



EDUCATIONAL PRACTITIONERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS CHANGE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE MODEL "SCHOOL AS A LEARNING ORGANISATION" IN GENERAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN LATVIA

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Abstract

In contemporary society, constant dynamic change presents a challenge that should be perceived as a determinant factor leading to progress. The aim of this study was to explore the extent to which educational practitioners in general education institutions in Latvia are prepared for change. Additionally, the study seeks to identify the main enabling factors and obstacles in implementing the "School as a Learning Organisation" (SLO) model in general education in Latvia. That was achieved through quantitative data analysis from various perspectives, such as comparing data based on the type and size of educational institutions, as well as the positions and seniority of employees. Research data were collected using a web-based survey designed and maintained through QuestionPro. The final analytic sample comprised 671 respondents from 62 general education institutions in Latvia. The research results revealed that educational practitioners in Latvia, including leading, teaching, and supporting staff from general education institutions, are open to changes, new practices, and innovations. However, there were exceptions influenced by the educational practitioners' seniority and position, institution size, and type. These factors could both positively and negatively predict employees' attitudes towards change. A positive attitude towards change among teaching staff is a crucial element for the successful implementation of educational reforms in Latvia, such as the adoption of the SLO model. To foster a positive organizational culture, school leaders must provide supportive and transformative leadership, which is crucial for employees' positive attitude towards change.

Keywords: attitude towards change, influencing factors, general education, innovations in education, school as a learning organisation

Introduction

In the contemporary, ever-changing global landscape, the predominant notion is that uncertainty remains an enduring constant. However, the ability to navigate this uncertainty

is fortified by qualities like flexibility, collaboration, a positive attitude towards change, and openness to new ideas, practices, and innovations. These qualities extend their influence across various spheres of life, with education being an integral part of this paradigm. A study (Busemeyer et al., 2018) has emphasised that European citizens consider education to be a top government policy priority and are surprisingly open to numerous reform initiatives.

Tura and Akbasli (2022) have researched that educational changes, such as reforms, new practices, and innovations, hold significant importance for educational institutions, enabling them to thrive in the changing global landscape and remain competitive amidst other entities. This is a comprehensive process that encompasses idea generation, support, implementation, dissemination, and the fostering of innovative work behaviours. Given that each phase of the innovation journey within educational organisations relies on the contributions of teachers and the broader school community, assessing their motivation to engage in innovation and identifying the factors influencing these motivations becomes a crucial factor in ensuring both organisational innovation within the education sector and innovation within the education system as a whole (Tura & Akbasli, 2022).

Traditionally, it is considered that there are two approaches to educational change (innovation): a top-down approach and a bottom-up approach (Barakat, 2019). However, due to the lack of educational practitioners' positive attitude towards change moderated by the implementation of a top-down approach based on centralization, many educational reforms and innovations worldwide are unlikely to be implemented coherently and therefore do not lead to profound and sustainable change (Barakat, 2019; Constantinescu, 2015; Hübner et al., 2021).

Research Problem

The concept of the "School as a Learning Organisation" (SLO) holds significant influence, guiding and shaping school improvement practices within various countries, both presently and in the past. The initial evidence pertaining to the interplay between leadership and organisational learning has its origins in the realms of research on school effectiveness and improvement (Harris & Jones, 2018). Teachers hold a pivotal role in fulfilling the school's mission. The concept of teachers as learning leaders lies at the core of the understanding of teacher quality, as derived from empirical evidence. Teachers must actively engage in their personal learning journeys while simultaneously guiding the learning of their students and peers. However, a significant amount of time, effort, and resources must be dedicated to transforming any school into a genuinely sustainable SLO. It is imperative to establish unified, coherent, and cooperative endeavours among employees at all hierarchical levels. These joint efforts are vital for securing and maintaining the cultural transformations that define an active and authentic learning community (Fullan, 2018). Consequently, the influential and potentially transformative concept of the SLO is at risk of losing its impact if there is a lack of collective commitment, collaborative action, willingness to take associated risks, and substantial changes needed for the school to genuinely embody a learning organisation. To prevent the concept from becoming merely a passing trend, leaders at all levels within schools must make it their shared aspiration, central purpose, and collective focal point for driving school improvement (Harris & Jones, 2018).

However, attempting to initiate change can result in either a positive or negative impact on attitudes and productivity. Within such intricate contexts, a notable proportion of change endeavours face setbacks, which serves as the main driving force behind adopting a novel and thorough theoretical approach to the complexities (Robinson, 2019). Aspiring to embody the SLO differs from actually achieving that status. Embracing the concept of the SLO in a sincere manner inevitably leads to disruptive changes. Learning devoid of change not only contradicts itself but also proves futile if substantial organisational enhancement is the true ultimate goal.

As a result, unless there is a joint commitment, collaborative efforts, a willingness to take associated risks, and profound alterations essential for the school's genuine transformation into an SLO, this impactful and potentially revolutionary notion risks losing its essence. Going beyond being just a passing trend, the notion of SLO must be the collective aspiration, the fundamental purpose, and the united focal point for school advancement among leaders at all levels within educational institutions (Harris & Jones, 2018).

Educational practitioners, especially teaching staff, as the main recipients of change, should become change agents to promote transformations (e.g., educational reforms, new practices, innovations) at all levels of society (Constantinescu, 2015; Hübner et al., 2021). There is limited research on educational practitioners' attitudes towards change, their resistance to change, or openness to new ideas, practices, and innovations, which may be crucial to the successful implementation of educational reforms. Without persuaded and committed change agents, educational reforms are unlikely to be implemented coherently and, in turn, are unlikely to be successful (Barakat, 2019; Hübner et al., 2021; Ibrahim & Aljneibi, 2022). The research problem of the current study highlights the core objective of education, which is to equip students with essential competencies, academic knowledge, and skills necessary to prepare them for the labour market, thereby enhancing their competitiveness by implementing the SLO model in general education in Latvia. Failing to address and incorporate the necessary changes, while neglecting external influences, can impede the progress of educational institutions and hinder student achievement.

