachers' age, size of the town they teach in and the age group they teach affects their attitudes towards including cross-curricular topics in their lessons.

## 2.2 EFL teachers' attitudes towards teaching cross-curricular topics: results and discussion

The second part of the questionnaire (questions 6-10), were asked from the teachers to get an overview of their attitudes towards teaching cross-curricular topics.

Majority of the teachers questioned, 80% of the sample, answered affirmatively to the Q6: *Do you think that it is easier to teach cross-curricular topics in English lesson than in other lessons?* There were no major differences between the answers of the teachers from different age groups. The teachers who belong to age group 35-44 years old gave the largest amount of positive response, as 16 teachers out of 21 (76.2%), answered affirmatively. The teachers who belong to the age group 55 and older were the most negative, as 9 teachers out of 19 (47.7%) said that in their opinion it was not easier to teach cross-curricular topics in EFL classrooms (Chart 1).

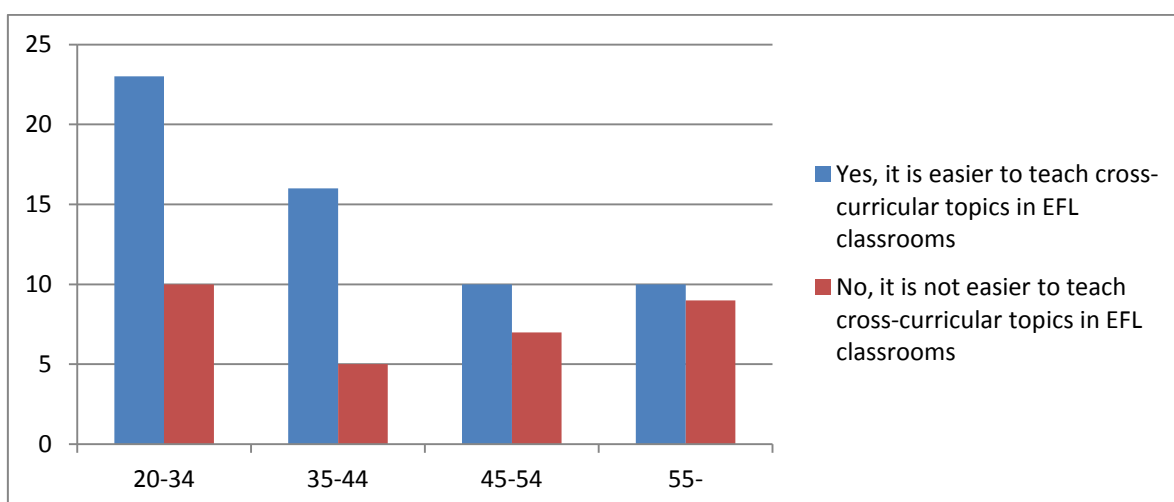


Chart 1. Teachers' opinions on teaching cross-curricular topics in EFL classrooms, differentiated by age.

The teachers were also asked to explain their opinion. The teachers, who answered positively to the question, explained their answer more than the teachers who answered negatively. There were 72 teachers thinking that it is easier to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons and 43 teachers, which is 59.7% of this group, explained their answers. There were 33 teachers who answered negatively and only 7 teachers, which is 21.2% of this group, explained their answers. The most common commentaries were indicating the wide range of materials available in the Internet and the topics in the coursebooks. The teachers also pointed out the possibility of having discussions on all of the cross-curricular topics and some of the teachers referred to the fact that most of the cross-curricular topics are already in the English language curriculum (see chapter 1.2) and also coincide with the national examination topics (Table 1). The 20% of the teachers who think that teaching cross-curricular topics in English lessons is not easier explained it with their students' insufficient knowledge of appropriate vocabulary and speaking skills and also their students' inability to understand some topics in English was mentioned (Table 2).

<b>Reasons why it is easier to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons</b>	<b>Number of teachers who listed the reason</b>
1. There are more possibilities to discuss different topics in English lessons	30 which is 33.3% of the sample
2. A lot of the cross-curricular topics are covered in coursebooks	6 which is 6.7% of the sample
3. A lot of interesting materials available in the Internet	5 which is 5.6% of the sample
4. A lot of the topics coincide with the national examination topic and with the topics in the English language curriculum	3 which is 3.3% of the sample

Table 1. Teachers' explanations for why it is easier to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons.

<b>Reasons why it is not easier to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons</b>	<b>Number of teachers who listed the reason</b>
1. The teacher does not have enough experience to teach cross-curricular topics	3 which is 3.3% of the sample
2. Students' knowledge on the topics is limited	2 which is 2.2% of the sample
3. Students' lack of necessary vocabulary to discuss cross-curricular topics	2 which is 2.2% of the sample
4. The focus in English lessons should be on the language	1 which is 1.1% of the sample

Table 2. Teachers' explanations for why it is not easier to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons.

To find out whether the teachers find teaching cross-curricular topics necessary they were asked the following question Q7: *In your opinion is it necessary to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons?* As could be seen already from the previous question, most of the EFL teachers questioned have quite positive attitudes towards teaching cross-curricular topics. Only 14 teachers (15.6% of the sample), answered that they think it is necessary to teach cross-curricular topics but they have not found appropriate teaching materials to incorporate any of the topics into their lessons and: 7 teachers (7.8% of the sample), answered that they have not found time to incorporate the topics into their lessons (Chart 2). There were no connection between the teachers' age groups or the levels they teach and the answers.

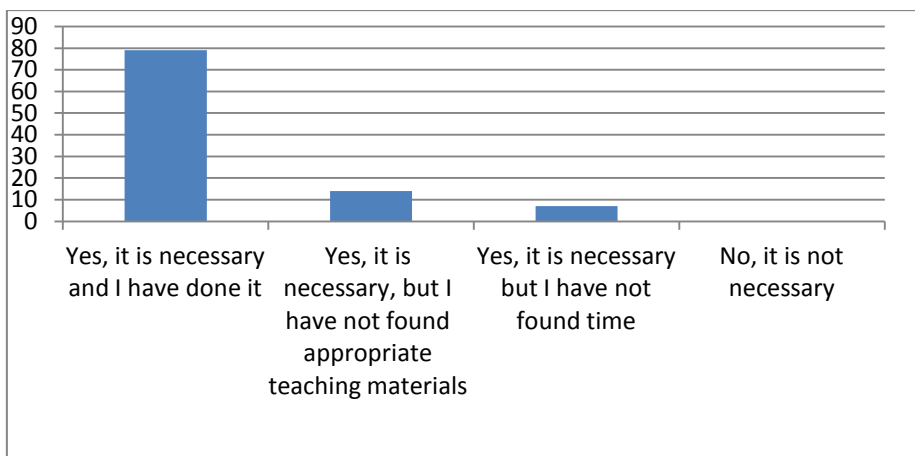


Chart 2. Teachers' opinions on teaching cross-curricular topics.

