



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

General Report on the Colleges and Universities 2013 Pre-school education Programmes

(8 undergraduate programmes (5 in colleges and 3 in universities) plus one pre-school and one primary Master's programme)

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1. According to current data for Lithuania, Pre-school Educators are prepared at undergraduate level in Colleges (5 study programmes), as well as at Universities (7 programmes), giving a total of twelve such programmes. In addition there are, it appears, 5 study programmes in primary. However, other programmes are on HEI lists but often not running, due to poor recruitment so it is difficult to really have a clear picture of provision. For example Siauliai two programmes are not at present recruiting, as a new programme, combining Pre-school and Primary education for teaching has been opened and taken over from the previous two. These two however are still technically 'on the books'. EET is of the view that this is an

excessive number of such programmes, especially as there are programmes with as few as 5 students in a year group. EET believes that higher standards could be achieved in a smaller number of 'Centres of Excellence', each of which would then have a larger number of students. Many of these programmes, in the opinion of EET are not financially viable, despite using strategies like only having entry every 2 years, doubling up with other groups for teaching etc. Too many programmes do not have enough students to make the education of the group a viable and worthwhile experience, despite the so-called 'need', which is not statistically well supported or argued.

2. EET appreciates that the issue of entry requirements is not entirely in the hands of the Colleges and Universities but is partially dependant on other bodies, such as the Association of Lithuanian Higher Schools (LAMA BPO) and the Lithuanian Ministry of Education and Science. EET suggests that it provide fruitful ground for research to investigate whether the subjects required for entry to Pre-School or Early Childhood programmes are a reliable basis on which to make decisions on the selection of entrants (Lithuanian language, mathematics and possibly English are sensible), but the inclusion of history as opposed to a science or arts subject is not understood by EET.
3. The titles of these programmes (Pre-school education/pedagogy) gives a somewhat negative perception as the existing titles fail to focus on what the core of the learning is about. In other countries in the EU, terms such as "Early Years", "Early Childhood Studies" or "Early Childhood Education and Care" are used or even "Education 0-7 years" all of which present a more positive picture and a clearer focus
4. A quotation from one self-assessment document offers a most interesting insight into the reasons for which a Master's degree (primary) might be required:

More than half of teachers in Lithuania expressed the necessity to improve in all the spheres related to teaching: content of the study subject taught, assessment of learners' achievement, choice and application of appropriate methods, ICT application, solving of problems of learners' discipline and behaviour, school learners' consulting. The research data allow concluding that the Bachelor's qualification acquired by the majority of teachers is not sufficient under contemporary conditions of change, technological progress and fast social euro-integration. It can be stated that Master studies could contribute to solving of the majority of these problems (Teaching and Learning: International Survey. TALIS 2008. Report. Vilnius: Nacionalinis egzaminų centras, 2009. [accessed 21 January 2013] Available at: http://www.egzaminai.lt/failai/1273_Talis_ataskaita.pdf).

This is a serious indictment of the standards of current Bachelor programmes. It should not be the function of a Master's degree to cover these deficiencies. The above quotation tells EET that the standard of work in the Bachelor's qualifications for teachers is inadequate, in regard to basic competences and the practical skills of teaching. It also indicates that the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provided across the country is not fit for purpose. In the first instance, competence in all of the areas listed should be part of basic initial training, possibly updated by CPD provided locally. Classroom management (discipline) is something that all students should be prepared for in their initial training, as it is an essential skill for all teachers.

In all institutions visited, EET was very concerned about the standards of the professional practice in both universities and colleges. In most cases, students did not have enough classroom practice hours to enable them to develop the necessary skills to become teachers. Excessive time devoted to observation and “getting to know the setting” impeded the time available for immersion in the development of the essential skills of teaching. Yet, EET found very high marking of students on their practices and a total lack of failures among those training to be teachers. These graduates are entitled to work across Europe and their quality is simply not good enough.

