

# DIVERGENT APPROACHES: NAVIGATING VARIED PERSPECTIVES ON DELINQUENCY PREVENTION BETWEEN TEACHERS AND POLICE IN GENERAL EDUCATION SCHOOLS

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**Abstract.** *Delinquent behaviour represents a pervasive social issue worldwide, notably in Lithuania, where juvenile delinquency persists at elevated levels in comparison to other EU countries. Despite concerted efforts to mitigate its prevalence, juvenile delinquency remains a considerable threat to public safety and social order. Consequently, the prevention of delinquent behaviour assumes paramount significance, necessitating a focused exploration of collaborative initiatives between teachers and officers. The objective of this study is to discern the intricacies of cooperation between teachers and officers in the implementation of delinquent behaviour prevention during adolescence. To attain this objective, the following tasks were delineated: 1) Analyse disparities in the roles of teachers and officers in the implementation of delinquent behaviour prevention. 2) Theoretically conceptualize the collaborative model for teachers and officers in delinquent behaviour prevention. 3) Investigate the nuanced aspects of cooperation between teachers and officers in the execution of delinquent behaviour prevention. 4) Identify the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the collaboration between teachers and officers for delinquent behaviour prevention. Methodologically, the study employs theoretical literature analysis, examination of legal acts, and statistical data analysis derived from empirical research. The study's findings revealed that despite a shared desire and positive attitudes toward cooperation between teachers and officers, the current level of collaboration is deemed inadequate and inefficacious. Notably, only 14.5% of teachers reported actual collaborative experiences with officers, despite a high prevalence of delinquent behaviour incidents, encountered by 63.1% of teachers in the last semester. Additionally, the study identified deficiencies in legal regulations, notably in the Description of the Organization of Preventive Activities, which lacks specific forms and methods for collaboration with teachers. The study recommends amendments to existing legal frameworks to establish a clear and mandatory system for cooperation.*

**Keywords:** *prevention of delinquent behaviour, cooperation between teachers and police officers, differences in roles in the prevention of juvenile delinquency.*

## Introduction

Delinquent behaviour constitutes prohibited and criminal conduct with far-reaching implications for both the individual and their family, as well as society at large. Such behaviour, characterized by a breach of legal norms, is deemed inappropriate, unlawful, and socially detrimental. Manifestations of delinquency encompass a spectrum of actions, including theft, violence, substance abuse, illicit activities, and other criminal offenses (Bulotaitė 2014; Universal Lithuanian encyclopedia 2023). Addressing and preventing adolescent delinquency in Lithuania is an issue of paramount significance.

Official statistics underscore prevalent forms of juvenile crimes within the municipalities of the Republic of Lithuania in 2022, including public order violations, illegal possession of

narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, robbery, and rape (Department of Informatics and Communications 2023). While statistical trends indicate a decline in juvenile delinquency in Lithuania in recent years, it remains comparatively high when benchmarked against other European Union nations. The NUMBEU Crime Index (2022) positions Lithuania at 26th out of 42 countries, emphasizing the imperative for enhanced preventive measures targeting minors.

Efforts to mitigate juvenile delinquency should prioritize the reinforcement of preventive strategies, with particular emphasis on fostering consistent collaboration between educators and law enforcement officials. Teachers and officials, while executing distinct roles and employing different measures, possess the potential to mutually reinforce each other's efforts. Collaboratively, they can formulate comprehensive plans for juvenile delinquency prevention, organize joint prevention initiatives, exchange insights, experiences, and best practices, and engage in reciprocal training and learning.

However, the absence of a well-defined legal framework in Lithuania to facilitate collaboration between general education teachers and police officers presents a significant challenge. A comprehensive examination of legal literature reveals a lack of theoretical analysis in this particular domain. While Urnikis (2006) and Bružinskaitė (2006) have explored the preconditions for cooperation between teachers and law enforcement in preventing juvenile delinquency in their respective master's theses, the majority of studies focus on the prerequisites for family-school cooperation in preventing delinquent behaviour among minors. In contrast, international literature provides more extensive insights into how teachers and officials collaborate to prevent juvenile delinquency. Numerous preventive programs, incorporating police involvement in schools and collaboration with teachers, have been established, with evaluations measuring their short and long-term impact and the dissemination of successful practices. Given the existing research gap in Lithuania and the promising foreign precedents, this article aims to **thoroughly examine the pertinent issue** of how cooperation between teachers and officials unfolds in the prevention of delinquent behavior.

**The primary objective** of this article is to elucidate the specific dynamics of cooperation between teachers and officials in preventing adolescent delinquency. To achieve this, **the following tasks are delineated:** (I) analysing role disparities between teachers and officials in the context of preventing delinquent behaviour; (II) theorizing cooperation between teachers and officials within the prevention model of delinquent behaviour; (III) examining the nuances of cooperation between teachers and officials in the context of preventing delinquent behaviour; and (IV) identifying the strengths and weaknesses inherent in the collaboration between teachers and officials concerning the prevention of delinquent behaviour.

### **Analysis of the roles of general education schoolteachers and police officers in the prevention of delinquent behaviour**

*The Role of Teachers in the Prevention of Delinquent Behaviour.* Incidents of delinquent behaviour within school premises can manifest in various forms, ranging from non-disciplinary and conflict behaviours to episodic alcohol consumption and evasion of lessons (McCord, J., & National Research Council, 2000). More severe transgressions, such as theft, violence against peers or educators, drug use, and illicit activities, can have enduring repercussions on a child's development, health, and future prospects. While delinquent behaviour may manifest as early as primary school, under the laws of the Republic of Lithuania, it is not considered a criminal offense until the individual reaches 14 years of age. In this context, general education schools play a pivotal role in addressing and curbing delinquency,

as their effectiveness directly impacts both youth crime rates and the psychological and social well-being of a substantial portion of the youth population.