The teachers were also asked about the possibility of teaching cross-curricular topics in English lessons, Q8: *Do you think it is possible to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons?* Out of the 90 teachers questioned only one teacher answered negatively. The next question was Q9: *Why do you think that it is not possible to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons?* The one teacher, out of 90 teachers questioned, chose the answer B: *There are not enough materials to teach cross-curricular topics.*

The last question in the second part of the questionnaire was Q10: *Why do you think, that teaching cross-curricular topics in English lessons is important?* This was an open question and it was answered by 79 teachers who pointed out different reasons for teaching cross-curricular topics in English lessons. The reasons that were mentioned most often were that “it helps make real life connections and broadens students’ horizons and gives them general knowledge”; reasons connected to language learning were also listed (Table 3).

<b>Reasons for teaching cross-curricular topics in English lessons</b>	<b>Number of teachers who mentioned the reason</b>
1. Cross-curricular topics help students to make real life connections with what they are studying	26 which is 28.9% of the sample
2. Cross-curricular topics broaden students' horizons and give them general knowledge	23 which is 25.6% of the sample
3. Cross-curricular topics help to teach new vocabulary	13 which is 14.4% of the sample
4. Cross-curricular topics help to improve students' speaking skills, the topics give good subjects for discussions	13 which is 14.4% of the sample
5. Cross-curricular topics make lessons more interesting and motivate students to learn	9 which is 10% of the sample
6. The teachers just have to include cross-curricular topics in their lessons because the topics are in the national curriculum	5 which is 5.6% of the sample
7. The students need to learn cross-curricular topics because of the national examinations	1 which is 1.1% of the sample

Table 3. Reasons for including cross-curricular topics into English lessons.

As can be seen from the answers to the second part of the questionnaire, the EFL teachers have quite positive attitudes towards including cross-curricular topics in their lessons. Majority of the teachers questioned think that it is easier to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons. There was a small difference between the answers of teachers from different age groups; the teachers who belonged to age groups 20-34 and 35-44 answered positively to a greater extent than the teachers who belonged to the age groups 45-54 and 55 and older. The reason for that could be in teacher training, as the younger teachers might be more ready to teach cross-curricular topics because the topics have been introduced to them at the university and they might have taken courses on the content of cross-curricular topics.

The teachers listed various reasons for why they think it is easier to teach cross-curricular topics; from their answers it can be seen that most of the teachers have read the



Estonian National Curriculum and they have familiarised themselves with cross-curricular topics and with the guidelines given in the curriculum for teaching the topics (see chapter 1.1). The respondents are also aware of the possibilities of modern coursebooks and the Internet for finding interesting, motivating and appropriate materials for their students. 5.6% of the teachers questioned stated that it is easier to teach cross-curricular topics in EFL classroom because of the availability of a wide range of materials in the Internet. There were also 20% of the teachers who claimed that it is not easier to teach cross-curricular topics in EFL classrooms. Since most of the teachers who think that it is not easier to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons did not clarify their opinions, it could be explained with the teachers not being familiar with the Estonian National Curriculum and do not understand the concept of cross-curricular topics. The teachers who clarified their views with their students' lack of skills and knowledge maybe just have not had the chance to familiarise themselves with modern teaching materials and information channels where to get useful materials.

The teachers were also asked about the necessity of teaching cross-curricular topics and 100% of the teachers questioned think that it is necessary, which is the same result as other researchers have found (see chapter 1.3). Although there were some teachers (15.6%) who claimed that they have not found appropriate materials to teach cross-curricular topics, and 7.8% of the teachers questioned said that they had not found time to teach the topics in their lessons, the results are quite different from the researches done on the topic among teachers in Estonia and Europe and according to which the main problems were lack of time and materials (see chapter 1.3).

The EFL teachers' positive attitude towards including cross-curricular topics into their lessons can be seen in their answers to questions 8 and 9 which were about the possibilities of including cross-curricular topics in English lessons: 89 teachers out of 90

think that it is possible.

The last question about teachers' attitudes was Q10: *Why do you think, that teaching cross-curricular topics in English lessons is important?* The question was answered by 79 teachers who listed several reasons for importance of cross-curricular topics. The reason the teachers pointed out most often was that cross-curricular topics help to make real life connections with the subjects the students learn at school and almost everyone has something to say about them. The teachers also emphasised that cross-curricular topics help to broaden the students' horizons and give them general knowledge. According to the questionnaire the teachers agree with the ideas of Nkwetisama (2011), Stempleski (1993), Gaith and Saban (1994) who all bring out the positive sides of including cross-curricular topics into English lessons (see chapter 1.2.1).

### **2.3 How often and in which ways EFL teachers include cross-curricular topics in their lessons: results and discussion**

The third part of the questionnaire, questions 11-16, aimed to find out how often and how the respondents teach cross-curricular topics, where they get their ideas and materials from, and which topics they teach more and why.

The teachers were asked how often they teach different cross-curricular topics, to find out which cross-curricular topics are included in EFL classrooms the most and why are some topics discussed more than others. With Q11: *How often do you teach the following cross-curricular topics?* a list of cross-curricular topics from the Estonian National Curriculum was provided and the respondents had to mark whether they use this topic once a week, once a month, once a term, once a year or never. 31 teachers (34.4% of the sample), teach the cross-curricular topic "Lifelong learning and career planning" once a

term. “Environment and sustainable development” is mostly included in lessons once a month (by 34 teachers, 37.8% of the sample). 37 teachers (41.1% of the sample) said that they teach “Civic initiative and entrepreneurship” once a term. “Cultural identity” is in most cases included in lessons once a month (by 34 teachers, which is 37.8% of the sample). “Information environment” is taught once a term by 29 teachers (32.2% of the teachers questioned). 34 teachers (37.8% of the sample) teach “Technology and innovation” once a term. “Health and safety” is also included in lessons mostly once a term, as this answer was chosen by 31 teachers which is 34.4% of the group. The cross-curricular topic that is included in lessons most often is “Values and morality”: 41 teachers (45.6% of the sample) reported that they include the topic in their lessons once a week. The cross-curricular topic which is most often omitted from lessons is “Civic initiative and entrepreneurship”, as 8 teachers (8.9% of the sample) admitted that they never teach that topic (Chart 3).