5. Quality control in many cases is not well established from the ground up. Though colleges have applied for quality recognition, there is a lack of real understanding amongst staff as how to embed quality into programmes. Much, at present, is done to a formula (committees, student and staff questionnaires, programme renewals etc.) not from a deep understanding of how to ensure quality processes at every step.
6. One College claims that ‘Quality culture in our higher education is not yet developed – the staff lack knowledge about the internal quality assurance mechanisms, we have no experience in implementing innovative quality management systems, we are not familiar with the basis of practical implementation of the requirements of international standards.’ This is a highly worrying statement in the eyes of EET and help needs to be given to College staff here.
7. The lack of double marking of the coursework (as opposed to the thesis defence) and no use of external examiners exacerbates the problems with high marking as there is no check on excessive grading by staff. This is demonstrated by the high number of students being awarded a perfect 10 for written work and for the school practice. In addition there is a total lack of the use of the grades 1-4 and the rare use of grades 5 and 6, which coupled with the fact that failure of a student on teaching practice or for low academic standards is almost non-existent, gives us serious cause for concern. Social partners informed us that there are students who withdraw from practice, as they themselves see they are unsuited to teaching, but students are in most cases not told to leave by staff. One of the reasons for this is the need to retain students for financial reasons, to keep staff in the universities and colleges employed, but it is disastrous with regard to maintaining high quality.
8. It is good to see kindergarten staff and social partners, as well as students, involved in the quality assurance process and in the preparation of Self-evaluation Reports (SERs). Some colleges have followed the SER template very well and tried hard to look carefully at their strengths and weaknesses but others have not. In some HEIs, there appears to be little support given to those writing the self-evaluation documents; there should be. College and university quality offices should be responsible for checking if the reports are completed correctly and using the latest template. SKVC should look at all these reports when they are submitted to ensure they follow the template and, if they do not, SKVC should send them back. There is far too much wastage of time for the international team trying to find the information they require in poorly written and improperly structured reports. It is essential that programme and institutional weaknesses are discussed in the SERs and suggestions made as to how to improve things. This is normal practice across Europe and is expected. It is a plus for an international reviewer to see that staff can be self-critical and make suggestions for changes and, more importantly, include

strategies for so doing. Such reflective practice provides an excellent model for students.

9. In most institutions evaluated, assessment practices are not really related to Intended Learning Outcomes and, in some cases, there is real confusion on the part of the staff as to the difference between aims, learning outcomes and objectives. Much more training is required here – the task is a difficult one. In addition there is still too much written about competences, as opposed to Intended Learning Outcomes which, if correctly written will cover the competences which are required.
10. The impression gained by EET is that most of the College and even university undergraduate programmes are designed to satisfy local needs, as teachers in kindergartens are now required to have a degree and can be trained under these programmes. This results in a lack of a forward looking philosophy. These programmes are provided from the basis of a strong belief in the need to educate students in the places in where they live which, to a certain extent, is understandable, especially for mature students. However, this attitude limits the student experience, the stretching of their minds and the introduction of students to different ways of thinking. This problem is intensified across the country by the fact that the majority of employers work and live in a particular area. They have all been trained at the local HEI and employ graduates from there. They all tell EET that this college or this university is 'the best'. However, they have very rarely, if ever, employed a member of staff trained anywhere else, so they have nothing with which to compare. The word to describe this culture is 'incestuous'.
11. Some full-time students do not find work in their specialist area, possibly caused by lack of job opportunities, despite claims that there is a national need. In some cases, only a single student out of an entire cohort had found work directly in the area of their competence. This is a serious waste of resources.
12. It is good to see that the employment of unqualified staff is now not permitted in kindergartens and that some colleges are working to attract students from ethnic minorities to work in the pre-school education field.
13. Lack of good data on staff student ratios hampers EET in assessing programme costs and value-for-money and it is obvious that this state of affairs across the country cannot continue (for financial considerations at the very least). It is essential that the Ministry have good recent data on numbers of graduates needed in each specific field, graduate employment and staff student ratios calculated on hours required for a programme for teaching and support for students in relation to numbers of students on the programme. Calculating this way would show up where too many hours were being given to teaching small groups. It would be much better to concentrate provision in fewer establishments, whilst allowing students to do practice in their own areas. The present practice of basing staff student ratios on credits taught rather than hours does not help to give clarity when looking at staff workloads, or the average numbers of staff to students in a programme. Figures on graduate employment should also be provided to reviewers.
14. The pre-school programmes lack an emphasis on the importance of play as an aid to learning and also lack a focus on the child, who should be at the centre of the programmes. Children's learning needs to be far more explicitly embedded into the heart of the programmes which, at present, lack real cohesion and a holistic approach. Many programmes offer a collection of modules (often old ones brought in from former programmes) possibly to keep staff in employment, or to cope with