An examination of the legal framework for delinquency prevention necessitates differentiation across international, national, regional, and school levels. International agreements and domestic legislation establish fundamental principles and norms governing the conduct of minors within educational institutions. The legal framework at regional and school levels outlines the organization of preventive measures and responses to delinquent behaviour. This framework is crucial for cultivating a secure and healthy learning environment, safeguarding children's well-being, and securing their prospects.

The fundamental principles governing the relations between a child and the state, as well as the public, are anchored in the rights and duties of the child. These principles are rooted in the child's best interest, mandating that decisions and actions concerning a child must prioritize their well-being and needs. The child's rights, enshrined in international and national documents such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on the Framework for the Protection of the Rights of the Child (1996), span various domains, including welfare, health, education, participation in decision-making, protection against violence and discrimination, and more. The child's duties encompass responsibilities for conduct, contributions to societal well-being, and respect for authority, laws, and the rights of others.

Maintaining a delicate balance between the rights and obligations of the child is imperative for fostering the child's development and integration into society. While the child is entitled to protection from harm and discriminatory treatment, they are also duty-bound to act in accordance with their age and capabilities. The child has the right to be heard and participate in decision-making, coupled with the duty to respect the views of others. Additionally, the child has the right to education and advocacy for their interests, alongside the duty to learn and develop (United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989).

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) emphasizes the provision of assistance and support to ensure the well-being of the child, including preventive measures to forestall delinquent behaviour. Hence, the Convention aligns with the objective of protecting children's rights and interests in a manner conducive to their well-being and safety.

At the national level, Lithuania's education system is governed by the Republic of Lithuania's Education Law. Serving as the principal legal framework, the Education Law (1991) delineates overarching principles and objectives in education, in addition to specifying the rights and duties of members within the school community. Within this legal framework, it is mandated that schools ensure the safety and well-being of students, foster their moral development and social integration, and engage in collaborative efforts with parents and other institutions for the holistic welfare and preventative measures concerning children.

Moreover, the Education Law assumes a crucial role in regulating the prevention of violence and bullying within educational institutions. Amendments introduced on October 18, 2016, further elucidated key concepts, such as bullying and cyberbullying, outlined preventive programs, and instituted a comprehensive ban on all forms of violence. This legal instrument also delineates the responsibilities of school leadership in responding to instances of violence, underscores the provision of psychological support for students and teachers impacted by or engaged in violent incidents, advocates for the enhancement of pedagogical staff qualifications in developing students' social-emotional competencies, and mandates the active participation of every student in a designated preventive program.

Additionally, the Education Law (1991) commits to the implementation of violence and bullying prevention programs, which are strategically formulated to enhance students' social

and emotional competencies. These initiatives aim to fortify communication and conflict resolution skills, instil values of tolerance and amicability, mitigate aggressiveness and negative emotions, cultivate positive self-esteem and self-confidence, and equip students with the resilience to confront instances of bullying and violence. This comprehensive legal framework operates under the guidance of the Ministry of Education, adhering to recommendations approved by the Minister (National Education Agency, 2023).

Recommendations for the implementation of violence prevention in schools (2017) delineate the foundational principles, measures, and procedures essential for the effective prevention of violence within the educational milieu. This framework encompasses both proactive strategies, such as information dissemination, counselling, and training, as well as reactive measures, including intervention, mediation, and the imposition of sanctions (Recommendations for the implementation of violence prevention in schools, 2017). Integral to these guidelines are the specific roles and responsibilities assigned to teachers concerning the prevention and intervention of delinquent behaviour. In accordance with this procedural framework, teachers are obligated to: acquire comprehensive knowledge about the principles, measures, and procedures governing the prevention of violence and bullying within the school environment; engage actively in professional development programs specifically designed to enhance students' social and emotional competencies; cultivate a learning environment that is inherently positive and safe, fostering cooperation, tolerance, and respectful relationships among students; exercise vigilant awareness to promptly identify and respond to any manifestations of violence and bullying within the school community; implement appropriate intervention measures, such as engaging in dialogue with both the victim and perpetrator, promptly notifying the school leadership or psychologist, and involving parents (guardians, caregivers), among other steps; diligently monitor the progression of situations involving violence and bullying, and systematically report on the outcomes and resolutions achieved (Recommendations for the implementation of violence prevention in schools, 2017).

The prevention of delinquent behaviour, with a specific emphasis on mitigating violence and bullying, is prominently featured in the General Education Plans of primary, basic, and secondary education programs (2023). These programs delineate the objectives and tasks of educational institutions, outline the content of educational programs, prescribe organizational methodologies, and address other pivotal aspects integral to the educational process. Drawing guidance from the stipulations set forth in the General Education Plans, each school is mandated to formulate decisions concerning the prevention and correction of delinquent behaviour, elucidating these in the School Education Plan.

The School Education Plan, crafted by individual schools, is required to align with the unique needs and capacities of students. It should encompass preventive activities geared towards averting issues such as violence, bullying, drug addiction, and other societal problems. This may include domains such as health education, civic education, and career education (General Education Plans of primary, basic, and secondary education programs, 2023). In the execution of their duties, teachers are entrusted with fulfilling specific roles and obligations within the realm of preventing delinquent behaviour. These encompass: disseminating information about the principles, measures, and procedures integral to the prevention of violence and bullying within the school environment; actively participating in professional development programs explicitly designed to foster the advancement of students' social and emotional competences; cultivating a positive and secure learning environment that promotes cooperation, tolerance, and respectful relationships among students; vigilantly identifying and promptly responding to any instances of violence and bullying within the school community; implementing appropriate intervention measures, such as engaging in dialogue with both the

victim and perpetrator, reporting to the school leadership or psychologist, and involving parents (guardians, caregivers), among other measures; integrating preventive topics into their educational subjects, such as facilitating discussions with students on the causes and consequences of violence, presenting alternative conflict resolution methods, and fostering the development of empathy and critical thinking (General Education Plans of primary, basic, and secondary education programs, 2023).