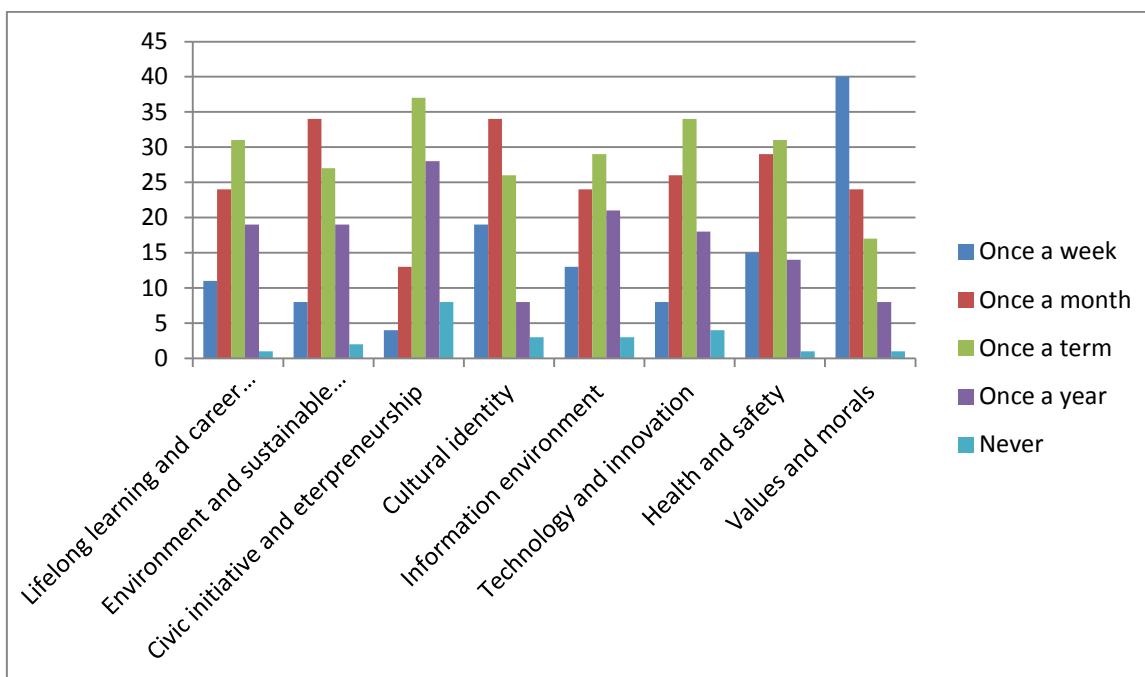


Chart 3. How often EFL teachers teach cross-curricular topics.

Since some topics might be more difficult to include in lessons in primary school, primary school teachers' answers were analysed separately to see if there are any differences from the other teachers. Primary teachers consider the cross-curricular topic "Values and morality" to be the most important, as 3 teachers out of 7, which is 42.9% of the group, include the topic in their English lessons once a week. The least discussed cross-curricular topic in primary schools' English lessons is "Civic initiative and entrepreneurship", as 3 teachers out of 7 (42.9% of the group) said that they never discuss this topic in their English lessons (Chart 4).

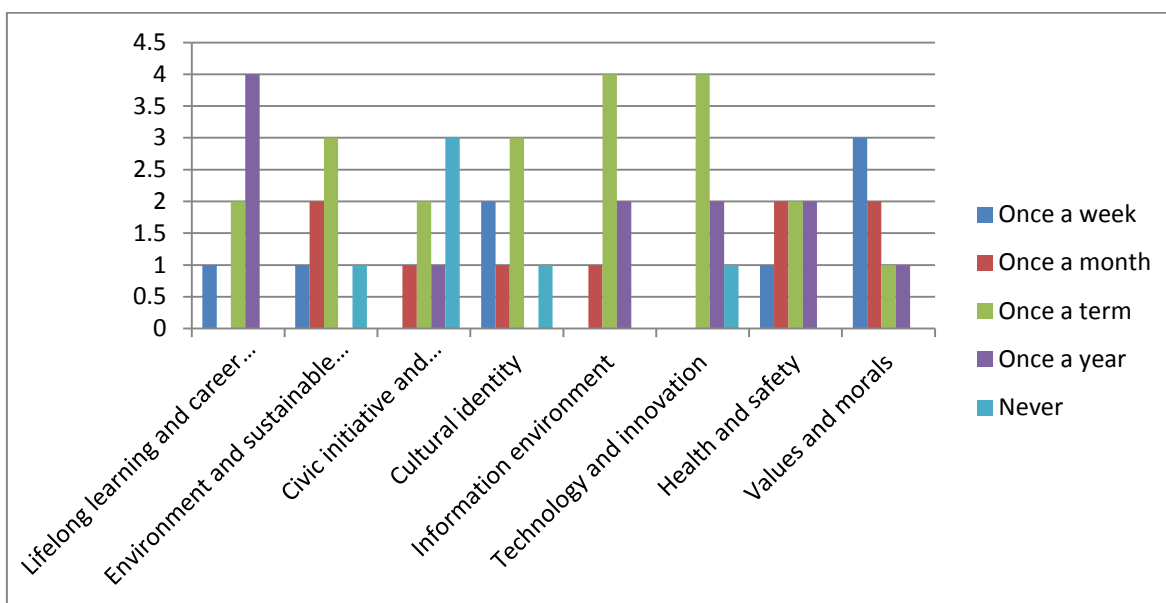


Chart 4. How often primary school teachers include cross-curricular topics in English lessons.

To understand why some cross-curricular topics are included in lessons more often than others, the teachers were asked the question Q12: *Why do you teach some topics more often than others?* The teachers could choose from four options or write their own reason. Some teachers chose more than one option. Most of the teachers answered that they teach some cross-curricular topics more often than others because some topics are easier to

incorporate into English lessons than others 58 teachers (64.4% of the sample) chose that answer. Only 3 teachers (3.3% of the sample) said that they teach all topics equally (Chart 5).

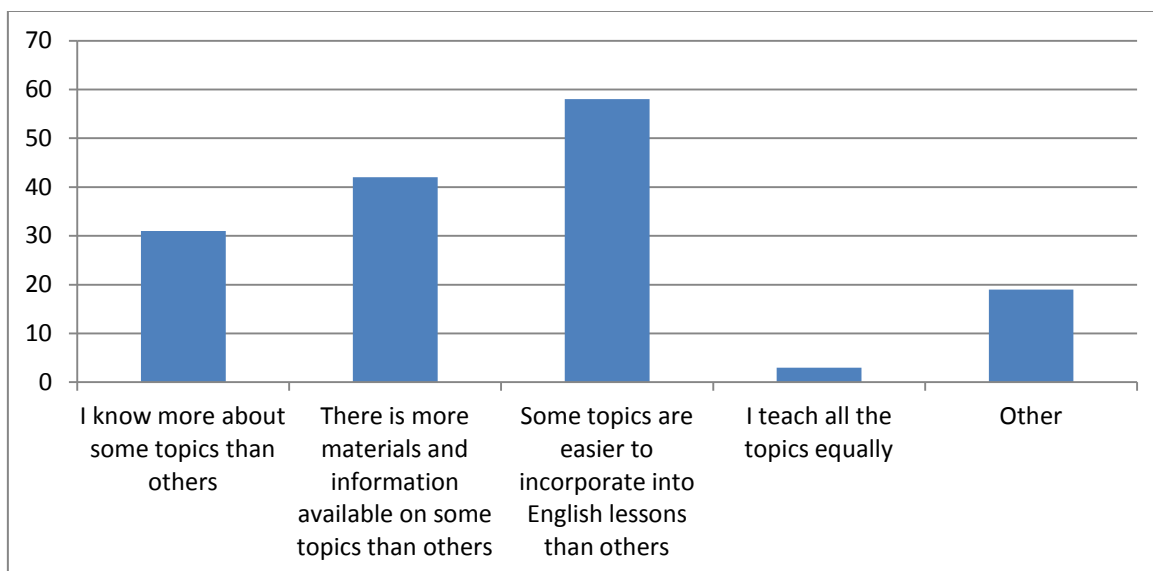


Chart 5. EFL teachers' reasons for teaching some cross-curricular topics more than others.