Research Focus

Educational practitioners involved in situations of change may either implement or resist it, depending on various external and internal factors (Barakat, 2019; Constantinescu, 2015; Ibrahim & Aljneibi, 2022; Johnson et al., 2017; Hübner et al., 2021; Korhonen et al., 2023; Monteiro et al., 2020). The initial aspect explored was the impact of job position on the inclination to embrace and execute workplace changes. Constantinescu's (2015) study among Romanian teachers measured attitudes towards change and found that 25% of participants were resistant to change and adopted a neutral stance, 3.8% refused change out of ignorance, while 70.2% had been aware of its importance from the very beginning. Hübner et al. (2021) have discovered that German teachers' motivation and perceived added value for themselves and school development positively predicted their rating of educational reforms. Johnson et al. (2017) found that US educators who held more positive views of both principal's support and teacher's affiliation (i.e., the level of connectedness and collaboration amongst teachers) reported greater efficacy and openness to adopting new practices. Towers et al. (2022) have examined teachers' perceptions of reforms in secondary education in England and have presented evidence regarding teachers' unfavourable attitudes regarding the reforms and concerns about remaining in the teaching profession.

Researched studies (Fullan, 2015; Gemmink et al., 2020; Tura & Akbasli, 2022) have suggested that teachers' involvement in formulating the school's vision and decisions regarding education and training have significantly influenced their adoption of innovative teaching methods. This engagement acts as a catalyst, reinforcing individual factors that teachers recognize as crucial for embracing innovative practices (Tura & Akbasli, 2022). Promoting innovation within the school climate has been found to encourage the implementation of innovative and creative teaching approaches. Organisational climate and culture encompass characteristics that influence employee behaviours, shape the organisation's identity, and are perceived by its workforce (Hübner et al., 2021; Johnson et al., 2017; Räsänen et al., 2022; Towers et al., 2022).

Barakat (2019) has analysed educational leaders' views on contemporary reform initiatives in Egypt and has concluded that the limited success of educational reforms could be attributed to several reasons. These reasons include a centralised educational system that lacks transparency, adaptability and willingness to embrace change. Additionally, stakeholders failed to recognize "the value and relevance of foreign-donor-driven reforms, which also lacked consistent evaluation" (p. 346). School leaders play a pivotal role in determining institutional priorities and influencing teachers' attitudes towards change and new practices. Schools with leadership personnel characterised by optimism, support, and a transformative approach tend to view educational changes (such as reforms and innovations) more positively (Johnson et al., 2017; Hübner et al., 2021; Towers et al., 2022).

Meyers and Hitt (2017) have suggested that the leadership staff should make an effort to understand teachers' viewpoints and engage with them on their terms, openly expressing trust in their professional abilities. Tura and Akbasli (2022) have emphasised that creating an environment conducive to innovative practices in schools is the responsibility of the school's leadership staff; therefore, it is essential to ensure that these administrators receive appropriate training to cultivate leadership behaviours rooted in innovation. In this context, it is imperative for school leaders to collaborate with stakeholders to reinforce individual traits that prove effective in teachers' innovative practices. Additionally, they should establish organisational conditions that promote the emergence of fresh ideas and practices. To achieve this, school leaders should primarily focus their efforts on teachers, ensuring they receive the necessary support (Johnson et al., 2017; Hübner et al., 2021; Räsänen et al., 2022; Sezgin & Sonmez, 2017; Towers et al., 2022; Tura & Akbasli, 2022). School leaders must possess the capability to support their staff, assisting them in navigating change through transparent and democratic approaches. Additionally, they bear the responsibility of directing resources towards bolstering the health and well-being of their personnel, especially when policy requirements are mandated (Towers et al., 2022).

Subsequently, the literature on how age and length of work experience (seniority) impact educational practitioners' inclination to adopt change was examined. On one hand, Ibrahim and Aljneibi (2022) have emphasised that committed teachers, including organisational commitment and commitment to teaching, play a vital role in implementing educational reforms. Their study has revealed that teacher commitment increases with age, length of work experience, and tenure at the same school, e.g., teachers of over 50 years and with over 15 years of teaching experience and over than 10 years staying at the same school were the most committed in comparison with other age and experience groups. On the other hand, recent studies (Camino, 2021; Hübner et al., 2021) have discovered that as teachers accumulate more experience in the profession, they tend to become less open, less receptive, and less willing to embrace new practices and experiences. Hübner et al. (2021) have found that age has a negative effect on the evaluation of education reforms as older and more experienced teachers tended to rate the reforms less favourably. This finding aligns with previous studies conducted by Donellan and Lucas (2011), Constantinescu (2015), and Johnson et al. (2017). For instance, Constantinescu (2015) observed that voluntary involvement in change-related initiatives was more common among younger teachers (25-35 years old), while older teachers (40+ years old) showed resistance to change. Johnson et al. (2017) noted that teachers with the most experience (≥ 9 years) reported less openness to adopting new practices compared to those with fewer years of experience (≤ 8 years). As individuals age, they tend to grow more attached to long-held practices, often viewing things through the lens of past experiences. Notably, teachers with one to five years of teaching experience place a high value on the sense of accomplishment, in contrast to those with six to fifteen years or sixteen and more years of teaching experience (Camino, 2021). This sense of accomplishment seems to be rooted in openness to new experiences (Nieß & Zacher, 2015), which tends to diminish over time (Camino, 2021). While novice teachers demonstrate

significant professional growth during the first five to seven years of their teaching career, they are also more prone to stress and disruption than experienced teachers (Gavish & Friedman, 2010; Goddard et al., 2013). Furthermore, experienced teachers are less inclined to leave the profession as quickly as novices (Towers et al., 2022).