The Regulation of the Child Welfare Commission (2011) governs the establishment and operations of the Child Welfare Commission within the school. Functioning as a collegial body, the Child Welfare Commission is entrusted with the resolution of matters pertaining to child welfare and the coordination of both preventive and intervention measures. This involves: organizing and coordinating preventive initiatives aimed at fostering a secure and positive educational environment; providing educational assistance to students; creating an environment conducive to the child's well-being and educational progress; adapting educational programs to cater to the needs of students with special educational requirements; conducting the initial assessment of educational needs for students (excluding those arising from exceptional talents); undertaking other functions directly associated with safeguarding the welfare of the child (Description of the procedure for establishing the school child welfare commission and organizing its work, 2011).

General Educational Plans (2023) mandate schools to incorporate preventive programs. The Ministry of Education, Science and Sports has developed methodological recommendations outlining the criteria and guidelines for the implementation of violence prevention programs in schools (Recommendations for the implementation of violence prevention in schools, 2017). These criteria encompass program objectives, content, methodology, evaluation, and outcomes. For instance, preventive measures targeting all school students aid in averting issues (such as bullying or other forms of violence) and mitigating the prevalence of existing problems. In cases where the preventive measures administered to the entire school populace prove ineffectual or insufficient for certain students, additional preventive measures and/or programs are implemented, along with educational assistance (Recommendations for the implementation of violence prevention in schools, 2017). The Ministry of Education, Science, and Sports provides schools with access to 12 distinct preventive programs, each designed to diminish delinquent behaviour.

Violence prevention and response are governed at the municipal level in Lithuania. Out of the 60 municipalities, 47 have established their domestic violence prevention procedures (Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania, 2023). This indicates that 78% of municipalities have formulated and endorsed these procedures, while 22% are yet to do so. Typically, these procedures align with the recommendations for implementing violence prevention in schools, as approved by the Minister of Education and Science Ministry of Social Security and Labor of the Republic of Lithuania, 2023). While each municipality has the flexibility to establish its criteria and recommendations for selecting preventive programs in schools, not all municipalities exercise this prerogative. The usual considerations encompass the preventive program's alignment with state education policy and its implementation strategy, the theoretical/empirical rationale of the preventive program, the validity of its goals and tasks, the appropriateness, directionality, and coherence of its content, as well as the evaluation and measurement of results.

At the school level, the regulation of delinquent behaviour prevention is delineated in the Rules of internal order, School Educational plans for specific school years, The procedure for preventing bullying and violence description, and the activity regulation of the Child welfare commission. These documents are endorsed through an order issued by the school director,

providing explicit definitions of the rights, duties, and obligations of teachers within a given school. Furthermore, they outline procedures for the self-evaluation of the efficacy of implemented measures.

The analysis of legal provisions indicates a predominant focus on preventing violence and bullying within school environments, with other forms of delinquent behaviour receiving insufficient attention. Schools enjoy considerable autonomy in selecting methods and approaches for preventing and addressing delinquent behaviour, particularly acts of violence. The role of teachers is pivotal and diverse, encompassing communication with students and parents, fostering mutual trust and respect, monitoring student behaviour to identify and prevent potential offenses, conflicts, or addictive behaviours. Collaboration with fellow teachers, social pedagogues, psychologists, and other specialists on issues related to the prevention of delinquent behaviour is emphasized. Teachers are tasked with imparting social skills, values, self-evaluation, and problem-solving techniques to help shape positive personalities, instil self-control strategies, etc. (Leikauskas, 2014). While there is no explicit mandate for cooperation with the police, there is no prohibition against it. Collaboration between teachers and law enforcement in preventing delinquent behaviour is permissible as long as it aligns with the rights and responsibilities of the child and contributes to the child's well-being, development, and societal integration.

***The role of police officers in the prevention of delinquent behaviour.*** Delinquent behaviour encompasses a spectrum of criminal and illicit activities resulting in harm to individuals, property, or society. Police officers play a pivotal role as key participants and collaborators in the prevention of delinquent behaviour, actively engaging not only in response but also in proactive measures to avert its occurrence or recurrence. The Police Law (2000) stands as the paramount legal framework governing police operations in Lithuania. It delineates the responsibilities of the police, emphasizing the prevention of criminal acts and other legal violations, stipulating the rights and duties of police officers, and outlining collaborations with other state, municipal entities, and the general public. Police preventive measures encompass a range of strategies, including the dissemination of information, educational initiatives, counselling, advice, warnings, prohibitions, restrictions, monitoring, supervision, engagement with risk groups and communities, provision of social assistance, and fostering integration (The Police Law, 2000).

Police preventive activity stands as a pivotal and intricate function with the primary goal of preventing criminal acts and administrative law violations, thereby mitigating their frequency and impact. The regulatory framework guiding the police in their preventive endeavours is encapsulated in the Order of the General Commissioner, specifically delineating the organization of police preventive activities (Description of the organization of police preventive activities, 2016).

This multifaceted approach involves the implementation of diverse methods, forms, and means, meticulously organized and coordinated. It extends beyond mere response to offenses and includes proactive engagement with risk groups, along with public information dissemination, educational initiatives, counselling, and support for individuals susceptible to or experiencing violence (Description of the organization of police preventive activities, 2016).