The teachers also indicated several reasons themselves; in most cases the teachers teach topics that are included in coursebooks they use. Some teachers include some cross-curricular topics more than others because they find some topics more relevant or more comprehensible to the students (Table 4).

<b>The reasons why teachers incorporate some topics more often than others</b>	<b>Number of teachers, who listed the reason</b>
1. Some topics are used more often because they are included in the coursebooks the teachers use	11 teachers, which is 12.2% of the sample
2. Some topics are more relevant and important to the students	2 teachers, which is 2.2% of the sample
3. Some topics are more suitable for younger students	1 teacher, which is 1.1% of the sample

Table 4. Teachers' own reasons for including some cross-curricular topics in English lessons more than others.

To find out in which ways teachers teach cross-curricular topics, they were first asked about planning the lessons Q13: *Do you set specific learning outcomes for teaching cross-curricular topics?* The teachers could choose between two options. The first option was: *yes, I set specific outcomes and I plan lessons for teaching cross-curricular topics.* The second option was: *no, I teach cross-curricular topics as a part of my lesson and discuss them only if they come up in the coursebook I use.* Most teachers (67, which is 74.4% of the sample) chose the second option whereas 23 teachers (25.6%) answered that they set specific learning outcomes for teaching cross-curricular topics.

To understand how the EFL teachers questioned teach cross-curricular topics, they were asked about the activities and materials they use for that purpose with Q14: *Which of the activities to you use to teach cross-curricular topics?* The teachers were given a list of activities and they had to mark which activities they always use, often use, sometimes use, rarely use and never use. The activity which the respondents use most often is teaching cross-curricular topic together with their subject, as 42 teachers (46.7%) answered that they often use this activity. The least used activity is teaching cross-curricular topic separately from their lesson, indicated as never used by 47 teachers which is 52.2% (Chart 6).

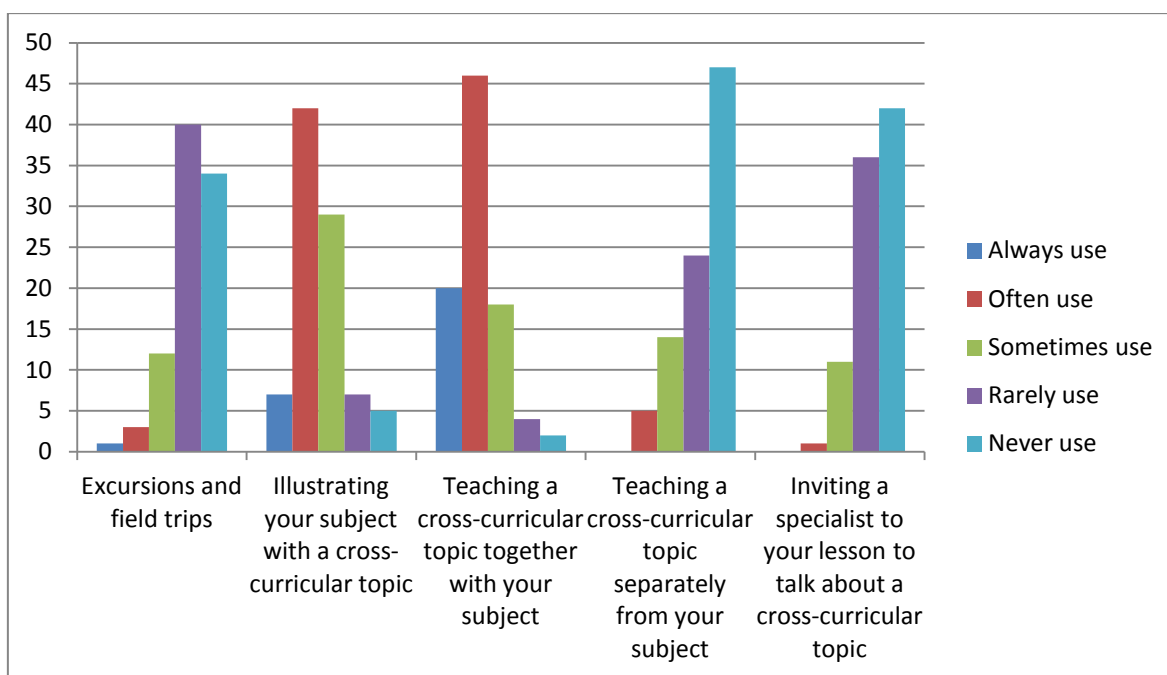


Chart 6. The activities EFL teachers use for teaching cross-curricular topics.

Since some of the activities, excursions and inviting a specialist to class might be easier to do in a bigger town than small village, the answers of teachers from a small town with just one school and teachers from bigger towns were compared. There were no significant differences between the answers of teachers from small towns and teachers from bigger towns. Total of four teachers (14.3% of all small town teachers questioned) said they sometimes use excursions and field trips and one teacher, representing 3.6% of the group, answered that she always uses excursions and field trips. The answers of teachers from bigger towns were distributed rather similarly, as three teachers (4.8% of all bigger town teachers questioned) reported that they often use excursions and field trips; and eight teachers (12.9% of that group) claimed they sometimes use excursions and field trips (Chart 7).

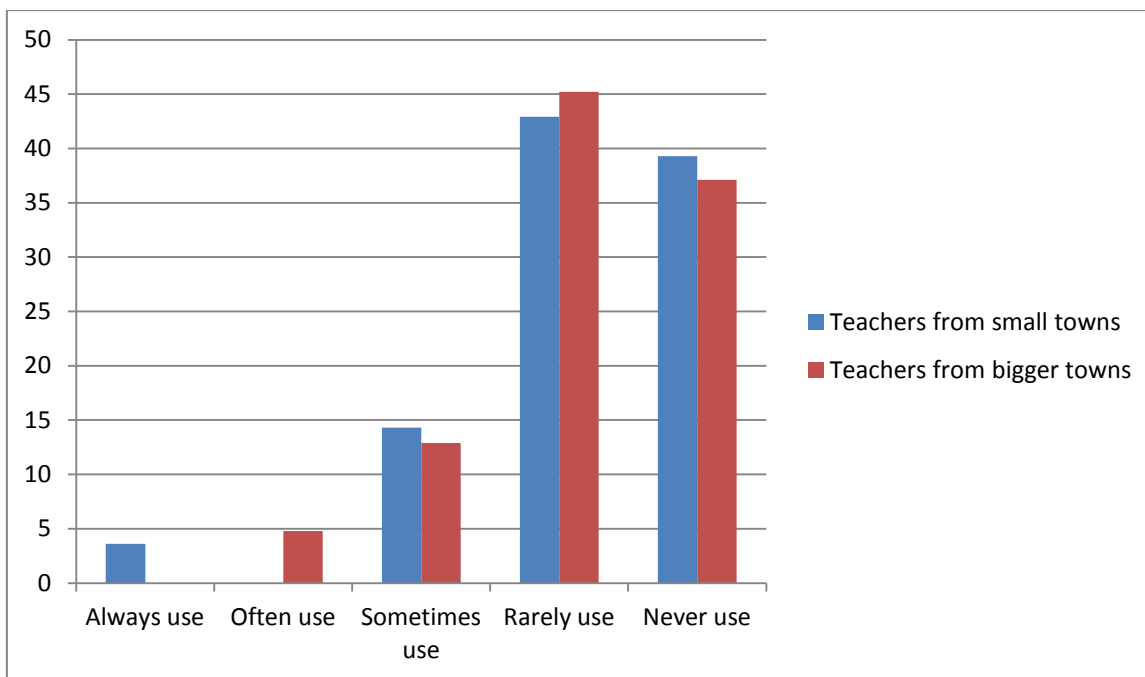


Chart 7. The percentage of teachers from small towns and from bigger towns using excursions and field trips as a teaching activity.

