



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vilniaus universiteto
PEDAGOGINĖS PSICHOLOGIJOS PROGRAMOS
(62406S106, 621S18001)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS

EVALUATION REPORT
OF *EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY* (62406S106,
621S18001)
STUDY PROGRAMME
at Vilnius University

Grupės vadovas: Prof. Emeritus dr. Stephen Edward Newstead
Team Leader:

Grupės nariai: Assoc. prof. dr. Lena Adamson
Team members: Prof. dr. Sherri Nevada McCarthy
Prof. dr. Reinhold Stipsits
Agnė Tamošiūnaitė
Prof. dr. Rita Žukauskienė

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	<i>Pedagoginė psichologija</i>
Valstybiniai kodai	62406S106, 621S18001
Studijų sritis	socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	psichologija
Studijų programos rūšis	universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	nuolatinė (2)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	ugdymo psichologijos magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1997-05-19

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Name of the study programme	<i>Educational Psychology</i>
State codes	62406S106, 621S18001
Study area	social sciences
Study field	psychology
Kind of the study programme	university studies
Cycle of studies	second
Study mode (length in years)	full-time (2)
Scope of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master in Educational Psychology
Date of registration of the study programme	1997/05/19

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I. INTRODUCTION

This evaluation refers to the Masters programme of Educational Psychology (Full-Time) presented in the self-evaluation report provided to the expert group. During the site visit the group became aware that the curriculum described in this document is not the same as the curriculum that is currently running. This will be commented on under the section *Programme management*.

The study programme Educational Psychology (Full-Time) at Vilnius University is delivered by The Department of General Psychology at The Faculty of Philosophy, Vilnius University. A Study Programme Committee is in charge of implementation and supervision of the programme.

The programme is designed to prepare students to work as educational psychologists, including consulting, counselling, psychological assessment, academic and behavioural intervention and research skills. The educational psychologists work mostly with children and adolescents but sometimes also in settings with young adults and adults.

The programme lasts for two years, and carries 80 credits/120 ECTS, though the precise number of credits varies in different parts of the documentation. Admission to the programme took place until 2008 when a new masters study programme titled Psychology (embracing a number of specialisations, including Educational Psychology) was launched. Admission is said in the self-evaluation report to be renewed in 2011/12 for the Master of Educational Psychology, but the programme was not running at the time of the site visit. Thus, this report is an evaluation of a programme that is not on going at the moment, which means that the expert group has not had the possibility to meet students from this programme. The programme is apparently going to run in parallel with another masters programme in Psychology with education as a speciality. In spite of probing a number of times during the site visit about the relationship between these two programmes the expert group is still somewhat unclear about the rationale behind having these two programmes both running. However, this does not affect the evaluation of this programme.

This evaluation report has been produced in the following way: the expert group received the self-evaluation report in June 2011. All members of the expert group individually read the self-evaluation report and prepared draft reports. The site visit was carried out in conjunction with the evaluation of four other programmes in psychology for which separate reports have been prepared. During the visit the team had the opportunity to discuss the programmes with faculty administrators, teaching staff and employers but not with students since the programme was not running. They also visited the library, offices, teaching space and laboratories associated with the programme. After the visit the expert group held a meeting in which the contents of the evaluation were discussed and the current report represents the opinion of the whole group.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The primary objective of the programme is “to educate psychologists whose central concern is the contribution of psychological science to the educational and emotional well-being of children and adolescents”. The programme was established as a response to the expanded need for school psychological services in Lithuania. According to the introduction to the self-evaluation there is a strong demand for psychologists in schools and educational-psychological services. It was also confirmed at the site visit that there is a great demand for educational psychologists in Lithuania.

At the meeting with the employers, it was also pointed out that educational psychologists are “at the frontline” and often need to be able to handle quite serious problems. On the theoretical side the programme seems satisfactory with respect to this. Employers’ opinions were that the students were theoretically very knowledgeable but that they were not always able to apply this knowledge well. Employers also expressed a positive wish to be able to take part more in programme planning and development.