The aforementioned order provides a comprehensive framework for police preventive activities, encompassing a range of forms and measures, namely: patrolling (ensuring the effective execution of assigned tasks within designated patrol sectors, routes, or posts, with the aim of maintaining public safety and deterring criminal activities) (Instructions for the operation of police patrols, 2011); control (verification procedures designed to ensure compliance with legal acts and other regulatory requirements, contributing to the maintenance

of law and order within the community) (The Police Law, 2000); inspection (targeted efforts aimed at identifying and eliminating situational causes and conditions that may foster the occurrence of criminal acts and administrative law violations, or facilitate their execution) (The Police Law, 2000); Projects and Programs (collaborative initiatives undertaken in conjunction with other institutions and organizations, reflecting a concerted effort to achieve long-term and intricate preventive goals and objectives) (Description of the organization of police preventive activities, 2016).

These measures collectively underscore the proactive stance of the police force, not only in reacting to criminal activities but, crucially, in engaging in preventive actions. The emphasis on collaboration, public awareness, and addressing the root causes of delinquent behaviour is indicative of a comprehensive strategy aimed at fostering a safer and more secure societal environment.

The preventive activities undertaken by the police are anchored in principles of comprehensiveness, systematicity, operativeness, individualization, partnership, and responsibility. This approach not only involves the analysis and elimination of the root causes and conditions leading to criminal acts and administrative law violations but also necessitates collaboration with other entities engaged in prevention efforts (Description of the organization of police preventive activities, 2016).

The planning, execution, monitoring, and evaluation of police preventive activities follow a strategic process. This includes: situation analysis (a thorough examination of the prevailing circumstances and factors contributing to the occurrence of criminal acts and administrative law violations); selection of preventive measures (a judicious choice of preventive strategies and interventions based on the identified risks and challenges); implementation of preventive measures (the operationalization of selected preventive measures with a focus on addressing specific concerns and fostering a safer environment); monitoring and evaluation (ongoing scrutiny of the preventive activities' progress and impact, followed by a comprehensive evaluation of the results achieved). In order to ensure effective coordination and control of these preventive endeavours, the General Commissioner issues directives mandating that heads of police structural units, along with their deputies, take on the responsibility of overseeing and managing police preventive activities (Description of the organization of police preventive activities, 2016).

The procedure for organizing police preventive activities is an important document that helps to ensure the quality and efficiency of police preventive activities, as well as to strengthen the professional competence and authority of the police in the preventive field. Preventive policing benefits both police officers and the public as it fosters cooperation and trust between them.

Police activities are additionally guided by the stipulations set forth in the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania, which delineates penalties for crimes and other legal violations. The nature and severity of penalties are contingent upon the extent of harm caused and the contextual circumstances surrounding the offenses. It is imperative that penalties align with factors such as the individual's age, health, character, and other personality attributes (Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania, 2000).

Penalties serve not only as retribution for committed crimes but also as a mechanism for resocializing and reintegrating individuals back into society. Officers designated as community officers within the police force play a pivotal role in executing preventive action functions. They are tasked with organizing and coordinating preventive measures and programs and fostering communication with various community groups and individuals (Malunavičiūtė,

2020). This collaborative engagement aims to proactively address potential issues and enhance the overall safety and well-being of the community.

Crimes committed by minors, those below the age of 14, do not fall under criminalization as they are not deemed accountable for criminal responsibility. This acknowledgment recognizes their limited maturity to understand the ramifications of their actions. In Lithuania, criminal responsibility begins at the age of 16, and exceptionally from the age of 14, as specified in Article 13 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Lithuania (2000).

However, crimes committed by minors do not go without consequences. The regulations governing the criminal responsibility of minors outlined in the Criminal Code (2000) are not intended for punitive measures but rather for education, integration into the community, and instigation of lifestyle changes for young individuals. These regulations strive to account for factors such as age, social maturity, receptiveness to external circumstances, etc., with the aim of addressing the roots of criminal behaviour, shaping the personality, and individualizing the impact.

It is crucial to recognize that these objectives should not solely be pursued through court-imposed sanctions or punishments but also through societal efforts. The focus of criminal responsibility for minors lies in education. Consequently, rather than punitive measures, the emphasis is on educational interventions. Measures taken by educators aim to achieve the objectives of punishment, but they are distinct from punishment as they are oriented towards correction and education. According to Article 82, Part 1 of the Criminal Code (2000), these educational measures may include voluntary educational work, compensation for material damage, a warning, transfer to a special educational institution, among others:

Educational measures are deemed more humane and effective than punitive measures for minors since their purpose is to assist in behavioural change and societal adaptation. However, when other interventions prove ineffective, juveniles may face punishment, the most severe form of criminal law enforcement. Punishments for minors are delineated in the special part of the Criminal Code (2000), specifically in Article 90. These may include community service of up to 240 hours, fines ranging from 50 to 2500 EUR, punitive measures like arrest from 5 to 45 days, restriction of liberty from 3 months to 2 years, or the most severe punishment for minors, a term of imprisonment not exceeding 10 years and not life imprisonment. Despite the potential negative impact of these punishments on the psychological and social development of minors, as well as the increased likelihood of reoffending, it is paramount to consider the education and protection of the minor's personality or development during sentencing. In certain instances, a more stringent punishment may be necessary, although it is recognized that sentencing a young person to imprisonment can inadvertently encourage recidivism rather than foster their education or correction.

In summary, the analysis of legal acts governing police activities underscores the significance of maintaining a balance between the rights and responsibilities of children, constituting a crucial aspect of preventive measures. The primary objective is to ensure that minors receive appropriate assistance and opportunities for behavioural correction, irrespective of whether they have committed a crime. Police engagement in delinquent behaviour prevention centres on crime reduction and public safety assurance. Preventive measures encompass collaboration with various institutions, NGOs, communities, and citizens, coupled with informing and advising the public on the causes, risk factors, prevention methods, and potential consequences of delinquent behaviour. Additionally, targeted preventive work with high-risk groups and operational measures like patrolling, monitoring, investigation, and detention are employed to prevent or halt delinquent behaviour. When educational interventions prove



ineffective, especially with teenagers deemed at high risk, police officers assume a pivotal role in delinquent behaviour prevention activities.

