

Dr. Michael Emery, UK (Head of the Group)  
Prof. Heinrich Stremitzer, Austria  
Prof. Jorgen Ljung, Sweden  
Prof. Rainhart Lang, Germany  
Prof. Erno Zalai, Hungary  
Prof. Kurt Pedersen, Denmark  
Dr. Gintaras Gavenas, Lithuania

## **Overview of Management and Business Administration studies in Lithuania**

The following overview is aimed at giving recommendations out of our work of external reviewing 94 programmes in Management and Business Administration in the country. We will only address general issues and recommendations for the Ministry here, since suggestions and recommendations to the HEI will be given in the reports on the programmes.

Looking at the programmes in the field we have assessed 94 programmes in 26 institutions, among them 21 Bachelor programmes, 35 Master programmes, 4 special programmes for professional education, and 34 College programmes (non university degree programmes).

We have seen a lot of serious attempts to develop programmes of international standard, among them a number of good programmes close to an international competitive level, among them also good college programmes with practical training.

We also want to highlight activities in the field of distance learning, to improve the staff and to include new staff studied and trained abroad.

The programmes include mainly the topics usually expected for programmes in Business and Management. We see special strengths of programmes in fields like accounting and finance, while general management topics like strategic and change management, project and quality management and leadership seem to be less developed.

The overall picture includes a number of recommendations coming from the weaknesses of the overall frame for higher education, the institutional setting of the programmes and the programmes themselves. Also, to acquire more fully the culture of more matured market economies as well as that of more stable institutions of higher education will take still some time. In what follows, we would like to comment on some issues more specifically.

## **1. Number of programmes & students coming years**

The number of programmes in Management and Business Administration studies under evaluation was 94 out of 149. It has now been 15 years since the new independent state was formed. An accumulated, relatively large number of students with interest in Business Studies had been a reality, in the future it might not be that case. Therefore it is essential for the Ministry to make an investigation how many students can be enrolled in the coming 5-10 years. That research can help to implement the right policy regarding number and structure of programmes in the above field.

The expert team recommends sharpening the profile of programmes and especially in case of multi- faculty universities with programmes in Business and Management to improve cooperation and coordination between faculties and departments.

## **2. Curriculum contents and teaching methods**

The Guidelines and requirements provided by the Ministry of Education concerning the structure and composition of the study programmes (general education, fundamentals of the field, subjects of special education etc.) are too rigid. Moreover, the institutions seem to follow them too rigidly. There should be more freedom given for the institutions to specify the courses and knowledge areas within the above broad components of the curricula. Instead of the detailed prescriptions, the Ministry should put more emphasis on making sure that the courses offered by the institutions are in line with their international counterparts (name and content of the courses), and the curricula are not fragmented too much (too many individual courses), students are not overburdened with in-class hours. The courses providing general education and the fundamentals of the field should be linked closer to the needs of the subjects of special education.

During the last years the market economy has been introduced as a fundamental concept for education in Business Administration and Economics. That has been supported by the introduction of new textbooks, availability to journals and periodicals as well connection to resources over the Internet. The physical premises have not so far been adapted to a new pedagogic style in our opinion. Classrooms, rooms for seminars and laboratory equipment are in most cases the same as it has been before. But more essential, the basic assumption of the learning process seems still to have a need for development. In our opinion the relatively large number of too narrow and specific courses shows that the way-of-thinking among the faculty and staff still can be improved in order to reach international standards.

The internationalisation of the business society has to be taking into consideration when wishing to improve course curriculum and courses. The

fact that Lithuania is a part of EU means that they have to some extent also a strong connection to its higher education system. Exchange of students and of faculty will improve the international dimension of higher education. Another area, widely used in Western Europe is the case-study methodology, which could ease upon the problem of shortage of practical skill development. The expert team have seen less of that in our examination of the programmes.

### **3. Faculty members and their possibility to do a good work**

We have seen that many faculty members hold 2 or 3 positions in different institutions. That means that the institutions can hardly develop a **critical mass** of staff. The payment of faculty in higher education has to increase in order to reach the expected quality. The expert team therefore recommends reducing part time positions in favour of full time staff. In practical subjects, the inclusion of more practitioners should be considered. A more systematic and sustained effort to develop the qualifications of staff is needed.

### **4. Internationalisation**

The expert team recommends increasing student and faculty exchanges with foreign institutions. In order to match the interest of students going to other countries, courses should be offered in English and other main languages more frequently, also to encourage foreign students to come to Lithuania. More funds should be dedicated to the internationalisation of the HEI.