Programme aims and learning outcomes as described in the self-evaluation report are relatively well defined and clear.

No information about the programme can be found at the University catalogue of study programmes 2011 to 2017. As a general comment on this website, the information about programmes is quite limited. If syllabus and course outlines were accessible here this would enable students to make better-informed decisions.

The quality of the learning outcomes at course unit level is sometimes questionable in relation to what a learning outcome actually should express: the visible use of knowledge that students are expected to be able to demonstrate after completion of the study period. The main problem is that the course outline templates do not distinguish between objectives and learning outcomes. This has led to great variability between the different courses where learning outcomes are mixed up with objectives and sometimes with just descriptions of the course. Learning outcomes on course level need to be specified in order to make them possible to assess and to promote active learning and the gaining of competences. “To gain experience”, “to prepare students”, “to make students acquainted with” etc are all examples of learning outcomes that cannot readily be assessed. The large variations in learning outcome quality between courses could indicate that teachers do not work together in a holistic way when planning and developing the programme. Since competence in this area is present in the teaching team, greater collaboration would probably improve this situation.

Labour market needs and employability aspects will be commented on under Curriculum design.

The level of studies seems consistent with the level of qualification. However, when looking at student theses the methodological level of these seemed quite low. Descriptive statistics, simple correlations and t-tests dominated, even though some of the research questions were more sophisticated and would have called for more sophisticated statistical methods to have been used. Also, students need to learn how to write an abstract in APA format. However, the sample of theses was very small and may not be representative. The programme includes a course on qualitative methods which is a positive feature, but lacks modules on quantitative methods which should be regarded as a shortcoming in a masters programme in educational psychology.

The name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content, and the qualifications offered are on the whole compatible with each other. What could be commented on is related to one of the optional courses, Analytical Psychology, which seems misplaced in this programme. To offer courses that do not specifically address the learning outcomes of a programme is probably best avoided.

In sum, the programme aims and learning outcomes are well defined and clear but not always publicly accessible. The programme aims and learning outcomes are based on the academic and/or professional requirements, public needs and the needs of the labour market and are also consistent with the type and level of studies, the title of the programme, and the level of qualifications offered. Learning outcomes at course level need to be developed. Employers’

comments were that graduates from the programme were theoretically very knowledgeable but could not always apply their knowledge.

2. Curriculum design

The programme was developed based on a great number of legal documents, national as well as European, academic as well as related to the psychological profession. This has ensured that the legal requirements are met.

The programme has a good balance between theoretical subjects, scientific research work and professional practice. Active learning seems prominent, as well as self-reflection, which is necessary for all practising psychologists. The literature needs to be updated a bit and preferably include scientific articles to a greater extent, however, no major problems are seen. Given the very good facilities at VU this should not constitute a problem. The lack of updating of literature may sometimes be due to lack of regular routines for this at departmental level.

However, the programme has quite a strong focus on problems and deviations and the assessment and counselling/therapy thereof; five course units deal with counselling and psychotherapy, five with problems and deviations, none with learning and motivation, none with prevention work and positive youth development, and none with schools as organisations. It is also questionable whether an educational psychologist really needs the amount of neuropsychology that is provided here and if this is compatible with the programme learning outcomes. If neuropsychology is included it should be clearly tailored and contextualised to the educational situation and to the competences needed there.

When it comes to labour market needs and employability aspects there are a few things to comment on that relate to the above. The educational psychologist works in educational settings (prominently in schools, possibly also universities with young adults and adults). This is a “normal” setting where problems/deviations can arise, not a clinical setting where problems/deviations are the *raison d'être*. In order to be able to work in such a setting there is a need for knowledge and understanding of how humans learn (including theories of motivation), theories of child and adolescent typical development, organisational aspects of school and other educational settings (including knowledge and understanding of the teachers’ work). Teachers work primarily with groups of individuals, the psychologist with individuals. This is a very important aspect to acknowledge in order to make the two professions collaborate in the best possible way. At the moment the team finds that the programme has appropriate content and methods, but that there are some omissions.