According to OECD studies (OECD, 2019a, 2019b, 2020), the average age of teachers in OECD countries is 44 years, and in several countries the teaching workforce has been ageing over the last 5-10 years. The study "Age and Innovativeness: Effects of teachers' age on perception of school innovativeness" (Sánchez Ruíz, 2021) utilised data from the OECD TALIS 2018 Survey (OECD, 2019b, 2020) to explore the link between age and innovativeness of teachers. Innovativeness here refers to the degree to which teachers within a school are receptive to new ideas and proactive in adopting innovative practices. It was observed that the average age of teachers within a school had a modest to moderately negative impact on the perception of teachers' innovativeness. These findings indicate that belonging to a school with a higher average age of teachers noticeably diminished individual perceptions of teacher innovativeness in a large number of countries (29 out of 48), even after accounting for the individual influence of teachers' age. Assuming that evaluations of teachers are considerably objective, it becomes plausible that older teachers might display a diminished inclination towards innovation, possibly due to their reduced readiness to embrace new and unconventional methods. This line of reasoning aligns with the findings of Goodson et al. (2006), who discovered that teachers' readiness to adopt innovative practices often decreases with age and experience.

Creativity and innovation empower individuals to explore various facets of a problem or issue and generate entirely new and interesting solutions (Schwarz, 2015). Although educators may hold diverse perspectives on creativity, recent research studies (Davis, 2018; Camino, 2021) consistently demonstrate its effectiveness when applied to the teaching and learning process.

Subsequently, previous research on the influence of school size (student population) on school staff attitudes towards change (innovation) was explored. Chang and colleagues (2011) noted that educators in institutions offering 31–60 classes exhibited superior scores in assessments of creative teaching in comparison to their counterparts in schools with 10 or fewer classes. In other words, medium and large schools appeared to foster creative teaching by promoting collaborative conversations and peer assistance, while smaller schools exhibited a lesser inclination towards these practices. It is obvious that there could be significant differences in the climate for innovation in the organisation between schools of different sizes. Medium and large-sized schools (with 31-60 classes) scored higher on organisational leadership and peer support than schools with ten or fewer classes. This suggests that medium and large-sized schools are more effective in promoting teachers' experiences of organisational leadership and colleague support. Hübner et al. (2021) estimated a negative coefficient for school size at high-track schools and found school size to be negatively related to the educational reform rating, highlighting slightly lower overall ratings at larger schools. Räsänen et al. (2022) found that school size predicted both cynicism towards the professional community and teacher-working environment fit concerning a constructive and enabling work climate. The lower the school population, the less likely teachers were to experience cynicism towards the professional community and the more likely they were to experience a good fit with respect to a constructive and enabling work climate. Results on the effect of school size on teacher burnout and turnover are partly contradictory: while evidence suggests that larger school size is related to higher levels of teacher burnout (Saloviita & Pakarinen, 2021), school size has not been found to impact teacher turnover rates (Nguyen et al., 2020).

Research Aim and Research Questions

The aim of the current study was to explore the extent to which educational practitioners in general education institutions in Latvia are ready for change, and to identify the main enabling factors and obstacles to the implementation of the SLO in general education institutions in Latvia. In order to gain a theoretical background, a review of existing literature on the elements that influence the readiness of educational staff to accept and implement change was researched. To achieve the aim, three research questions were formulated: (1) To what extent are educational practitioners of general education institutions inclined towards change and innovations in Latvia? (2) Do characteristics like staff's work experience (seniority) and position, school size and type impact employees' attitudes towards change (e.g., educational reform, innovation) in general education institutions in Latvia? (3) What are the main factors and barriers to the implementation of the SLO concept in a general education context? To achieve the aim of the research, quantitative data analysis was conducted, analysing and comparing data from different perspectives, such as the type and size of educational institutions, as well as the position and seniority of employees.

Research Methodology

General Background

The present web-based survey study (implemented in June 2023) is a component of a larger research "A model and tool to support the implementation of the *school as a learning organisation* approach in educational institutions" within the project "Establishment and implementation of the education quality monitoring system" carried out from July 2022 till the end of October 2023 and financed by the European Social Fund. The research is designed to facilitate the adoption of the SLO model in educational institutions throughout Latvia. The framework of the seven-dimensional SLO model proposed by Kools and Stoll (2016) served as a prototype for the development, validation and subsequent implementation of the eight-dimensional SLO model in Latvia.

Sample

The stratified method of probability sampling was employed, wherein the primary criteria for constructing a school sample were as follows: 1) type of educational institution (GE - general education institution; VET - vocational education institution); 2) type of GE institution (primary, lower-secondary, or upper-secondary school). The educational institutions were selected using the randomisation modelling function in IBM SPSS, keeping the proportion between the 641 GE and VET institutions (93.1% GE and 6.9% VET) in order to maintain the representation of the type of educational institution in the sample.

The permission to conduct the staff questionnaire was approved by the management of each educational establishment. On June 6, 2023, invitations to participate in the survey, along with links to the online questionnaire, were sent to the email addresses of 86 institutions selected for the study (80 GE and 6 VET institutions), addressing the letters to the school management for onward distribution to school staff via the school's electronic school management system. All the respondents were informed about the use of research data and the statement "By filling out this questionnaire you agree that the information provided will be anonymously used in the research. You can stop filling the form if you feel that you do not wish to answer any of the questions". The survey data collection took place in June 2023, gathering responses from 68 educational institutions with an overall 79.1% response rate. A total of 759 GE and

VET representatives completed the questionnaire. A representative sample was obtained with generalisation of results to all Latvian GE and VET institutions with 11% error at a 95% confidence level.