small numbers. This practice results in stagnation and a failure to change. In addition, there is little growth in the difficulty of the work from year to year, due to this collection of modules approach, rather than one based on the aims and learning outcomes of the programme.

15. Low student numbers, in many colleges and even in some universities, means that these students have to undertake joint lessons with others studying pedagogy for different age groups, or even social pedagogy. There is a real danger here that the focus on the young child is lost, in the attempt to teach viable groups, when small groups are joined together for the majority of teaching time. Students complained about this. Too much assessment was based on students' own research because the tutor of the 'generalised' module e.g. pedagogy or psychology had no experience of working with pre-school children. In some Colleges and Universities, a very small proportion of the staff teaching on these programmes themselves possess the qualifications required to work with young children and even fewer staff had any substantive experience of actually working or teaching at that level.
16. Quality IN THE COLLEGES is NOT degree level. There is little focus on the education of children of pre-school age, as opposed to minding and entertaining them. EET had difficulty in identifying these as Level 6 EU programmes and this problem needs to be seriously addressed. The graduates of all of these programmes can work across the EU as qualified teachers but they simply do not measure up to an EU standard. Reluctantly, due to the claim that there is a growing national need for such graduates, EET has decided to pass most of the programmes at the lowest possible level to give 3 years accreditation to the colleges to allow them 3 years within which to improve, despite our serious concerns about the lack of Level 6 rigour. It is very distressing for the Chair to see, in some cases, no change or improvement from her first visit in 2003. All our concerns about the quality of the programmes are clearly demonstrated in the final thesis and practice reports. In reality, all these college programmes could have been failed on the lack of degree level (Level 6) difficulty. The one failure is based on lack of good working conditions for staff and students, problems with the curriculum and above all the fact that this college was given almost identical advice about the need to improve a similar programme (Primary Pedagogy taught by many of the staff involved in this Pre-school programme) in 2010 and nothing has really changed.
17. There appears to be a lack of detailed focussed psychology for 0-7 years in all these programmes, as the psychology is general and modules are often taken in conjunction with other groups studying pedagogy. It would be good to see more emphasis on the young child for these students. In addition students asked for more practically related work in this area e.g. managing groups, addressing special needs, dealing with diversity, conflicts, relations with children and their parents, how to communicate with staff members etc. It is important too that the issue of Children's Rights are covered in the curriculum and issues such as child abuse discussed.
18. ICT in most HEIs needs a far greater focus on its pedagogical use in the classroom and for the management of a school/kindergarten. Students need to know how to use interactive whiteboards during their training. EET was informed in one college that "they can learn this in the workplace", which is not satisfactory. Universities are on the whole better equipped than colleges, which means university students have advantages over those educated in colleges, yet both obtain a degree. A much greater use of technology should be obvious in the college modules e.g. robots and

cameras. Computer games are being introduced but often by way of students being told to find them on the internet, with little input or discussions on quality and safety in use occurring.