If the above mentioned fields were included, together with more knowledge and understanding of prevention work, child and adolescent risk behaviour, and positive youth development programmes, this would probably benefit the students and their future clients and work places.

In sum, the content of the subjects and/or modules is consistent with the type and level of the studies. However, the programme has a fairly strong focus on problems and deviations and students would benefit if it also would include more about prevention work and positive youth development, and also promote students’ knowledge and understanding of schools as organisations. Apart from this the content and methods of the subjects/modules are appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes and the scope of the programme is sufficient to ensure learning outcomes.

3. Staff

All staff hold at least a PhD and consist of 4 professors, 9 associate professors and one lecturer. Staff enhance their professional qualifications in accordance with the regulations of Vilnius University on this. They go on visits to other universities, attend conferences and courses, are members of editorial boards etc. Altogether they seem very active and engaged in their scientific practice. However, nothing is specified around staff development specifically designed to enhance teaching practice. The indications at the site visit were that the staff took a traditional academic view on this subject and showed little interest, although there was a positive awareness of the need for developing the learning outcomes including fit for purpose assessment methods etc. in their programme.

Staff also engage in research projects, some of them directly related to this study programme, but few publish in international journals.

As far as the team could see at the site visit the department did not seem to have engaged much in supporting their teachers in the substantial current changes in HE within the intergovernmental initiative of the Bologna process. Some optional seminars had been held but as far as the team understood these were mostly to do with the structural parts of the Bologna Process, focusing on the ECTS credits. Teachers did not seem to be aware of the demands of a shift from teacher driven provision to student centred learning. This needs to be developed in this (and the other) programmes. Having said this, the teachers seem both interested and well aware of the need for using and developing a variety of teaching methods.

In sum, the staff situation is fully satisfactory for the programme needs and meets legal requirements. The qualifications and number of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes. There were no indications of an unsatisfactory amount of staff turnover. Some of the teaching staff on the programme are involved in research directly related to the study programme being reviewed. The University needs to promote the professional development of the teaching staff in terms of teaching and learning in accordance with European trends and agreements.

4. Facilities and learning resources

Facilities and learning resources are good. Access to data bases, journals and books is on par with institutions in other parts of Europe and the U.S. and students have the resources they need for a positive learning experience. Integration with workplaces, as well as internet accessibility for staff, allow a good programme to function despite the limited office and classroom space. Although a wider range of laboratory equipment would be optimal, labs and equipment, as well as library resources and journals, are adequate. The department also has an observation room of very high quality which is especially well suited for a masters programme of this type.

5. Study process and student assessment

Admission requirements are a BA in Psychology.

The teaching activities sound traditional with lectures and seminars but a range of interactive methods are also listed. The department has also produced a number of readers, guidelines etc to the students to facilitate their studies. This is commendable.

Assessment takes place primarily in the written format and is done in accordance with the rules of the University, which stipulate a ten-point scale and registration of grades in a database.

Assessment criteria (i.e., descriptors of what *satisfactory* or *very satisfactory* etc actually mean in relation to the course) are not published anywhere to students in advance (cf. European Standards and Guidelines, ESG). The self-evaluation report mentions that an introduction of “systemic examination monitoring” needs be introduced in the future. This is very good: assessment and grading is a “forgotten child” in academia and often characterized by low validity (e.g. written exams to assess competences that need to be evidenced in other ways) and low reliability between teachers. To do a systematic monitoring of this and align all learning outcomes with fit for purpose assessment methods will improve the quality of the programme. It is however important to point out here that this applies to all programmes in a general sense. Assessment methods on this programme are varied and satisfactory but with an overemphasis on the written format. Students can file appeals.

Students are included into projects and scientific research in the department via their thesis work and the organization around these seems of a good standard. Students are encouraged to take part in conferences, and to become members of professional organisations. They are also encouraged to go abroad to other universities under the Erasmus Student Exchange Programme. Mobility figures seem low and the team’s advice would be to interview students in order to understand why this is so.