In order to achieve the research aim, the responses of the sampled GE institutions were used. with generalisation of results to all Latvian GE institutions with 12% error at a 95% confidence level. The analytical sample of the current study comprises 671 respondents from 62 GE institutions, which accounts for 9.4% of respondents from primary schools, 30.3% from lower-secondary schools, and 60.3% from upper-secondary schools (see Table 1).

Table 1
Characteristics of the Sample According to the Parameters of the Educational Institution Represented by the Respondents

Criterion	Indicator	N	%
GE institution type	Primary school	63	9.4
	Lower-secondary school	203	30.3
	Upper-secondary school	404	60.3
Number of students	Up to 100 students	96	14.3
	101-300 students	182	27.1
	301-500 students	137	20.4
	501-1000 students	156	23.2
	1001 and more students	100	14.9

The sample comprises school management representatives of GE institutions (14.3%), teachers (74.5%), and school support staff (e.g., speech therapist, psychologist, social pedagogue, etc.) (11.2%) with different levels of work experience (see Table 2). The obtained data were analysed in accordance with the requirements of the Personal Data Processing Law in Latvia and the Declaration of Helsinki, and the research was approved by the Academic Ethics Codex of the University of Latvia (April 26, 2021, Nr. 2-3/46).

Table 2
Characterization of the Sample According to the Individual Parameters of the Respondents

Criterion	Indicator	N	%
Position	School management representative	92	14.3
	Teacher	478	74.5
	Support staff	72	11.2
Work experience	0-5 years	166	25.8
	6-12 years	106	16.5
	13-24 years	114	17.7
	25 years and over	257	40.0

Instrument and Procedures

Quantitative data were collected using a single data collection instrument, an online survey questionnaire developed and administered through QuestionPro. The questionnaire's structure encompassed several sections: (1) Information about the respondent and the

represented educational institution, including type of institution, size, location, respondent's position, workload, seniority, and number of workplaces; (2) 5-point Likert scale questions on factors of the school's internal environment such as staff job satisfaction, institutional culture, staff attitudes to change and the use of learning analytics to enhance the culture and quality of learning and teaching; (3) 5-point Likert scale questions relating to the implementation of the following eight dimensions of the SLO model within an educational institution: (A) shared school mission, vision and values; (B) the internal culture of the school organisation that promotes learning; (C) purposeful and continuous professional development of all employees; (D) promoting team learning; (E) the system of knowledge collection and exchange at school; (F) research of professional practice and a culture of innovation at school; (G) the role of school administration in modelling learning and promoting growth; (H) learning from the external environment and larger system.

The questionnaire encompassed both nominal scale and ordinal scale questions. Employee seniority and the institution's student population were initially expressed in absolute numbers (proportional scale) and subsequently categorised into several groups (ordinal scale). To assess the attitude of educational institution practitioners towards change, evaluations of 15 indicators were examined using a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 indicating "disagree", 2 for "partially disagree", 3 for "neither agree nor disagree", 4 for "partially agree", and 5 for "agree". Among these, indicators 2(-), 3(-), 7(-), and 10(-) were formulated with a negative tone, indicating a negative attitude towards change, perceiving change as bothersome, resistance to new ideas, and reluctance to try new concepts. The remaining eleven indicators were phrased with a positive tone (see Table 3). The four indicators with (-) constituted the sub-section "Employees' negative attitude towards change" ($\alpha = .692$), while the remaining indicators formed the sub-section "Employees' positive attitude towards change" ($\alpha = .762$). The internal consistency of scores within both subsections and the reliability of obtained data were assessed using Cronbach's alpha test. The analysis indicated satisfactory internal consistency and data reliability across both subsections.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical methods such as Frequencies, Descriptives, and Crosstabs were employed, along with the One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test to assess the normal distribution of data. The internal consistency of data was evaluated using the Reliability analysis - Cronbach's alpha. For comparing independent groups, the Mann-Whitney *U* Test and Kruskal-Wallis *H* Test were utilised, while the correlation analysis method (Spearman) explored relationships between variables. Quantitative data processing and analysis were conducted using the IBM SPSS program. A measure of effect size (Eta squared - η^2) for statistically significant differences between two or more respondent groups was calculated and interpreted (Lenhard & Lenhard, 2016). The focal point of data processing and analysis in this study revolves around the staff's attitude within educational institutions towards change. The analysis explores its interplay with the cultural landscape of the institutions and the assessment of the implementation of the dimensions of the SLO model.

Research Results

Employees' Attitude towards Change

Within the subsection "Employees' negative attitude towards change", the indicators yielded relatively lower scores ($M_e = 2-3$, $SD = 1.09-1.26$). Respondents predominantly expressed disagreement (23.1%-48.0%) or partial disagreement (16.4%-23.0%) with statements

formulated in a negative context. Conversely, the indicators belonging to the subsection "Employees' positive attitude towards change" exhibited relatively higher scores ($M_e = 4-5$, $SD = 0.59-1.18$). Respondents generally leaned towards agreement (13.0%-76.9%) or partial agreement (17.7%-45.9%) with positively phrased statements (see Tables 3 and 4). The highest scores were for indicators 12, 14 and 15, highlighting the openness of the management of the GE institutions in Latvia towards change and innovation. These indicators reflect the ability to articulate clear justifications for implementing change within the school and the positive attitude of GE institutions' staff towards change and innovation, considering them essential for the school's advancement.