There was a slight difference between the answers of teachers from small towns and bigger towns over inviting a specialist to class. Total of 17 teachers (60,7% of all respondents from small towns), admitted that they never invite a specialist to class to talk about a cross-curricular topic; and only two teachers (7,1% of that group) stated they sometimes use this activity. Teachers from bigger towns invite specialists to their lessons more often, as nine teachers (14.5% of all the respondents from bigger towns), claimed that they sometimes use this activity and one teacher, representing 1.6% of the group, said that she often invites a specialist to English lessons. 25 teachers from bigger towns, which is 40.3% of that group, reported they never invite specialists to their lessons (Chart 8).



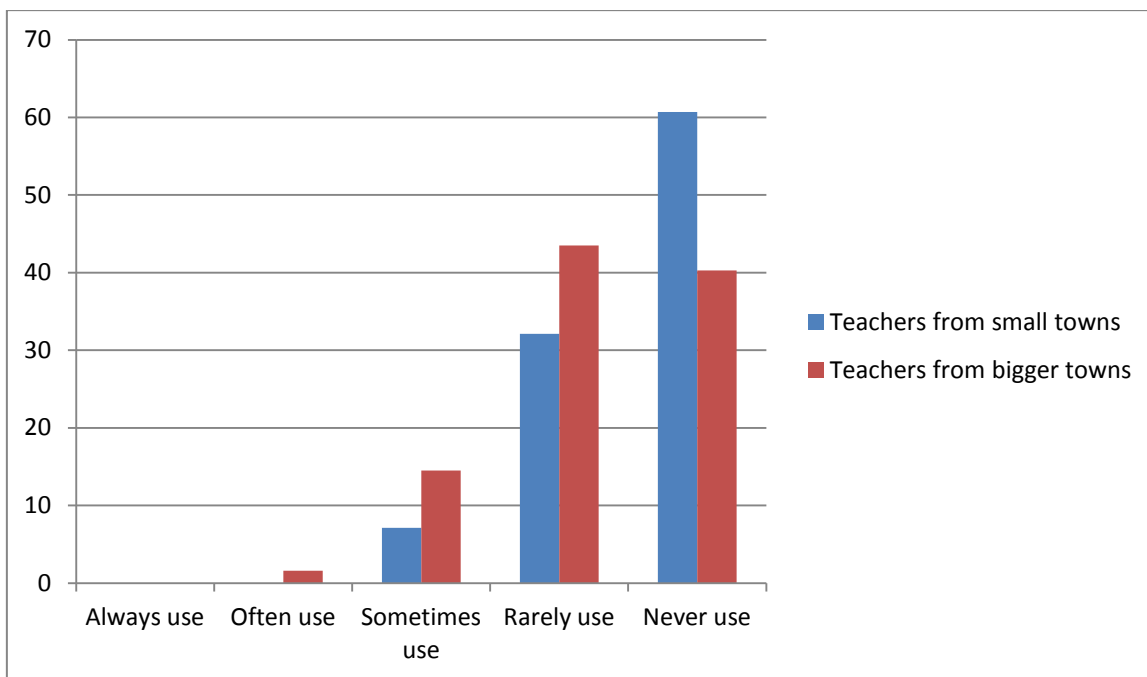


Chart 8. The percentage of teachers from small towns and from bigger towns using “inviting a specialist to class” as a teaching activity.

More questions about different teaching activities were asked from the teachers in terms of cross-curricular topics. The teachers were asked Q:15 *How effective are the following activities for teaching cross-curricular topics?* Accompanied by a list of classroom activities and they had to mark whether they think the activity is very effective, effective, not very effective, very ineffective or “I do not know”. The teachers questioned consider discussions to be the most effective method for teaching cross-curricular topics, as preferred by 48 teachers (53.3% of the sample). The most ineffective method is using lectures, confirmed by 52 teachers (57.8% of the sample) “not very effective” and by 7 teachers (7.8% of the sample) “very ineffective” (Chart 9).

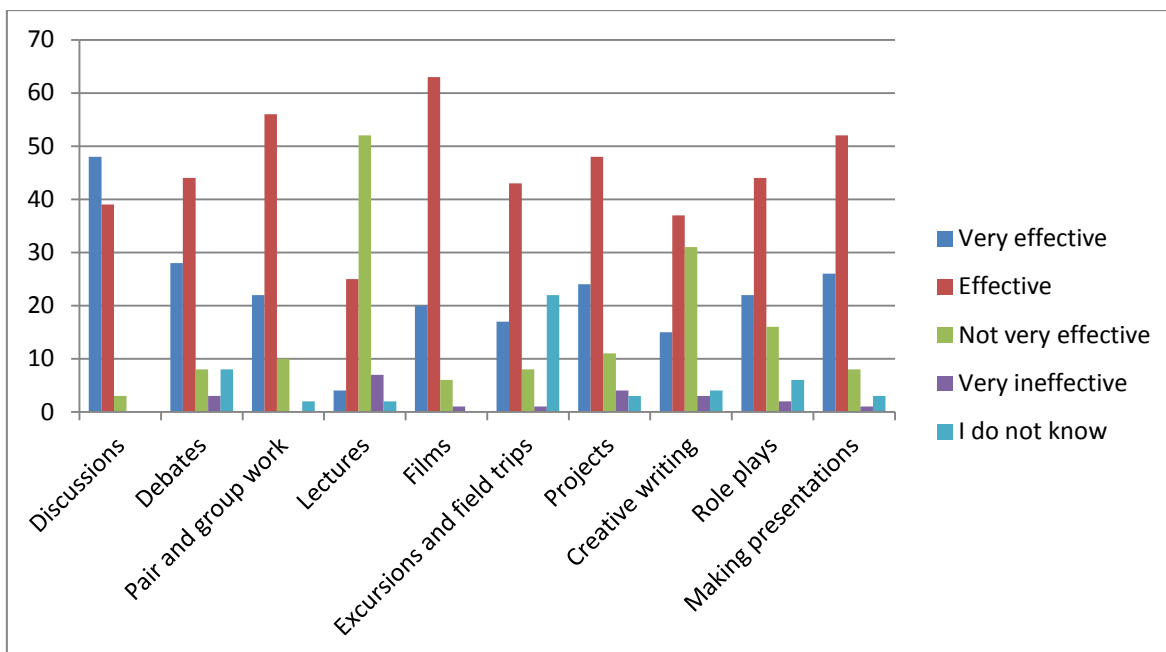


Chart 9. The effectiveness of classroom activities.