***Theoretical Foundations for Collaboration Between Educators and Officials in Adolescent Delinquency Prevention.*** The prevention of delinquent behaviour among adolescents encompasses diverse measures and programs designed to either avert or mitigate the occurrence and impact of deviant behaviour. This preventive effort can be categorized into primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Primary prevention operates proactively, targeting all children and adolescents before any delinquent behaviour emerges. Secondary prevention focuses on at-risk groups or individuals predisposed to criminal activities, while tertiary prevention addresses those who have already committed offenses, aiming to deter recurrent criminal behaviour (National program for prevention of violence against children and assistance to children, 2011). The theoretical underpinnings of collaboration between educators and officials in delinquency prevention align with specific objectives, including ensuring a secure and positive learning environment within schools, fostering the social integration and responsibility of teenagers, mitigating conflicts and violence, and enhancing mutual trust and communication between adolescents and adults. Collaboration between educators and officials holds the potential to enhance the efficacy of delinquency prevention. Cooperation transcends mere interaction, conversation, assistance, or resource sharing, as it involves joint efforts geared towards improving work quality and efficiency (Skučaitė and Karmazė, 2011). In collaborative endeavours, individuals work together, prioritizing group outcomes over individual achievements. Successful cooperation demands shared experiences, a sense of responsibility for results, and possessing the requisite skills and competencies (Teresevičienė and Gedvilienė, 2000).

Collaboration between law enforcement officers and educators is a crucial initiative for fostering a safer and more amicable school environment. However, the successful implementation of such collaboration necessitates the establishment of clear rules and guidelines to pre-emptively address potential issues and disagreements. As of now, Lithuania lacks a definitive document outlining these guidelines, leading to the theoretical formulation of possibilities for cooperation between educators and officials, drawing inspiration from international best practices. An analysis of eight delinquent behaviour prevention and correction programs has been conducted, with a focus on programs that (I) exhibit sustained and cohesive collaboration between educators and officials in delinquency prevention, (II) have been successfully implemented by involved parties, and (III) have undergone thorough evaluation, affirming their efficacy in combating delinquent behaviour.

The School Resource Officer (SRO) program stands out as one of the oldest and most prevalent school policing initiatives, extensively implemented in the United States, Australia, Canada, and Great Britain. The primary objectives of this program revolve around fortifying school security and cultivating positive relationships between law enforcement officers and students. Officers actively engage in school activities and collaborate with school staff, parents, and community members. SROs are viewed as exemplifying community policing principles, adopting a proactive and preventive stance towards crime and violence within educational institutions (Shaw, 2004). Empirical data indicates that the deployment of police officers in urban schools yields positive outcomes, effectively reducing instances of school violence and disciplinary infractions (Johnson, 1999). For instance, a program implemented in the schools of a southern U.S. city witnessed a noteworthy decrease in the overall number of moderate and serious crimes, dropping from 3,267 in the academic year 1994-1995 to 2,710 in 1995-96 (Johnson, 1999).

The Community Outreach through Police in Schools program stands as a school-based policing model originating in the United States, having been in operation since 1998. The primary objectives of the program are centered on the prevention of violence and the enhancement of police-student relations. This initiative involves collaboration between community police officers and paediatricians who conduct weekly sessions targeting high school students exposed to violence in their community. The program addresses various topics, including stress management skills, conflict resolution, and the effective utilization of community resources. Spanning a duration of 10 weeks, the program aims to assist students in expressing and coping with their emotions while fostering a positive shift in their perception of the police and its role within the community (Shaw, 2004). Evaluation through pre- and post-participation surveys demonstrated the program's effectiveness, with participants reporting reduced nervousness, decreased apprehension about potential outcomes, and an overall improvement in emotional well-being upon completion of the group sessions (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003).

Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program aims to prevent drug and violence problems among children and adolescents. It was developed in Los Angeles in 1983 and is now widely used in the United States and other countries. The program is for students in kindergarten through 12th grade as long as they are drug and violence free. The program is based on the premise that drug education is a key factor in reducing the demand for drugs. But the program has been criticized for its ineffectiveness, with several rigorous evaluations finding no significant impact on drug use (Shaw, 2004). Nevertheless, in a survey of more than 2,000 DARE participants, more than 90 percent reported that the program helped them abstain from drugs and alcohol. For this reason, the program remains popular and loved in schools and continues to expand its implementation around the world (U.S. Department of Justice, 1995).

The School Liaison Officer (SLO) program, originating in England and evolving since the 1970s, is designed to prevent juvenile delinquency and foster positive police-school relationships. SLOs, designated officers for this purpose, collaborate with schools, serving either full-time or part-time based on the mutually agreed-upon arrangements. Regarded as a manifestation of community policing, the SLO program adopts a welfare and educational approach to addressing crime and violence within school environments (Shaw, 2004). A comprehensive analysis conducted by Gottfredson and colleagues spanning the years 2010-2019 revealed that schools with SLOs reported higher incidents of crimes compared to schools without, signalling the program's effectiveness. However, there is a lack of evidence indicating that the program aids in crime reduction through collaboration, prompting questions about its overall efficacy (Samuels-Wortley, 2021).