19. There appears to be a national difficulty in admitting to failure. This prevents staff from being self-critical and analytical as well as preventing them from ever failing a student. As a result, staff have difficulty in guiding students to be reflective and self-critical during the programmes. The response of both staff and students to questions from EET on the numbers of students who fail was generally one of total surprise and the assurance to EET that no students fail. The cumulative assessment processes are done at a level that makes success assured. This is particularly noticeable for practice assessments, where school staff are involved and EET was told by one member of college staff that “we use a simple sheet of paper to help them evaluate our students”. This is very worrying as, when this is coupled with universally high marking, it does not convince EET that high standards are being maintained. We could find no real evidence of students failing any of these programmes due to poor academic ability, or poor performance in practice. This is highly unusual across Europe. There is very little spread of grades in the pattern which one would expect to see. How this is possible is unclear to EET. In other countries in Europe, students fail and the prevailing state of affairs in Lithuania means that the standard of these graduates is too low. Staff in the colleges admitted they do all they can to keep students on the programmes because, if students leave, they will lose funding. This is a serious admission with regard to the quality of graduates being produced. It is questionable if this state affairs would be tolerated in other subject areas, such as medicine etc. yet these graduates are responsible for the education of young children.
20. The drop-out rate in year one in the colleges gives cause for concern. This raises questions as to whether these students really want to follow this programme and whether they have a clear vocation to work with young children. It is essential that early simulation exercises are carried out in the college which will allow students to demonstrate their ability to link theory to practice in relation to the use of didactics and their understanding of the education system. It may also be worth having all students, and not just state-funded students, take the motivation test as a way of ensuring that those applicants who are accepted on the programme really wish to and are suitable for studying in this area. It would also be good practice to insist that all prospective students work for a week voluntarily in a pre-school or kindergarten before starting on the programme. This would undoubtedly remove those students whose ideas about young children are unrealistic.
21. As so few staff in either universities or colleges have real experience of teaching young children and as so many staff are not qualified in the area of pre-school education, this means that staff teaching on the programmes are not, in general, undertaking research focussed on the early years level.
22. Poor participation in Erasmus, together with little experience outside their own part of the country for many of these students, is not healthy or good for intellectual growth, stimulation, development and change. Colleges and universities could, at least, invite foreign teachers to give lectures on the programmes. This is happening in a few cases, but it is by no means general. Few staff are involved in international activities in the colleges which limits their own experience and, as it is funded by the EU, this is to be regretted, Contacts are better in universities but, as most students

now work, travelling abroad to study is difficult. The problem with localism is compounded by many students working full-time at the same time as studying a full-time programme. EET was astonished to find that for University Master's programmes, this appeared to be the norm. Most of these students were also receiving state funding to study full-time, in addition to a state salary for their full-time work. As a result, teaching contact time is at a minimum and students simply are not doing enough work to merit the award of a Master's qualification. In other countries, part-time degrees are just that - part time and students work and follow the programmes but take longer to complete.

23. There is a clear lack of theoretical difficulty and intellectual challenge in the college degrees, but these degrees are still counted as a Bachelor's degree which is problematic. EET have very serious concerns about the low quality of most of these programmes which, in many ways, are old fashioned and of far too low a level to be assessed as a degree-level qualification. A comparison could be made here with the now defunct nursery nurse qualification provided in England in the 1970s in Further Education Colleges to students aged 16-18, not those studying at degree level. It may be time to end all of these three year programmes, replacing them all with more substantive four-year programmes.
24. The presentation of the final *thesis* (the word used here is not correct, at the most it is a dissertation - the word "thesis" should be used only for Masters and Doctoral level) is resulting in very low standards. This is a problem in the colleges but in universities, it is totally unacceptable. This is particularly worrying at Master's Level where students are being, we are told, prepared to be scientific researchers. In no way is this the case, as basic international research standards are not being adhered to. It is not surprising, therefore, that so few staff publish in international refereed journals if this is the standard of their OWN work. The following guidelines have been given to both colleges and universities for years and the majority simply ignore them. It was good to see, on this visit, that an effort had been made in one institution, in one programme, to change as per the previous guidance. However, it is not understandable as to why this had not occurred in the second programme in the same institution where exactly the same advice had been given but where no attempt to improve had been made. In fact, the thesis was acknowledged as a weakness by them in their remarks in their self-assessment, but blamed on the changes in the student intake caused by Ministry decisions.