Finally, the teachers were asked about their sources of information and materials, to assess their awareness of the availability of different sources and to find out which materials they use. The teachers were asked Q16: *Where do you get information and materials for teaching cross-curricular topics?* The questionnaire included a list of 15 sources of information and the respondents had to mark whether they always use, often use, sometimes use, rarely use or never use the sources given. The most preferred sources of information are the Internet and coursebooks. Total of 42 teachers (46.7% of the sample) said that they always use the Internet for getting information and materials for teaching cross-curricular topics. Coursebooks were highlighted as good sources by 41 teachers (45.6%) always using them for cross-curricular topics. The least used sources of information and materials are mailing lists and consulting a specialist 30 teachers (33.4% of the sample) admitted that they never use mailing lists; and 25 teachers (27.8%) stated that they never consult a specialist for information on the cross-curricular topics (Chart 10).

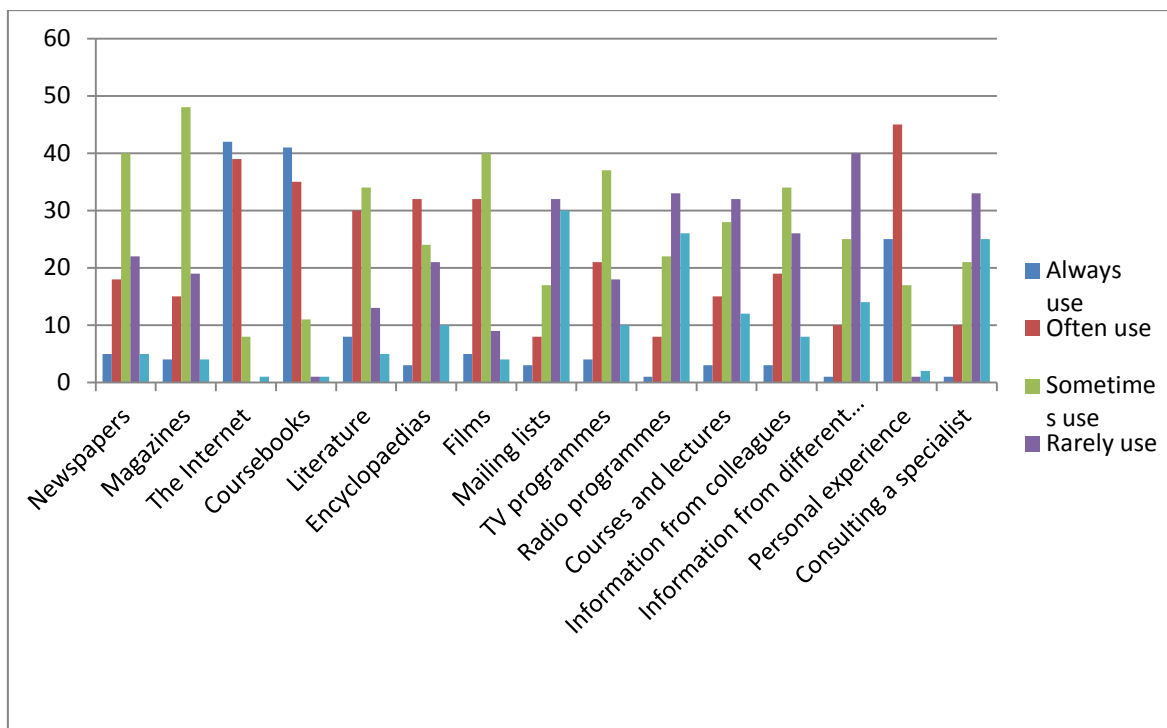


Chart 10. The EFL teachers' sources for materials and information.

The third part of the questionnaire shows which cross-curricular topics are included in the EFL classrooms the most; how EFL teachers teach cross-curricular topics and where they find information and materials for teaching the topics.

The cross-curricular topics EFL teachers include in their lessons most often are “Values and morality”, “Cultural identity”, and “Environment and sustainable development”. The cross-curricular topics which are discussed the least are: “Civic initiative and entrepreneurship” and “Information environment”. The EFL teachers' answers in this study are therefore a little different from the results of the research conducted by the Centre for Educational Research and Curriculum Development (2010: 123-128) (see chapter 1.3), as according to the latter, the cross-curricular topics taught most often are “Environment and sustainable development” and “Health and safety” whereas the least taught topic is “Lifelong learning and career planning”. It is easy to understand why the topic “Cultural identity” is among the most included topics, as

teaching culture is an important part of language classes and learning about the culture of other countries is part of the language curriculum (National Curriculum for Basic Schools 2011: Appendix 2) (see chapter 1.2.2). The reason why the topic “Environment and sustainable development” is included more often than other topics might be that there are a lot of materials available and most modern coursebooks include that topic (see chapter 1.2.3). The topic “Values and morality” might be included into EFL lessons a lot because various issues under that topic are good for inciting discussions as part of English lessons. Also the topic can be discussed together with a wide range of other themes, for example in analysing different literary texts and films. It is more difficult to explain why the topics “Civic initiative and entrepreneurship” and “Information environment” are only discussed once a year according to the answers of 54.5% of teachers and never discussed according to 12.2% of the teachers. The reason might be the lack of materials on these topics. Also the content of the topics is more difficult to discuss with younger pupils which might also explain the results to the answers of the teachers.

The primary school teachers’ answers were analysed separately, because some cross-curricular topics might be more difficult to teach at lower levels. There were no differences between the answers of the teachers of higher levels and lower levels. According to the answers of the primary school teachers the cross-curricular topic which is included in English lessons the most is “Values and morals” as 42.9% of the primary school teachers questioned said they include the topic in their lessons once a week. The least included topic is “Civic initiative and entrepreneurship” as 42.9% of the primary school teachers questioned said they never teach this topic. The topic “Values and morality” can be taught through different texts and stories which makes it easier for teachers to incorporate the topic into their lessons. The topic “Civic initiative and entrepreneurship” seems to be a difficult topic to include in lessons for all teachers,

probably because it is a subject which requires extensive content knowledge and the EFL teachers do not have enough materials or skills to teach the topic.

Several teachers also mentioned that many cross-curricular topics are already present in the coursebooks they use. Therefore the teachers tend to include such cross-curricular topics more in their lessons.

The teaching activities the EFL teachers use the most are teaching a cross-curricular topic together with their subject and illustrating their subject with a cross-curricular topic. The least used teaching activities are teaching a cross-curricular topic separately from one's subject and inviting a specialist to class to talk about a cross-curricular topic. The reason why the EFL teachers do not teach a cross-curricular topic separately from their subject is probably because it is a language class and all subjects are taught through the language. The reason why EFL teachers rarely ask a specialist to come to their class might be that it is difficult to find an English speaking specialist who is ready to come and visit lessons. On comparing the EFL teachers' answers with the results from other research papers, no significant differences in teaching methods and choices of topics can be found (see chapter 1.2.2 and 1.3).