The Police Undercover Agents in Schools program represents an unconventional collaboration model between law enforcement and educational institutions, extending its reach beyond teenagers to include students. The primary objective of undercover agents typically revolves around preventing drug trafficking and identifying students involved in drug distribution by establishing rapport with them and attempting to make purchases. The program employs various techniques for officers to infiltrate student groups. However, this approach has faced criticism for several reasons, including the potential negative impact on students' attitudes towards the police, exacerbation of the relationship between young people and law enforcement, and the possibility of causing emotional harm to students while encouraging undesirable behaviour, aggression, and violence (Shaw, 2004). Despite these concerns, the program remains active, as evidenced by notable instances such as the 2022 operation in Holly Township, New Hampshire, where undercover agents arrested 62 drug dealers, seizing \$400,000 worth of drugs and \$30,000 in cash (Harlan 1990)

The School Adoption Plan is part of a broader spectrum of active police-initiated educational programs in Europe, implemented in countries such as Estonia, Holland, Belgium, Slovakia, and Poland. Grounded in the philosophy of community policing and the belief that "it's better to raise a good child than to correct him later," the program aims to achieve several key objectives. These include fortifying relationships among young people, their parents, schools, and district police; reshaping attitudes towards crime; early identification of criminal behaviour; and fostering positive behavioural changes. Research studies have indicated the program's effectiveness, although not all objectives have been fully met. Notably, there is no conclusive evidence supporting the police's ability to identify children at a higher risk of engaging in future criminal activities, a task that would demand significantly more police time and commitment (Shaw, 2004).

The Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) program is a research-based gang prevention initiative established in 1991. Comprising 13 interactive lessons, the program focuses on fostering social skills, stress coping mechanisms, and resistance abilities. Originally launched by the US Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms in collaboration with various police departments in Texas and Arizona, its primary aim was to counteract the increasing issue of youth involvement in gangs. A comprehensive study conducted across eleven cities demonstrated the program's effectiveness, revealing that GREAT students exhibited a lower rate of criminal activities. Specifically, one year after completing the program, participants were 39% less likely to join gangs compared to non-participants. Additionally, program participants displayed a positive attitude towards the police, heightened self-esteem, and stronger connections to their parents and school (Shaw, 2004; National Gang Center, 2023).

The Police Schools Involvement Program (PSIP) is an initiative fostering active collaboration between school communities and police officers, inaugurated in Australia in 1999. Operating with officers assigned to work with up to 10 primary or secondary schools, the program aims to achieve several objectives: reducing societal crime levels, enhancing relations between the police and youth, shaping students' comprehension of the police's societal role, fostering crime prevention concepts, and developing teenagers' social skills to navigate potentially hazardous situations. Evaluating the program's impact revealed improved student understanding of the police's role, with teachers reporting a positive contribution to reducing delinquent behaviour. Moreover, teenagers developed social skills beneficial for avoiding dangerous situations (Shaw, 2004).

In conclusion, it is crucial to underscore that collaboration between law enforcement officials and schools represents a key avenue for mitigating students' delinquent behaviour and fostering a secure and amicable school environment. The nature and extent of cooperation between officials and educators vary across countries, contingent upon legal, cultural, and social factors. Internationally, many countries boast well-established preventive programs that delineate roles, competencies, and responsibilities for both officials and teachers. Officials, beyond merely responding to potential criminal acts, actively engage in educational and counselling processes. These programs undergo rigorous self-evaluation, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of preventive activities. Implemented initiatives serve to fortify the relationship between officials and the school community, diminishing conflicts and violence while enhancing students' trust in the police and overall community well-being.

Regrettably, in Lithuania, the collaboration between officials and schools remains notably weaker and sporadic. Officials typically become involved only after educational measures prove ineffective, and minors have already engaged in potentially criminal activities. There exists a dearth of clear guidelines or standards governing officials' interactions with students or teachers, coupled with inadequate training and supervision in preventive activities. The country

lacks a developed or adapted model that would define the roles, competences, and responsibilities of officials and teachers in preventive endeavours, reflecting a deficiency in cooperation and coordination among responsible institutions in the realm of preventive activities. Addressing these gaps is imperative for fostering a more effective and systematic approach to preventing delinquent behaviour in the Lithuanian school system.

## Research method and sample

This quantitative study aims to investigate the perceptions of educators and officials regarding the effectiveness of measures for preventing delinquent behaviour and explore potential avenues for enhanced collaboration. Utilizing a non-probabilistic targeted group formation method (Kardelis, 2005) participants, comprising 21 individuals from law enforcement and 77 from general education schools, were contacted via email and invited to complete a questionnaire. The survey sought evaluations of the effectiveness of current preventive measures and opinions on activities that, while not presently implemented, could facilitate more cohesive cooperation between officials and educators.

*Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Teacher Sample.* The sample of educators predominantly comprises women (89.6%), with 9.1% being men, and the remaining participants choosing not to specify their gender. In terms of age distribution, 24.7% fall below the age of 30, 27.3% are aged 31-40, 37.7% are aged 41-50, 6.5% are aged 51-60, and 3.9% are over 61 years old. Consequently, the majority (65.4%) falls within the age group of 31-50 years. Regarding length of service, the majority (62.3%) have worked for less than 5 years, while 20.8% have been employed at the school for over 20 years. A smaller proportion (7.8%) reported working for 6-10 years, and the same percentage for 11-20 years. One participant chose not to disclose their length of service.

*Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Sample of Police Officers.* Among the sample of police officers, 52.4% are men, while 47.6% are women. The majority (61.9%) falls within the age group of 20-30 years, with 9.5% aged 31-40, and the remaining 28.6% aged 40-50. In terms of seniority, the majority (52.4%) reported having less than 5 years of experience, while 23.8% of police officers have 11-20 years of seniority. A small portion (14.3%) stated that they had 6-10 years of work experience, and the remaining 9.5% worked for more than 20 years. Regarding job roles, researchers constituted the largest group (38.1%), followed by officials (23.8%), and chief specialists (14.3%). A small number (9.5%) stated that they were chief patrolmen and chief commissioners, while the remaining 4.8% of respondents indicated that they were chief inspectors.