The following guidelines need to be strictly followed

- Word count (omitting, quotes and the bibliography section) as opposed to numbers of pages should be used to prevent students filling pages with bar and pie charts and graphs to use up space.
- Much more use of foreign literature is essential to make any of the literature searches worthwhile and the universities and even the colleges have good access to material via the databases they pay for. Unfortunately, students do not use them and staff do not seem to include them in booklists for modules. This is obviously caused by a problem with the use of foreign languages by staff and students, which needs to be addressed. The language of research is English and students and staff and students need help with this. Many booklists were dated. It would be advisable for students as well as staff to be obliged to take the learning of a foreign language further in their studies as language proficiency was poor for both staff and students.

- The methods used for data collection should be a mixture of qualitative and quantitative approaches, to ensure triangulation of the findings. At present most of this work uses only questionnaires, often incorrectly called a survey. The choice of methods needs to be justified and discussed, using references to theoretical sources about research methodology.
- The dissertation/thesis should always include a section on research ethics and how standards have been maintained with regard to confidentiality and how the respondents have been protected from harm. A discussion on how validity and reliability have been ensured and how bias has been avoided should also be included. Again the use of supporting research theory is required.
- After the presentation of research findings and the analysis, using accepted methods, the third part of the work should involve discussing the findings of the research in comparison to the literature which was examined in the first section. Has this research found similar or different things? If there are differences, the possible reason(s) for this should be addressed. The success or otherwise of the chosen research methods and any difficulties faced should also be discussed.
- At present, Masters Degrees are, in their aims, telling us that they intend to produce scientific researchers. This is not the case at all; the quality of the research and the presentation of findings are at a very low level. This is despite grandiose research thesis titles used at undergraduate and also Masters Level which would be more suitable for a major Doctoral thesis or even for a national research project.

An additional page is given at the end of this document to outline what should be in the contents of each section of the work

25. It is essential that the content of a degree should follow its title e.g. a Masters in Primary Education, should be focussed on improving the quality of teaching and learning in primary schools, not producing a consultant or a researcher for the education community, or someone who will work in higher education. Certainly, these students should have research skills, but not at the expense of a real concentration on the main focus of the programme, which is about enhancing learning in a primary school. The idea of producing a consultant, when most students have very little actual practice experience in teaching when they enter a Master's degree is risible. Things have changed and now, often, students come on to Master's degree programmes with either, no experience in the classroom or, from a different background entirely. How can a Master's degree, on which there is no practice in school, provide the learning to turn students with restricted teaching experience into educational consultants?
26. The purpose of a Master's degree is not to produce university or college teachers. Concentration on learning in HEIs and andragogy should be addressed by way of college and university qualifications, offered to new staff on a part time basis.
27. The Motivation Test is too simple; students tell us they can guess the answers and it is not sufficiently related to the young child, being a general pedagogy programme test. Centres in which to take the test are too few and they are inaccessible for some

students. There is a problem with the timing of the test, which appears to be putting students off applying for pedagogy programmes. The test should be later, after exam results are known and far more centres are needed as students in the country side do not want to have to travel to cities to take the test. In some cases, the Colleges are taking students to the test centres only to find that they then decide to go, not to their local College, but to one in the city. EET was also informed that applications for places on this programme have to be done earlier than for other programmes and the reasons for this seem to be unclear. Despite the test, large numbers of students are dropping out in year one.