Table 3
Attitudes of Educational Institution Practitioners towards Change

Item / Indicator	M_e	M_o	SD	σ^2	Min-max	Sum
1. I am looking forward to the changes in my school.	3.00	4	1.18	1.40	1-5	1933
2(-). I don't like change.	3.00	3	1.26	1.58	1-5	1615
3(-). Most of the changes at my school are annoying.	2.00	1	1.17	1.38	1-5	1222
4. Change is usually good for my school.	4.00	4	0.97	0.95	1-5	2293
5. Changes help me perform my work duties better.	4.00	4	1.07	1.15	1-5	2177
6. I initiate the changes that are necessary in the school.	4.00	4	1.18	1.40	1-5	2124
7(-). I'm usually resistant to new ideas.	2.00	1	1.09	1.18	1-5	1151
8. I tend to try new ideas	4.00	4	0.88	0.77	1-5	2424
9. I usually support new ideas.	4.00	4	0.74	0.55	1-5	2521
10(-). I'm usually hesitant to try new ideas.	2.00	1	1.26	1.59	1-5	1439
11. Teachers tend to try different teaching methods and approaches.	5.00	5	0.59	0.35	1-5	2720
12. The school leaders are open to change and innovation.	5.00	5	0.66	0.43	1-5	2776
13. The school leaders have the necessary knowledge and skills to manage change in the school.	5.00	5	1.17	1.38	1-5	2473
14. I believe that change and innovation are necessary for the development of the school.	5.00	5	0.74	0.55	1-5	2665
15. The school leaders have a clear rationale for implementing change in the school.	5.00	5	0.77	0.59	1-5	2690

Table 4
Employees' Attitude towards Change

Item / indicator	1 = disagree	2 = partially disagree	3 = neither agree nor disagree	4 = partially agree	5 = agree
1. I am looking forward to the changes in my school.	13.0	8.1	31.3	34.6	13.0
2(-). I don't like change.	23.1	19.8	25.2	25.0	6.9
3(-). Most of the changes at my school are annoying.	46.6	16.4	24.0	10.0	3.0
4. Change is usually good for my school.	2.5	5.7	22.0	41.4	28.4
5. Changes help me perform my work duties better.	6.1	6.6	22.6	42.9	21.8
6. I initiate the changes that are necessary in the school.	8.8	8.1	22.0	37.8	23.3
7(-). I'm usually resistant to new ideas.	48.0	22.0	19.3	9.3	1.5
8. I tend to try new ideas	1.2	4.7	12.8	45.9	35.3
9. I usually support new ideas.	-	2.2	11.3	44.9	41.6
10(-). I'm usually hesitant to try new ideas.	32.1	23.0	19.6	20.4	4.9
11. Teachers tend to try different teaching methods and approaches.	-	0.5	3.9	31.3	64.4
12. The school leaders are open to change and innovation.	0.3	1.9	3.2	17.7	76.9
13. The school leaders have the necessary knowledge and skills to manage change in the school.	6.4	3.9	11.3	22.3	56.1
14. I believe that change and innovation are necessary for the development of the school.	0.8	0.7	7.9	28.5	62.0
15. The school leaders have a clear rationale for implementing change in the school.	0.8	1.9	6.3	24.2	66.9

Employees' Attitude towards Change (by Type of Educational Institution)

The Kruskal-Wallis H test revealed statistically significant differences ($p < .001$) with small effect sizes ($\eta^2 = .008-.029$) in the attitudes of employees from different types of GE schools towards change, as observed in the assessments of various indicators. Specifically, evaluations of representatives from lower-secondary schools scored higher in the indicators 12 and 15. Evaluations of representatives from primary schools scored higher in the indicator 3(-). The evaluations of representatives from upper-secondary schools scored higher in the indicator 13. Representatives from primary schools tended to perceive change as more annoying ($\chi^2(2) = 7.276, p = .026, \eta^2 = .009$), with mean ranks of 328.66 for primary schools, 272.55 for lower-secondary schools, and 303.80 for upper-secondary schools. In contrast, representatives from lower-secondary and upper-secondary schools recognize the openness of school leaders and their readiness for change and innovation ($\chi^2(2) = 6.709-18.190, p < .001, \eta^2 = .008-.029$), with mean ranks ranging from 248.40 to 274.05 for primary schools, 297.90 to 330.79 for lower-secondary schools, and 283.52 to 304.09 for upper-secondary schools.

Employees' Attitudes towards Change (by Size of Educational Institution)

Based on the outcomes of the Kruskal-Wallis *H* test, notable statistically significant differences ($p = .001-.043$) were identified, accompanied by small effect sizes ($\eta^2 = .010-.025$), across institutions in relation to their size (measured by the number of students). These disparities were particularly apparent in five indicators (see Table 5). The largest schools (with 1001 students or more) displayed more agreement with indicators 3(-) and 7(-), reflecting a more negative attitude towards change and a greater resistance to novel concepts. This correlation is further substantiated by the findings from Spearman's correlation analysis: as the number of students in a school increased, so did the level of agreement with these two statements ($r_{3(-)} = .146, p < .001$; $r_{7(-)} = .108, p = .008$). Conversely, the smallest schools (with up to 100 students) exhibited stronger alignment with statements 12 and 13, which pertain to the receptiveness of school leaders towards change and innovation, along with the requisite skills and knowledge for orchestrating change within the school. Medium-sized schools (with 301-500 students) demonstrated higher agreement with statement 15, indicating that "School leaders have a clear rationale for implementing change in the school."