## Research Results

*Teachers' Attitude Towards the Effectiveness of Delinquent Behaviour Prevention Measures.* The research data indicates that slightly more than a third (36.9%) of the surveyed educators did not encounter delinquent behaviour or have information about potential criminal acts by their students in the last six months. However, 63.1% of the pedagogues reported instances of delinquent behaviour, with violent behaviour such as bullying, violence, and threats being the most common (18.5%).

In terms of reporting known cases of delinquent behaviour, only 2.7% of educators informed the police, while most opted for discussions with the student (23.3%), their parents (21.9%), social pedagogue (28.8%), or school management (16.4%). The reluctance to involve the police was attributed to various reasons, with 19.2% citing concerns about harming the

student and their family, 13.5% expressing unfamiliarity with reporting procedures, and 11.5% doubting that the police would consider the incident significant.

Despite the reluctance to report to the police, when asked about cooperation, 81.6% of educators stated that they did not have to collaborate with police officers in addressing students' problematic behaviours or explaining committed criminal activities. Only 14.5% had experience in such cooperation, and only 12% of those reported a positive experience.

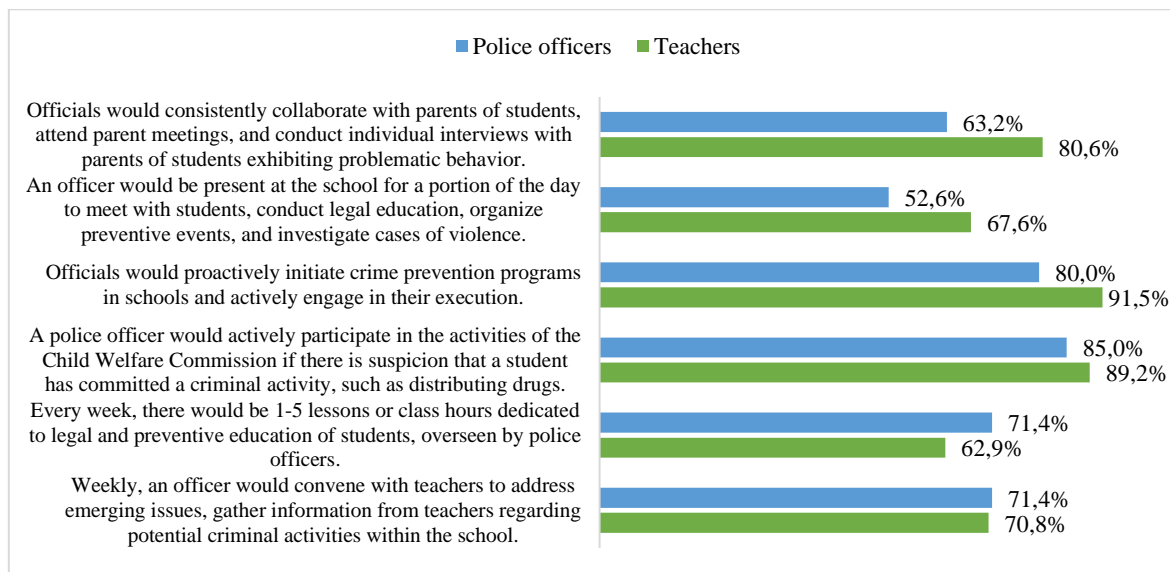
In terms of trust in the police, 77.6% of educators expressed more trust than mistrust, indicating that trust in law enforcement is not a significant factor influencing the decision not to report delinquent behaviour. The overall trend suggests that educators tend to address delinquent behaviour issues within the school community and may not perceive the police as necessary partners in prevention efforts.

When asked to assess the effectiveness of prevention measures for delinquent behaviour, the most highly regarded measures include class events promoting positive informal communication (90.8%), involvement of police officers in preventive activities like thematic lessons (89.3%), participation of police officers in school-organized preventive events (88.2%), activities of the Child Welfare Commission in coordinating assistance for children with behavioural difficulties (87.8%), and the class teacher's communication with children of parents with behavioural difficulties (87%). Notably, cooperation with police officers in prevention is considered highly effective by 88-89% of respondents, despite limited reported instances of actual collaboration (14.5%). This suggests a positive attitude among teachers towards the potential effectiveness of police involvement in delinquent behaviour prevention.

In summary, the data indicate that a significant majority of surveyed pedagogues encounter various forms of delinquent behaviour and possess information about potential criminal activities involving minors. This information is predominantly shared with parents and relevant personnel within the educational institution, but there is limited communication with police officers. Only a small fraction of respondents has first-hand experience collaborating with law enforcement, yet a notable 80-90% believe that the involvement of police officers in activities aimed at preventing delinquent behaviour would be an effective measure to curb its manifestations. The findings suggest a potential discrepancy between the limited actual collaboration with police and the perceived efficacy of such collaboration in preventing delinquent behaviour.

***Police officers' attitude towards the effectiveness of measures to prevent delinquent behaviour.*** Research results indicate that officers hold a highly positive assessment of the preventive measures employed to address delinquent behaviour, expressing confidence in their effectiveness. The top five most esteemed measures in this sample encompass patrolling (100%), followed by the development and execution of programs and projects addressing the root causes of crime (95.3%), legal education and counselling for parents and school administration (90.5%), and participation in school-organized thematic events showcasing police activities (85.7%). It's noteworthy that measures requiring consistent and systematic collaboration with teachers are deemed highly effective, underscoring their potential to mitigate delinquent behaviour more effectively than activities like communicating with students identified as at-risk (85%).

***The perspective of educators and police officers regarding the potential for enhanced collaboration.*** Both groups were presented with a common set of questions, evaluating various cooperation and crime prevention measures. 1<sup>st</sup> figure illustrates the percentage of participants who deemed each mentioned measure as either useful or very useful in the prevention of delinquent behaviour.