Double degree or joint study programmes could be considered as tools for internationalisation.

Faculty exchanges should also be encouraged in order to develop the international research activities.

### **5. Strengthen Research**

We strongly recommend the Ministry and the institutions responsible for master level studies to strengthen research activities and support and promote the quality of the programmes in the country. This implies the development of an adequate structure at the HEI with respect to the institutional setting, especially to provide more time, money, and office space, e.g., separate laboratories for research. At the same time the experts recommend not to overemphasize the theoretical research requirement in the colleges; applied search and consultancy should be encouraged.

## **6. Material conditions of education: Library resources, computers and teaching materials**

Libraries connected to Lithuanian higher teaching institutions generally are short of financial means and seriously lag behind libraries in the West. Establishing a good research library is costly, not least the provision with valuable books. It is unlikely that this gap will be closed, but IT has provided institutions with valuable alternatives.

One such alternative is the use of (international) data bases, whether statistical or literary in nature. It should be drawn to attention that the total volume of data bases exceeds the total internet by a factor of more than 30. Similarly e-books are suited to fill the gap. Maybe the most important factor facilitating the expansion of library resources is the electronic access to scientific (and other) articles. There are several examples from our visits to Lithuanian Colleges and Universities that they are up-to-date on the electronic side.

Lithuanian students clearly have limited resources for the acquisition of teaching materials. In many cases libraries will have a stock of the most commonly used textbooks in stock for students, but is unable to provide other books in curricula in sufficient numbers. It is also a common practice that teachers print study materials for students.

The solution to the problems with respect to teaching materials might be the introduction of intranets in the institutions. This is under construction in some institutions, and will in several ways facilitate the learning processes. First, the responsible teacher may place the course programme, lecturing notes and other relevant material on the intranet. Second the net may be used by the teacher (in cooperation with the Library) to distribute electronically the teaching material. Over time, the libraries will build the necessary competences to distribute the material. Establishing intra-nets has the additional advantage that teachers and students have a tool to establish chat-fora.

In terms of computers and other IT equipment the team is impressed with the speed of technological development in Lithuanian institutions. Typically the institutions visited had a sufficient supply of equipment in the computer labs, and some students have PCs.

The use of the computers for study work seems appropriate, and instructors appear very engaged in their teaching. One problem may be the teaching staff which in some cases does not possess the necessary proficiency in the use of IT.

## **7. Programme levels, recognition of studies and credits**

The structure of study programmes and grades in Lithuanian higher (post-secondary) education, especially in the area of business administration and management, should be reconsidered. At present, there are non-university and consecutive university programmes, which have, as a matter of fact, reintroduced a rather rigid dual/binary structure is going to be replaced in most European countries by a framework that offers a continuum of study levels students can move on or leave the system of education.

The Bologna system for higher education with two levels (bachelor and master) has to be taken into consideration in one or another way in Lithuania. That is also a need to get an ECTS-label for good transparency both between units in Lithuania and in international co-operations.

Equally important, students can switch, within certain limits of courses, between program areas as they enter for studies at bachelor and master levels, when they go further to higher levels.

In such a framework, apart from three higher education degrees (B, M, PhD), certificates and diplomas are given for studies completed at levels lower than the above degrees. Meeting certain set requirements, students having obtained diplomas can continue their studies for university degrees.

Such framework would recognize programmes and grades as follows:

L1. Professional (vocational) post-secondary programmes and diplomas (certificates)

(A large part of present Lithuanian college programmes would fall into this category)

L2. Bachelor programmes and degrees

(Part of present Lithuanian college programmes and the Bachelor programmes)

L3. Professional (specialized) post-graduate programmes and diplomas (certificates)

(Apart from the similarly named existing Lithuanian programmes, part of the Master's programmes could be sorted into this category as well)

L4. Master's programmes and degrees

L5. PhD programmes and degrees

## **8. Suggestions for the improvement of the evaluation procedure**

We recommend the introduction of a one-step procedure of programme evaluation. The team of sub-leaders does not think that the present procedure should be maintained. The responsible group of peers looking at the self-assessment report and visiting the institutions executing the deeper

questioning and discussing the results and formulating the recommendations should also give a final suggestion about the accreditation, which should not necessarily be discussed among the other group leaders. It is deemed sufficient that the sub-team groups are submitting their reports to the accreditation centre.

We also recommend a more informative SAR. They should be limited to main points of the programme and the institutional settings instead of providing too many statistics without interpretation. Further information can always be obtained when visiting the institutions. In the case of a time lag between the production of an SAR and the visit, it should be mandatory to provide the expert team with the new data and developments in advance.