Table 5
Statistically Significant Differences Between Mean Ranks Compared by School Size

Item / indicator	Rated higher	Kruskal-Wallis <i>H</i> Test statistics					Effect size η^2
		$\chi^2(4)$	p	Mean rank 1	Mean rank 2	Mean rank 3	
3(-). Most of the changes at my school are annoying.	Largest schools	18.515	.001	261.52	285.26	356.12	.025
7(-). I'm usually resistant to new ideas.	Largest schools	10.199	.037	276.98	294.50	333.16	.011
12. The school leaders are open to change and innovation.	Smallest schools	9.824	.043	315.94	305.45	301.86	.010
13. The school leaders have the necessary knowledge and skills to manage change in the school.	Smallest schools	17.687	.001	317.60	308.55	314.86	.023
15. The school leaders have a clear rationale for implementing change in the school.	Medium-sized schools	12.147	.016	316.82	326.18	294.74	.014

Note. The mean ranks for the three categories of schools are as follows: smallest schools (up to 100 students) have a mean rank 1, medium-sized schools (301-500 students) have a mean rank 2, and largest schools (1001 and more students) have a mean rank 3.

Employees' Attitudes towards Change (by Position of Respondents)

When analysing the evaluations of indicators within the survey section "Employees' attitude towards change" based on employee positions, notable statistically significant differences emerged, accompanied by both small ($\eta^2 = .005-.018$) and intermediate ($\eta^2 = .114$) effect sizes, across the assessments of nine indicators (see Table 6). Specifically, indicators 3(-) and 10(-) garnered higher agreement from teachers, reflecting their perception of change within

their schools as vexatious and their inclination to be cautious about embracing new ideas in their pedagogical practices. Conversely, the remaining indicators found stronger agreement among the management staff. This underscored the management's positive stance towards change, viewing them as beneficial for the school's improvement, contributing to enhanced job performance, and being indispensable for the school's growth (indicators 1, 4, 5, 14). Additionally, the school management representatives' active role in change implementation was apparent, as evidenced by their proclivity to explore new ideas, provide consistent support for novel concepts, and foster change deemed necessary for the school (indicators 6, 8, 9).

Table 6
Statistically Significant Differences between Mean Ranks by Respondents' Job Position

Item / indicator	Rated higher	Kruskal-Wallis <i>H</i> Test statistics					Effect size η^2
		$\chi^2(2)$	<i>p</i>	Mean rank 1	Mean rank 2	Mean rank 3	
1. I am looking forward to the changes in my school.	Management staff	10.228	.006	323.34	284.34	340.99	.011
3(-). Most of the changes at my school are annoying.	Teaching staff	10.404	.006	268.20	308.55	253.73	.011
4. Change is usually good for my school.	Management staff	14.403	.001	316.71	282.96	353.49	.018
5. Changes help me perform my work duties better.	Management staff	13.418	.001	305.71	284.32	354.71	.016
6. I initiate the changes that are necessary in the school.	Management staff	71.167	.000	308.30	269.11	434.27	.114
8. I tend to try new ideas	Management staff	11.172	.004	289.50	287.47	350.34	.012
9. I usually support new ideas.	Management staff	14.762	.001	287.63	286.37	357.65	.018
10(-). I'm usually hesitant to try new ideas.	Teaching staff	7.136	.028	287.95	305.74	253.53	.005
14. I believe that change and innovation are necessary for the development of the school.	Management staff	7.004	.030	310.47	287.84	332.13	.005

Note. Mean rank 1 for school support staff, mean rank 2 for school teaching staff, mean rank 3 for school management staff.

Employees' Attitude towards Change (According to Respondents' Seniority)

Upon comparing the evaluations of indicators within the survey section "Employee's attitude towards change" based on the seniority of the employees, statistically significant differences with small effect sizes emerged in the evaluations of indicators 2(-), 3(-), and 7(-) (see Table 7). A discernible trend becomes apparent in all these cases: as the employees' work experience increases, the ratings of these indicators also rise. This pattern suggests that individuals with longer tenures in the school display more resistance to new ideas, exhibit a lesser inclination towards change, and are more prone to perceive change as bothersome. This observation finds reinforcement in the outcomes of Spearman's correlation analysis. Significant positive correlations between employees' seniority and the evaluations of indicators 2(-), 3(-), 7(-), and 10(-) were identified. These correlations indicate that as work experience accumulates, the evaluations of these indicators tend to rise ($r = .111-.142$, $p = .001-.007$).

Furthermore, a positive correlation was observed between the common indicator within the subsection "Employees' negative attitude towards change" and the length of work experience of employees. This correlation indicates that as the length of work experience increases, the level of resistance to change also intensifies ($r = .155, p < .001$).

Table 7
Statistically Significant Differences Between Mean Ranks by Respondents' Work Experience

Item / indicator	Rated higher	Kruskal-Wallis H Test statistics				Effect size η^2		
		$\chi^2(3)$	p	Mean rank 1	Mean rank 2		Mean rank 3	Mean rank 4
2(-). I don't like changes.	25 years and over	10.546	.014	272.63	282.40	283.66	323.36	.013
3(-). Most of the changes at my school are annoying.	25 years and over	13.086	.004	261.24	291.64	296.19	321.24	.017
7(-). I'm usually resistant to new ideas.	25 years and over	13.307	.004	256.98	304.61	301.69	315.93	.018

Note. Mean rank 1 for school staff with experience 0-5 years, mean rank 2 for school staff with experience 6-12 years, mean rank 3 for school staff with experience 13-24 years, mean rank 4 for school staff with experience 25 years and over.

Employees' Attitudes towards Change and the Culture of the Educational Institution

The common indicator within the subsection "Employees' positive attitude towards change" demonstrated a positive and statistically significant correlation with the common indicator representing the culture of the educational institution. This suggests that as the school culture becomes more positive, the employees' attitude towards change also becomes more positive. On the other hand, the common indicator within the subsection "Employees' negative attitude towards change" showed a statistically insignificant negative correlation with school culture. This could potentially indicate that as the school culture diminishes, the employees' resistance to new ideas and changes increases. However, it is important to note that this hypothesis has not been statistically validated (see Table 8).