A range of social activities is mentioned.

In sum, the admission requirements are well-founded, a BA in psychology is required to enter the programme. The organisation of the study process ensures an adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes. Students are encouraged to participate in research and applied research activities. Students have opportunities to participate in student mobility programmes and the higher education institution ensures an adequate level of academic and social support. The assessment system is dominated by written exams but still with a good variety of formats. The self-evaluation mentions that an introduction of “systemic examination monitoring” needs be introduced in the future and that this is on the way at university level. Carrying out a systematic monitoring of this and aligning all learning outcomes with fit for purpose assessment methods will improve the quality of this and all programmes.

6. Programme management

According to the self-evaluation document the responsibilities between the Study Programme Committee, the Department and the Faculty seem clear and the programme has been continually assessed and improved by teachers, students and stakeholders. However, at the site visit the expert group became aware of the mismatch between what was presented in the self-evaluation document and reality. This full-time programme was, according to the document, scheduled to start in 2011/2012 but had not yet started in October. It is to this day still unclear to the expert team whether there is a programme in educational psychology at masters level running at Vilnius University or not. Additional information with course outlines for such a programme was provided during the site visit. However this differs from the evaluated programme both with regards to the number of credits (84 vs 80) and syllabus and course modules, and cannot be considered the same programme. To add to this confusion staff also found it difficult to articulate the difference between the programme under evaluation and the Master of Psychology with education as a specialism, which is currently running. Thus the expert group finds the situation very problematic in terms of both responsibilities and internal quality assurance processes. After a serious discussion we did decide on a grading of 2 rather than 1 since our overall impression of the programme is that with the recommended alterations it will definitely be a programme of satisfactory quality in an area of high public need.

In sum the administrative situation of this programme is problematic with regards to responsibilities and internal quality assurance processes. There is a lack of clarity regarding this programme and its relationship to a Master of Psychology with education as speciality which needs to be sorted out, as do issues concerning whether this programme should be (or is) delivered in full-time or part-time mode.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Clarify the situation of this programme with regard to whether it is full-time and/or part-time, and also clarify the rationale behind this programme and the Master of Psychology with education as a speciality.
2. Review programme content and see if the following components can be included: prevention science, positive youth development programmes, and information about the school system and school culture.
3. Review all course outlines with regards to learning outcomes with a new template clearly separating aims, objectives and learning outcomes from each other. (An appendix will be available at the SKVC with suggestions in order to facilitate this process.)
4. Review all assessments/examinations so that they are aligned with the learning outcomes and also to ensure that integration and synthesis across the programme lead to the intended learning outcomes beyond those of each individual course.
5. Review department routines on updating of literature.
6. The staff development opportunities should be expanded, especially in the area of teaching and learning. An excellent start could be to focus on the qualitative parts of the Bologna process promoting the move from teacher driven provision to student centred teaching and learning in order to make higher education competence-based instead of just knowledge-based.

IV. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Educational Psychology* (state codes – 62406S106, 621S18001) is given **positive** evaluation.

Study programme assessment in points by evaluation areas.

No.	Evaluation Area	Evaluation Area in Points*
1.	Programme aims and learning outcomes	3
2.	Curriculum design	2
3.	Staff	3
4.	Facilities and learning resources	4
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process, student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	2
	Total:	17

*1 (unsatisfactory) - there are essential shortcomings that must be eliminated;

2 (satisfactory) - meets the established minimum requirements, needs improvement;

3 (good) - the field develops systematically, has distinctive features;

4 (very good) - the field is exceptionally good.

Grupės vadovas:
Team Leader:

Prof. Emeritus dr. Stephen Edward Newstead

Grupės nariai:
Team members:

Assoc. prof. dr. Lena Adamson

Prof. dr. Sherri Nevada McCarthy

Prof. dr. Reinhold Stipsits

Agnė Tamošiūnaitė

Prof. dr. Rita Žukauskienė