The answers of EFL teachers from small towns and the ones' from bigger towns were compared to establish, whether there are any differences in the use of teaching activities: inviting a specialist to class to talk about the cross-curricular topic and using excursions and field trips. The reason the answers of the teachers were compared in this manner was that the location of the school might affect using the teaching methods. For example, museums and various organisations are more available for the teachers who are from bigger towns. Surprisingly there were no significant differences in the answers of teachers from bigger towns and teachers from smaller towns.

The EFL teachers consider discussions and films to be the most effective teaching methods for cross-curricular topics, 53.3% of the teachers questioned said that using discussions is a very effective way and 43.3% of the teachers said that discussions are an effective way to teach cross-curricular topics. Watching films is also a very popular teaching method among EFL teachers as 22.2% claimed them very effective and 70% effective for teaching cross-curricular topics. Other means which were also indicated as being more effective were pair and group work and making presentations. The EFL teachers also consider lectures and creative writing tasks to be the most ineffective ways of teaching cross-curricular topics.

There were no major differences between the EFL teachers' answers and the results of other research papers (see chapter 1.2.2). For example, according to a research conducted by the Centre for Educational Research and Curriculum Development (2010: 12) teachers consider discussions, films and pair and group work to be the most effective teaching methods, and lectures are considered to be the least effective ways of teaching cross-curricular topics.

In the research conducted by this author, the EFL teachers have not emphasised the lack of materials as much as the teachers questioned for the other research papers discussed in chapter 1.3. The respondents of this study use their coursebooks extensively for teaching cross-curricular topics but other sources of information and materials are also used by them. The source used most often is the Internet as confirmed by 46.7% of the respondents. The least used sources according to the EFL teachers questioned were mailing lists, radio programmes and consulting a specialist, as 33.3% of the teachers stated they never use mailing lists for information and materials, 29.9% never use radio programmes and 27.8% never consult a specialist for information and materials for teaching cross-curricular topics. In comparison according to a research on applying cross-curricular topics, conducted by

the Centre for Educational Research and Curriculum Development (2010: 128) the most used sources for information and materials are newspapers, magazines and the Internet (see chapter 1.2.2).

The fact that 35.6% of the respondents rarely use courses and lectures as a source for materials and information for teaching cross-curricular topics indicates that there are not enough courses on the cross-curricular topics. The results of this research and other research papers (see chapter 1.3) have showed that courses on some cross-curricular topics are very much needed.

The third part of the questionnaire confirmed that the EFL teachers are well informed of the sources of information and materials and use various ways of getting necessary resources for teaching cross-curricular topics. According to the result of the study, Estonian EFL teachers, regardless of the level they teach at or the size of the town they teach in, tend to have similar opinions and ways of teaching regarding cross-curricular topics.

## CONCLUSION

The purpose of cross-curricular topics is to teach students the skills and necessary knowledge which cannot be taught in ordinary school subjects to prepare them for real life experiences. Cross-curricular topics are included in the National Curriculum and have to be incorporated into the schools learning environment and lessons. Teaching cross-curricular topics can be more difficult in some lessons than others since all subjects might not offer possibilities for relating their content with cross-curricular topics. EFL lessons are appropriate for teaching cross-curricular topics as teaching a language is mostly about teaching communication skills and cross-curricular topics are good sources for discussions. Cross-curricular topics also provide an inspiring material for making connections between subjects and real life.

The concept of cross-curricular topics is also present in European educational documents and cross-curricular topics are taught in many other European countries. The process of developing cross-curricular learning has changed the topics and improved them significantly. There are now eight cross-curricular topics in the current Estonian National Curriculum and the topics are all provided with suitable methods and activities for teaching them in class.

Cross-curricular topics are not only meant to be taught in lessons but they should be incorporated into schools' learning environment through schools' values and attitudes. The inclusion of cross-curricular topics should start from the co-operation of teachers, schools' staff and management; the topics should be included into schools' documents, curriculum and syllabuses. Cross-curricular topics can also be taught through school events, extracurricular activities and clubs. Co-operation between school, different organisations, parents and local community is also an important way of teaching cross-curricular topics.



The aim of the current thesis was to determine the attitudes of Estonian EFL teachers' towards including cross-curricular topics into lessons, to find out if their opinions differ from the results of other researches done on this topic and whether they use the flexibility of their subject for teaching cross-curricular topics.

In lessons cross-curricular topics can be taught in various ways, by using different methods and materials, for example just discussing the topics and using role-plays, debates or inviting a specialist to class to talk about the topics. Estonian teachers use different methods for teaching cross-curricular topics; they mostly prefer to use discussions and other active teaching methods. Estonian teachers also possess the knowledge of different sources for information and materials for teaching cross-curricular topics. The sources used most often are the Internet, magazines and newspapers.

Although several authors have written on the issue and they have indicated various ways of including cross-curricular topics into lesson, the research in this field shows that teachers have many problems with teaching cross-curricular topics. Firstly, the teachers questioned point out the problems with the cross-curricular topics in the Estonian National Curriculum, as they claim that the topics are difficult to understand, their wording is unsuitable and the role of the topics in teaching is unclear. Secondly the teachers often indicate the lack of time, skills and materials for teaching cross-curricular topics.

A survey was conducted by the author of the thesis, among the EFL teachers of Estonia, to which 90 teachers from all over Estonia responded. The results of the study show that the EFL teachers have much more positive attitudes towards teaching cross-curricular topics compared to other teachers. 80% of the respondents agree that it is easier to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons and that many of the topics are already included in the coursebooks they use. The importance of including cross-curricular topics

in English lessons was generally acknowledged for its potential for making real life connections. Only 15.6% of the teachers claimed that they have not included cross-curricular topics in their lessons because they have not found the time to do it, and 7.8% of the teachers admitted that they have not found appropriate materials for including cross-curricular topics into their lessons.

The EFL teachers use various methods for teaching cross-curricular topics; the methods considered to be the most effective were discussions, debates, group and pair work and watching films. The most frequently used sources of information and materials are found on the Internet but coursebooks were also mentioned.

According to the results of the survey conducted by the author of the thesis, it can be said that the EFL teachers in Estonia have a positive attitude towards teaching cross-curricular topics. The teachers' opinions on teaching cross-curricular topics differ from the opinions of teachers of other subjects as the EFL teachers are aware of their subjects' flexibility and most of them employ it for teaching cross-curricular topics.

This thesis and the results of the research conducted could be used by the EFL teachers in order to improve their knowledge of cross-curricular topics and methods for training them. Further research on the topic of teaching cross-curricular topics in EFL classrooms could focus on the coursebooks used at different schools and analyse the topics included in the books.

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## Appendix

Dear colleagues,

I am Krista Mahlakõiv, an MA student at Tartu University. For my thesis I am doing research on teaching cross-curricular topics in EFL classrooms and would appreciate your help in answering some questions. Filling out the questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out what English teachers think about including cross-curricular topics into English classes and whether they teach cross-curricular topics in their lessons.