Table 8
Correlations Between Employees' Attitudes towards Change and the Culture of the Educational Institution (Spearman's rho Results)

		Employees' negative attitude towards change	Employees' positive attitude towards change
The culture of the educational institution	r	-.027	.305**
	p	.511	< .001

** . Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Employees' Attitudes towards Change and the Implementation of the SLO Model in an Educational Institution

The common indicator within the subsection "Employees' positive attitude towards change" exhibited positive and statistically significant correlations with the evaluations of

the implementation of all dimensions of the SLO model. Among these correlations, it showed the strongest correlation with the common indicator of the SLO dimension F "Research of professional practice and a culture of innovation at school" ($r = .346, p < .001$). This indicates that as the employees' attitude towards change becomes more positive, the assessment of the implementation of all dimensions of the SLO model increases. Moreover, a positive attitude towards change is connected to a higher level of professional practice, research and innovation culture within the general education institution.

In contrast, the common indicator within the subsection "Employees' negative attitude towards change" did not exhibit significant correlations with the evaluations of the implementation of the dimensions of the SLO model. While there seems to be a slight inclination towards a negative correlation (indicating that greater employee resistance to change might result in lower evaluations of SLO model dimensions), this tendency did not reach statistical significance (see Table 9).

Table 9

Correlations Between Employees' Attitudes towards Change and the Dimensions of the SLO Model (Spearman's rho Results)

Dimensions of the SLO model	Employees' attitude towards change	
	negative	positive
A - Shared school mission, vision and values	$r = -.035, p = .390$	$r = .300^{**}$
B - The internal culture of the school organisation that promotes learning	$r = -.014, p = .733$	$r = .266^{**}$
C - Purposeful and continuous professional development of all employees	$r = -.014, p = .740$	$r = .279^{**}$
D - Promoting team learning	$r = -.028, p = .491$	$r = .332^{**}$
E - The system of knowledge collection and exchange at school	$r = .010, p = .814$	$r = .256^{**}$
F - Research of professional practice and a culture of innovation at school	$r = -.011, p = .795$	$r = .346^{**}$
G - The role of school administration in modelling learning and promoting growth	$r = -.039, p = .347$	$r = .307^{**}$
H - Learning from the external environment and larger system	$r = -.045, p = .281$	$r = .273^{**}$

** . Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

The current study is a component of a larger research project aimed at facilitating the implementation of the model "School as a Learning Organisation" (SLO) in educational institutions in Latvia. It was explored that the attitudes of educational practitioners towards change, encompassing areas such as educational reforms, new practices and innovations within the general education institutions in Latvia. The research was conducted in the context of the development, validation, and further implementation of the SLO model in Latvia. The outcomes of this study provide valuable insights into the interplay between educational practitioners' attitudes towards change, the organisational climate and culture of schools, supportive and transformative leadership, and the effective execution of the SLO model.

Regarding the first research question, findings indicated that the attitude of the educational practitioners in Latvia towards change was generally positive, rather than neutral. Analysis of the online survey responses revealed that participants mostly agreed ($M_e = 5$) with the statements affirming the necessity of change and innovation for school development.

They also acknowledged that teachers in their institutions were inclined to experiment with various teaching methods and approaches. Furthermore, the survey respondents observed that their school administration displayed openness to change and innovation, possessed a clear rationale for implementing change, and was equipped with clear rationale, knowledge, and skills to effectively manage change within the institution. Consequently, the study highlighted a predominantly positive evaluation of the school administration's openness to change and their capacity for change management. Conversely, statements reflecting a negative stance towards change received the lowest level of agreement ($M_e = 2$) among the educational practitioners in Latvia. These research findings are in alignment with other studies, which have determined that the public in European countries has exhibited a surprising openness to various education reform proposals, demonstrating from the outset a high level of understanding of the importance of education reform (Busemeyer et al., 2018; Constantinescu, 2015).

The results of the second research question underlined the importance of the characteristics of educators (e.g., work experience and position) and the characteristics of educational institutions (e.g., school type and size) in influencing attitudes to change. The results indicated that school administration, as compared to school teaching and support staff, exhibit a greater openness to new practices and innovation. Additionally, they display a more positive outlook towards change, which in turn contributes to the enhancement of quality assurance and the overall development of educational institutions. Furthermore, the results indicated that teachers tend to be more inclined to view changes in their schools as potentially annoying, displaying a propensity to exhibit hesitation in adopting new ideas within their pedagogical practices. However, it is highly important to emphasise that the level of support for change (e.g., educational reforms, new practices and innovations) is crucially dependent on well-planned implementation and the informed participation of educators.

It is essential for staff to recognise the importance and value of change, not only for the academic institution but also for their personal and professional development. This highlights the need to address constraints and opportunities in a way that resonates with educational practitioners (Busemeyer et al., 2018; Constantinescu, 2015; Hübner et al., 2021).

Moreover, the extent to which teachers are willing to adopt and integrate new practices and innovations depends on the school's organisational climate and culture, as well as the quality of the work of the school's management team. Leadership that is supportive and promotes a positive school culture can encourage teachers to adopt new practices and reinforce their positive attitudes towards educational reforms (Johnson et al., 2017; Towers et al., 2022). The results of the study were consistent with this notion, revealing a positive and statistically significant correlation between employees' positive attitudes towards change and the culture of the general education establishment.

This culture encompasses effective mutual communication, cooperative interactions, and supportive dynamics. In particular, the results revealed that the more positive the school culture becomes, the more positive and optimistic the staff attitude towards change is.

One of the important emerging issues in the current research data is the role of long-term work experience in influencing employees' attitudes towards change. The results showed that seniority affects attitudes to change as the longer a person works in a school, the greater is the resistance to new ideas, the less they like change and the more often they perceive it as annoying. Similar trends were also found in other studies on the influence of the teacher's age and length of teaching experience on the perception of innovativeness, openness to new ideas and practices, and attitude to change (Camino, 2021; Constantinescu, 2015; Johnson et al., 2017; Hübner et al., 2021; Sánchez Ruiz, 2021).