28. The Master's degrees are also under strain because of the law which allows those with related qualification, but not a first degree in a specific area, to undertake Master's study e.g. students who had studied as a teacher of ethics or social pedagogy or as a pre-school teacher undertaking a Master's in Primary Education. Staff are seriously worried about this as they have to provide bridging modules to overcome deficiencies in students' previous knowledge. However, these merely involve setting students self-study tasks to complete and do not include any time spent in a school classroom to gain practical experience. This, coupled with the fact that most of these students are working full time, means that their degree is not of a requisite standard with regard to its depth and quality of experience.
29. In addition EET has serious concerns that universities, as a result it appears, of dropping numbers are producing new programmes that attempt to train teachers who can work with children aged 0-12. This is obviously to follow the job market, as the employment situation in teaching is difficult, due to demographics and the high level of emigration. EET has serious concerns, after seeing one of these new programmes that it is not possible to train a teacher for such a wide and disparate age range, especially as it is impossible to give students sufficient practice time with different ages of children or thoroughly prepare them for the different learning and teaching methods required.
30. It is good to see that some colleges are now monitoring the employment rates of their graduates.

Practices

31. The final pedagogical thesis should be renamed as the student's "Teaching Portfolio" and should be highly reflective. It should clearly state, with examples, the student's strengths and weaknesses in practice. What needs to be improved when s/he begins work? The student should then take this into employment and show it to their employer who can then see where further input or training is required. Again this is common practice across the EU. We do not expect our newly qualified teachers to be perfect; one could then question why so many Lithuanian students are considered almost perfect, many receiving the perfect 10 for practice and dissertations.
32. The Teaching Portfolio should be electronic not a large folder of paper.
33. EET saw no evidence that students, and possibly staff, understood what is meant by the term 'critical reflection'. This was perfectly obvious in the practice reports where sections labelled 'reflection' were merely descriptions of what was done and not

- done. Some colleges have modules related to reflective pedagogy but there is no transference of this into practice.
34. It is essential that students have a variety of practices and are not just based in one kindergarten or school for all practices. This does happen with part-time students who are working in the sector. This approach restricts diversity of experience.
 35. It is good to see that more and more colleges are making binding agreements with practice institutions to make good links.
 36. Little is said in the self-evaluation reports about the responsibility for practice assessment and how it is divided between the school and college staff and as to what is actually being assessed. The SERs, in most cases, are very scanty in this regard. A clear line of how responsibility for assessment is divided should be available, **with mentors trained in how to do this**, tutors visiting schools and discussing progress with mentors and students must take clear responsibility for assessing practice in the classroom. It was clear that there was confusion amongst some groups of staff as to the percentages ascribed to various parts of the assessment on different practices. Practice cannot be assessed by reports, or by presentations graded after the event, which appears to be the norm. This problem needs to be urgently addressed. Stakeholders say that, when recruiting, they take little or no notice of practice, or even programme final grades which is alarming.
 37. There is a great deal of time wasted on practice, in that students do not do any individual teaching until year 3 in universities. Even in colleges, time is wasted on each practice finding out about the school and acting as assistant to the teacher even in year 3 at the beginning of the practice. We would expect that, even in year 1 a student should themselves be trying to teach e.g. a small group for part of a lesson or part of paired work with 2 students in the same class. The actual time these graduates have spent in full control of a class is not sufficient for working in other European countries, who may well ask for these details in job applications. The whole concept in the HEIs is that the teaching practice area is far less important than the theory that the tutors teach. This concept is totally outdated and needs rapid change. Practice and its assessment should be the most important part of the programme.
 38. As mentioned above, there is a lack of training for mentors, though they are responsible for a large part of the practice assessment. Mere long experience does not mean that school staff know and understand how to assess students' planning and reflection. The assessing of and reporting about practice is of a very low standard, more a tick list of what has been completed rather than an analytical assessment. The impression gained by EET is that colleges and universities do not consider this their responsibility as previously mentor training (2006) was offered using EU finance. As a result, the HEIs seem to be content to sit back and do nothing, unless they are financed. This is totally unacceptable and this is not the only situation where reliance on EU funding appears to be stifling initiative. The HEIs should be undertaking mentor training themselves and do it yearly to update school staff. There appears, from the perceived staff/student ratios, to be a surplus of staff in HEIs who could easily undertake this role. They would however, need to have themselves been teachers for the age range in which the mentor works. This is another good reason for changing the type of person who is recruited to train teachers in HEIs, from a theorist to someone with extensive practical experience of work in school, who can relate theory to practice using personal experience.