Sincerely yours,

Krista Mahlakõiv

There are eight cross-curricular topics in The Estonian National Curriculum:

1. Lifelong learning and career planning.
2. Environment and sustainable development.
3. Civic initiative and entrepreneurship.
4. Cultural identity.
5. Information environment.
6. Technology and innovation.
7. Health and safety.
8. Values and morals.

### Questionnaire

#### 1. Circle the suitable answer for you.

- A) There is only one school in my town/village  
B) There is more than one school in my town/village

#### 2. Age (circle your age group).

- A) 20-34    B) 35-44    C) 45-54    D) 55-

#### 3. Which subjects do you teach?

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#### 4. In which forms (classes) do you teach English?

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#### 5. Have you had any experience in teaching cross-curricular topics?

- A) Yes  
B) No

#### 6. Do you think that it is easier to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons than in other lessons?

- A) Yes  
B) No

Explain: \_\_\_\_\_

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**7. In your opinion is it necessary to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons?**

- A) Yes, it is necessary and I have done it
- B) Yes, it is necessary, but I have not found appropriate teaching materials to incorporate any of the topics into my lessons
- C) Yes, it is necessary, but I have not found time to incorporate any of the topics into my lessons
- D) No, it is not necessary, the topics are taught in other lessons
- E) No, teaching cross-curricular topics is not necessary

**8. Do you think it is possible to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons?**

- A) Yes
- B) No

**9. Why do you think it is not possible to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons?**

- A) It is difficult to connect cross-curricular topics with the topics in the English curricula
- B) There are not enough materials to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons
- C) I do not have the knowledge and qualifications to teach cross-curricular topics
- D) I do not have enough time to include cross-curricular topics into my lessons
- E) I think it is possible to teach cross-curricular topics in English lessons

**10. Why do you think, that teaching cross-curricular topics in English lessons is important?**

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**11. How often do you teach the following cross-curricular topics?**

Cross-curricular topics	Once a week	Once a month	Once a term	Once a year	Never
Lifelong learning and career planning					
Environment and sustainable development					
Civic initiative and entrepreneurship					
Cultural identity					
Information environment					
Technology and innovation					
Health and safety					
Values and morals					

**12. Why do you teach some topics more often than others?**

- A) I know more about some topics than others
- B) There is more materials and information available on some topics than others
- C) Some topics are easier to incorporate into English lessons than others
- D) Other reasons (Please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- E) I teach all the topics equally

**13. Do you set specific learning outcomes for teaching cross-curricular topics?**

A) Yes, I set specific outcomes and I plan lessons for teaching cross-curricular topics

B) No, I teach cross-curricular topics as a part of my lesson and discuss them only if they come up in the coursebook I use

**14. Which of the activities do you use to teach cross-curricular topics?**

Activities	Always use	Often use	Sometimes use	Rarely use	Never use
Excursions and field trips					
Illustrating your subject with a cross-curricular topic					
Teaching a cross-curricular topic together with your subject					
Teaching a cross-curricular topic separately from your subject					
Inviting a specialist to your lesson to talk about a cross-curricular topic					

**15. How effective are the following activities for teaching cross-curricular topics?**

Activities	Very effective	Effective	Not very effective	Very ineffective	I do not know
Discussions					
Debates					
Pair and group work					
Lectures					
Films					
Excursions and field trips					
Projects					
Creative writing					
Role-plays.					
Making presentations					
Other					

**16. Where do you get information and materials for teaching cross-curricular topics?**

Sources	Always use	Often use	Sometimes use	Rarely use	Never use
Newspapers					
Magazines					
The Internet					
Coursebooks					
Literature					
Encyclopaedias					
Films					
Mailing lists					
TV programmes					
Radio programmes					
Courses and lectures					
Information from colleagues					



Information from different organizations					
Personal experience					
Consulting a specialist					
Other _____					

**Thank you for your help!**

**RESÜMEE**

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

INGLISE FILOLOOGIA OSAKOND

**Krista Mahlakõiv****EFL teachers' attitudes towards teaching cross-curricular topics****(Inglise keele õpetajate suhtumine läbivate teemade õpetamisse)**

magistritöö

2013

Lehekülgede arv: 66

Annotatsioon:

Käesolev magistritöö käsitleb läbivate teemade õpetamist inglise keele tundides. Töö eesmärk on anda ülevaade läbivatest teemadest, nende kohast riiklikus õppekavas, nende õpetamisest ning probleemidest, mida läbivate teemade õpetamine õpetajatele põhjustab, ja läbi uurimuse välja selgitada inglise keele õpetajate suhtumine läbivatesse teemadesse ning võrrelda nende vastuseid teiste õpetajate vastustega.

Töö koosneb kahest osast. Töö teoreetilises osas on teemakohase kirjanduse abil antud ülevaade läbivatest teemadest, nende ajaloost, kohast riiklikus õppekavas ja meetoditest ning materjalidest, mida nende õpetamiseks peamiselt kasutatakse.

Töö empiirilises osas antakse ülevaade uurimuse meetoditest ja tulemustest ning analüüsitakse neid. Selgitamaks välja inglise keele õpetajate suhtumist läbivate teemade õpetamisse viidi läbi küsitlus 90 Eesti inglise keele õpetaja seas. Valimi moodustasid inglise keele õpetajad erinevatest Eesti linnadest ja maakondadest, kes õpetavad inglise keelt erinevates vanuseastmetes. Inglise keele õpetajate vastuseid võrreldi eelnevalt samal teemal läbiviidud uurimuste tulemustega, et näha, kas inglise keele õpetajad suhtuvad läbivate teemade õpetamisse positiivsemalt ning kasutavad oma aine paindlikkust erinevate teemade suhtes läbivate teemade õpetamiseks.

Läbivad teemad on oluline osa tänapäeva haridusest, kuna need teemad võimaldavad siduda õppeaineid erinevate igapäevaste teemadega ning seeläbi valmistada õpilasi ette iseseisvaks eluks. Läbivate teemade õpetamine peaks toimuma igas koolis nii ainetundides kui ka läbi kooli õppekeskkonna, väärtuste ja suhtumise.

Läbiviidud küsitluse põhjal selgus, et inglise keele õpetajate suhtumine läbivate teemade õpetamisse oma tundides on väga positiivne, enamus küsitletud õpetajatest pidas läbivate teemade õpetamist oluliseks ja võimalikuks osaks inglise keele õpetamisest. Küsitletud inglise keele õpetajatel on head teadmised materjalidest ja meetoditest läbivate teemade õpetamiseks. Kokkuvõtvalt võib öelda, et inglise keele õpetajate suhtumine läbivate teemade õpetamisse on positiivsem kui teiste ainete õpetajate suhtumine ning inglise keele õpetajad on teadlikud oma aine võimalustest läbivate teemade õpetamiseks.

Märksõnad: läbivad teemad, inglise keele didaktika, keskkonnaharidus, õppemeetodid.

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(sünnikuupäev: \_\_\_\_\_ 16. September 1984 \_\_\_\_\_)

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