The current research data also revealed that in smaller schools (with up to 100 students), the willingness of the school administration to embrace change and innovation, along with their ability to provide a clear rationale for change, received more positive evaluations. In contrast

to some prior studies (Chang et al., 2011), the current study revealed that larger schools (with 1001 pupils or more) tend to show more resistance to new ideas and more sceptical attitudes to change among their staff. Evidently, in larger schools, staff face greater challenges, such as increased workloads, potential overwork, burnout and frequent career changes, leading to a lack of resources to implement change. In smaller schools, staff seem to be more open to change, as workloads are more manageable, job satisfaction is higher and trust in the school administration is higher, which effectively promotes communication and coordination in a smaller team. In such schools, teachers who are positive about their work and have a supportive school culture are more likely to be positive about change and adopt new practices (Johnson et al., 2017; Towers et al., 2022).

The third research question focused on the main factors and barriers that influence the implementation of the SLO concept in the wider context of general education in Latvia. Since a positive attitude to change among teaching staff remains crucial to the success of education reforms such as the SLO model, it is important to create a positive organisational climate and culture. This is achieved through supportive and transformative leadership by the school administration, which is a key enabler and mediator of positive staff attitudes towards change. When school administration creates a culture of trust in its decisions and, more importantly, involves teachers in shared decision-making, openness to change and new experiences increases. However, there are significant challenges to the implementation of the SLO model in Latvia as the lack of teaching staff, combined with the ageing of teachers creates complex obstacles. It should be noted that in 2022 there were 23% of retired and pre-retired teachers in general education in Latvia (14% of teachers of 60-64 years and 9% of teachers over 64 years, Central Statistical Bureau of Latvia, 2022) and they may lack motivation to accept change, reflecting a lack of trust in changes in education policy. Furthermore, the centralised top-down approach that lacks flexibility may hinder the integration of the SLO model into the educational environment in Latvia. This rigid approach fails to recognize that a single strategy might not be suitable for all educational institutions, which reinforces the view that one size does not universally accommodate diverse educational settings (Barakat, 2019; Hübner et al., 2021).

Conclusions and Implications

This research explored the relationship between the attitudes of educational staff towards change and the implementation of the SLO model in general education in Latvia. The results show that the overall attitude of employees towards change within general education institutions in Latvia is generally more positive than neutral. However, the study revealed nuanced contextual factors influencing the attitudes of staff towards change.

Firstly, the attitude of employees towards change is shaped by the specific characteristics of the educational institution they represent, including the type and size of the institution. For instance, representatives from primary schools were more likely to perceive changes as bothersome. On the other hand, those from lower-secondary and upper-secondary schools tend to recognize the school leaders' inclination for openness and readiness to embrace change and innovation. Interestingly, attitudes are also influenced by the scale of the institution, which is determined by the number of students enrolled. Larger institutions showed more negative attitudes towards change and more resistance to new ideas. In contrast, smaller schools tended to evaluate the school leaders' openness to change more favourably, and they also rated the administration's ability to articulate the rationale for change more positively.

Secondly, employees' attitudes towards change are also influenced by the individual parameters of the respondents, especially their positions and seniority. Teachers are more likely than school support and management staff to find change in their schools annoying and to hesitate when it comes to trying new ideas in their pedagogical practices. On the other hand,

the management of educational institutions tended to be more positive about change, seeing it as beneficial to the school, contributing to better job performance and essential for school development. In addition, school administrators were more proactive in implementing change, showing a willingness to experiment with new ideas, consistently supporting new concepts and promoting the necessary change in the school.

Moreover, the survey results highlighted the willingness of the representatives of the school administration in general education institutions in Latvia to embrace changes and innovations. They demonstrated the school leaders' capacity to effectively articulate the reasons behind implementing changes in the school. Additionally, an employee's seniority significantly impacts their attitude towards change. The longer an individual has worked in a school, the more resistant they become to new ideas, disliking change, and perceiving them as bothersome.

Furthermore, the positive attitude of employees towards change demonstrates a significant and positive correlation with the culture of the general education institution. This culture encompasses effective mutual communication, cooperation, and support. Specifically, as the school culture improves, the employees' attitude towards change becomes more positive.

Finally, the positive attitude of employees towards change exhibits positive and statistically significant correlations with all dimensions of the SLO model. Noteworthy is that this correlation was particularly strong with the SLO dimension "Research of professional practice and innovation culture at school". This suggests that as employees' positive attitude towards change increases, the successful implementation of all dimensions of the SLO model is enhanced. This positive attitude also corresponds to a higher level of culture related to professional practice research and innovation within the general education institution.

The results of the conducted research lead the authors to conclude that teachers are the agents of real change because they have direct contact with students, parents, and other educational stakeholders. Therefore, it is essential to evaluate the influence of various factors on teachers' attitudes towards change. School administrators should implement meaningful and supportive communication with teachers to explain the reasons and effects of change, creating an environment that fosters the successful implementation of change. Equally important is the cooperation among teachers in sharing experience and knowledge. This synergy between experienced teachers and new teachers can lead to effective collaboration and joint work planning, ultimately improving the quality and efficiency of their work. In the future, more in-depth research will be necessary to determine how the type of educational institution (primary, lower-secondary, and upper-secondary) affects employees' attitudes towards change and the determining factors. When conducting this type of research at the national level, it was crucial to consider the sociocultural context, which could vary from one country to another. Conducting cross-national studies in this field would also be valuable to promote international cooperation and facilitate the comparison of research results within an international context.

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Declaration of Interest

The authors declare no competing interest.

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