**Figure 1.** Opinions of teachers and police officers about the usefulness of cooperation-based measures in the prevention of delinquent behaviour.

In the analysis of officials' and educators' attitudes towards the potential effectiveness of prevention measures, the Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) criterion was employed to assess the statistical significance of differences in opinions. Any observed differences were deemed statistically significant if the probability of error was  $p < 0.05$ . The results revealed no statistically significant differences between the attitudes of officials and educators. The most effective measures identified include the initiation of crime prevention programs with active involvement from officials, participation of police officers in the activities of the school's child welfare commission when a minor is suspected of committing a criminal act, and regular communication between officers and parents of teenagers prone to crime during legal education.

In summary, the study highlights several crucial aspects. Firstly, the data underscores the insufficiency and ineffectiveness of cooperation between educators and officials. Despite positive evaluations and trust from pedagogues towards officials, the actual experience of cooperation remains limited, with only 14.5% encountering officials while addressing student issues. This percentage is remarkably low, especially considering that 63.1% of educators have dealt with delinquent behaviour among students in the last semester, encompassing criminal acts such as fights, hooliganism, and substance distribution.

Secondly, the research emphasizes a shared desire for cooperation between educators and officials. Educators believe that collaboration with officials would enhance the effectiveness of preventive activities and aid in resolving student issues. Officials express a willingness to cooperate and provide guidance to educators. The overall attitude from both parties is positive and constructive, underscoring a need for legal and organizational measures to ensure seamless and consistent collaboration.

Thirdly, the study reveals shortcomings in the current legal regulation, emphasizing the need for changes and supplements. The primary document governing preventive activities lacks specificity regarding forms and methods of cooperation with educators, relying heavily on the initiative and goodwill of officials. This absence of guaranteed and controlled cooperation underscores the necessity for legal reforms to establish a clear and mandatory system of collaboration, encompassing both reactive and proactive measures.

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## Conclusions

Upon a comprehensive examination of the roles played by educators and officials in the prevention of delinquent behaviour, distinct focuses and responsibilities emerge. Pedagogues primarily concentrate on proactive measures to prevent delinquent behaviour, while officials are oriented towards responding to instances of such behaviour. Key roles for teachers encompass effective communication with students and parents, fostering mutual trust and respect, vigilant monitoring of student behaviour, pre-emptively addressing potential offenses, conflicts, violence, and addictions. Collaboration with fellow teachers, social pedagogues, psychologists, and other specialists in delinquency prevention is emphasized, as is the imparting of essential social skills, values, self-evaluation, and problem-solving techniques that contribute to positive personality development and self-control strategies. On the other hand, officials' pivotal roles include ensuring that young individuals receive appropriate assistance and opportunities for behavioural correction, irrespective of criminal involvement. Their responsibilities extend to collaboration with various entities, such as state and municipal institutions, non-governmental organizations, communities, and citizens, with a particular focus on informing and advising society on the causes of delinquent behaviour, associated risk factors, preventive methods, and potential consequences.

In constructing a model for the prevention of delinquent behaviour, theoretical frameworks were developed by drawing inspiration from successful international practices. Several countries have established preventive action programs that provide clear definitions of the roles, competencies, and responsibilities of both officials and teachers. In these programs, officials engage not only in responding to potential criminal acts but also actively participate in educational and counselling processes. A noteworthy feature is the self-evaluation of officials, assessing the effectiveness, strengths, and weaknesses of implemented prevention programs. Successful programs abroad have been instrumental in fortifying relationships between officials and the school community, reducing conflicts and violence, fostering increased trust in the police among students, and enhancing overall community well-being. However, in Lithuania, the collaboration between officials and schools is characterized by irregularity. Officials are primarily brought in as responders to potential criminal acts, lacking a proactive role in prevention. The absence of clear guidelines or standards for interactions with students and teachers hampers the effectiveness of officials. Additionally, inadequate training and supervision further hinder the success of preventive activities. To improve this situation, there is a pressing need for the development of comprehensive guidelines, training programs, and ongoing supervision to ensure officials play a more proactive and integrated role in preventing delinquent behaviour within the school environment. This shift towards a collaborative and preventive approach would likely yield more positive outcomes for both students and the community.

To gain insights into the dynamics of cooperation between educators and officials in preventing delinquent behaviour, a quantitative study was undertaken through a questionnaire survey. The findings illuminate that while both educators and officials acknowledge the significance of delinquent behaviour prevention measures in schools, their effectiveness hinges on the extent of collaboration and communication between these two vital groups. The study uncovers a positive and optimistic outlook from both educators and police officers regarding delinquent behaviour prevention. However, a critical observation emerges—there exists an insufficiency in their cooperation. To address this gap, fostering mutual trust becomes paramount. Encouraging and fortifying trust between these groups will be pivotal in creating an environment conducive to effective collaboration. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the

importance of sharing best practices and addressing challenges collaboratively. By exchanging experiences and insights, educators and officials can collectively enhance the efficiency of their prevention efforts. Additionally, there is a call for continuous monitoring and evaluation of prevention programs. Regular assessments will provide valuable data on the results and impact of these initiatives, enabling informed adjustments for optimal effectiveness.

The study results elucidate distinct strengths and weaknesses in the collaboration between officials and educators. Collaboration Strengths: educators and officers exhibit a positive and optimistic attitude towards the prevention of delinquent behaviours; educators' express confidence in preventive measures, such as classroom community events and the involvement of police officers; officers highly value patrols, programs, and projects targeting the root causes of crime as effective preventive measures. Collaboration Weaknesses: collaboration between pedagogues and officials is fragmented and relies on isolated initiatives; educators report delinquent behaviours to only a small portion of officials; officials lack clear guidelines or standards for interactions with students or teachers; there is no established model in Lithuania defining the roles, competencies, and responsibilities of officials and teachers in preventive activities.

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