In conclusion

39. The criteria for the template for assessment, used by the international teams, especially the 4 levels for grading, make it very difficult for the EET to really be critical of poor practice as a 1 leads to closure – a 5 point scale would allow level 2 to be for areas that are significantly poor and need improvement and 1 for programmes areas that are so bad the programme should close.
40. The whole HEI system lacks proper data – staff student ratios, workloads data and costs of programmes are not available. Some HEIs are starting to keep records of graduate employment which is good, but it is essential that careful records are kept and that predictions of the need for teachers in specific fields at national and local level are available to all. Universities and colleges are too ready to take in students who can pay, rather than considering if there is employment for the graduates they produce. The system of financing and controlling numbers of students in training is seriously flawed. Very small numbers of students on programmes have resulted in new programmes which have been designed to follow the labour market rather than producing high quality specialists, resulting in graduates that have insufficient knowledge and experience in the fields for which they say they are trained e.g. to work with children from age 0 to 12. This is not satisfactory in any way.
41. It is distressing to note that pedagogy programmes in colleges and universities are often in buildings that are old and poorly maintained, whereas other disciplines have new buildings. This is not satisfactory in any way and gives an indication of the status of teacher education in the nation.
42. In many places there is a need to update the pedagogically-related ICT equipment.
43. The funding system for these programmes means that there is a tendency to produce a constantly increasing list of programmes. Master's degrees, it appears, are funded on their titles, which prevents them being put together to make rational groups where students can work together. Universities should be given the choice of how to allot funding between the various degree titles, from a central grant for their Master's programmes so they can rationalise the approach.
44. It appears that in reality almost all Master's students (including those who are fully state funded) are generally working full time for a salary which in most cases is paid by the state. This, results in a programme that is literally 'do it yourself' with very low contact time and a great deal of that via distance learning. These students are in reality part time and should therefore not be expected to cover the work required at Master's level in two years. The fact that they do and succeed, means that the depth and standards required are not sufficiently high. A longer period would allow for more work in other countries to expand experience. This was requested by graduates, students and social partners.
45. Role of SKVC. The agency needs to be properly funded and have control over the HEIs who, at present, are too easily able to ignore or twist directives from the Ministry or the Agency. It is not satisfactory in a country that professes to take quality seriously that the Agency depends on project funding from the EU and so has to use its staff time on projects rather than on assessing and ensuring quality.
46. There is a culture amongst HEIs of waiting for someone else to act or to fund improvement. There is too little reliance on their own efforts and ideas. The sector needs to grow up and become responsible for its own quality which, at present, despite many committees, endless questionnaires and meetings is not seen as the

responsibility of every staff member. This includes the impression gained from overheard staff conversations that some staff have no interest in reaching accepted EU standards as "this is Lithuania and we can do what we want for Lithuania not the EU". As the EU funds so much of what is done and staff sit and wait for that funding, a culture change needs to occur and this must come from Ministry and HEI management. There is far too much complacency at present and things are slipping backwards rather than moving forward.

47. Leadership and management is, in many cases, weak, with a demonstrable lack of knowledge or interest in specific programmes by Faculty and Institution leadership teams. This is not satisfactory, especially when a review is being undertaken. This can result in poor SERs as staff teams are not properly trained, old templates are used and the only input on how to do the task is left to SKVC. There does not, in some cases, even seem to be an insistence that teaching staff attend the review meetings. When asked why staff involved with teaching research subjects at Master's level were not in attendance, we were told 'they are teaching or doing something else'. This, coupled with the selective use of, or total ignoring of advice given on previous visits, clearly demonstrates a lack of commitment to improving quality or even to the review process and an inflated opinion of the level of the programmes offered.
48. Despite claims that the country has a need, it is obvious that many graduates of the pre-school programmes do not find employment in the area as there are no jobs – this is a national problem – does the country want pre-school education or not? Does it want to spend money educating graduates for non-existent posts? Something needs to change.

Gillian Hilton on behalf of the team



Guidance for writing a thesis at Master's level and even Bachelor's Level

For a Master's dissertation 20,000 words is the norm for an Education thesis for a Bachelor's Dissertation 10-12,000 words.

The title should be appropriate and truly reflect what the thesis contains. Grandiose or over ambitious titles that give an incorrect impression of content must be avoided.

The whole should be presented with a title page, acknowledgements avoiding naming respondents or places where the research was carried out, a list of contents, lists of tables and of figures. There should then be an abstract of around 200 words for the Master's thesis less for the Bachelor's dissertation briefly explaining what was researched, how and why and what were the overall findings.

1. Introduction this explains the reason for the research. The broad field of study to be addressed needs to be explained and set in context and the research problems introduced possibly with a research question that is to be answered. The introduction should be short and aim to engage and interest the reader. A brief overview can be given of the research undertaken and the structure of the dissertation that is the titles of the different chapters and a short explanation of their contents.
- 2, Literature review
Background to the topic needs to be presented - where it arises what concerns there are about it - why it needs to be studied
Previous researches in the area. These need to be comprehensive and include opposing findings and use international research results and issues raised. This should be presented in a way in that asks questions of the research discussed by experts in particular its relevance to work in another country.
3. Research Methodology
Purpose and hypothesis of current research should be explained
Anticipated Research Challenges- what might prove difficult e.g. access to respondents or getting permission to carry out the research
Consideration of Ethical Issues which may arise such as working with vulnerable children and adults, how permission was sought, possibly harm and distress considered and worked against and confidentiality anonymity and privacy are ensured (e.g. name changes, institutions labelled A,B C etc.). All this referenced to good practice in research contained in accepted research texts. How the gathered data will be protected from exploitation.
How the respondents were contacted and how the research was explained and if children are involved how the obstacle of their lack of understanding or ability to say no was considered in the research practice.
Research Instruments which have been considered, the research paradigm explained i.e. the overarching approach and why it was chosen in preference to other methodologies. This must be referenced to current research theory
Context and setting in which Research is located.
Research Instruments selected and reasons for choices, referenced to research theory. How was triangulation of the findings assured, either by use of a combination of methods of data collection, or the use of several different groups of respondents to ensure a wide range of opinions was gathered?
How validity and reliability were considered and bias avoided.

4. Research Findings
 - How Research was conducted- a timeline is often useful here
 - A discussion of any problems or changes that occurred or a recommendation of how the approach could be improved if the work were undertaken again.
 - Overview of the research data emerging
 - Discussion of research findings and the methods used for their analysis.
 - Presentation of each area of research in an appropriate manner, charts graphs explanations etc.

5. Discussion of each finding and how it relates to other research that was included in the literature search chapter
 - Differences and similarities emerging from the data – are the findings the same as for other research, or different did any new or context related findings occur? A critical discussion needs to occur here.
 - How this piece of research fits within the global understanding of the issue

6. Conclusions and Recommendations
 - Conclusions arrived at from the research
 - What further research might now be required in order to explore the problem further
 - How the findings can be applied locally or more widely but care needs to be taken here not to insist that the findings are generalisable as they will be too limited to allow that claim to be made.

7. Recommendations for further work

8. Bibliography

9. Appendices