STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

Vilniaus universitetas

***PEDAGOGIKA* PROGRAMOS (631X10001, 62207S133)**

**VERTINIMO** **IŠVADOS**

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**EVALUATION REPORT**

**OF *PEDAGOGY* (631X10001, 62207S133)**

**STUDY PROGRAMME**

at Vilnius University

|  |  |
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Išvados parengtos anglų kalba

Report language - English

**DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ**

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| --- | --- |
| Studijų programos pavadinimas | Pedagogika |
| Valstybinis kodas | 631X10001, 62207S133 |
| Studijų sritis | socialiniai mokslai |
| Studijų kryptis | pedagogika |
| Studijų programos rūšis  | laipsnio nesuteikiančios studijos |
| Studijų pakopa |  |
| Studijų forma (trukmė metais) | nuolatinės (1), ištęstinės (1) |
| Studijų programos apimtis kreditais | 60 |
| Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija | mokytojas |
| Studijų programos įregistravimo data | 2008-05-21 Nr. ISAK-1444 |

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**INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME**

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| Title of the study programme | Pedagogy |
| State code | 631X10001, 62207S133 |
| Study area | social sciences |
| Study field | teachers training |
| Kind of the study programme | non-degree |
| Cycle of studies |  |
| Study mode (length in years) | full-time (1), part-time (1) |
| Scope of the study programme in credits | 60 |
| Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded | teacher |
| Date of registration of the study programme | 2008-05-21 No. ISAK-1444 |

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# I. INTRODUCTION

The study programme on Pedagogy (631X10001, 62207S133) at Vilnius University serves the national and regional needs of providing the necessary pedagogical qualification to teachers who are currently working in Lithuanian schools and have not previously acquired such a qualification to teach. Although the programme “Pedagogy” taught at the Faculty of Philosophy of VU corresponds in main lines to the Lithuanian regulation of teacher education, doubts remain on the suitability of the programme for really achieving its objective due to the lack of university control over the student teacher school practice. Such weaknesses substantially undermine the validity of a programme that would be otherwise of great value to the nation, even if work would still be needed to strengthen its overall quality.

As indicated in the general report, the poor quality and reliability of the student teacher school practice is an issue that needs to be addressed at national level. Also, the name and categorisation of the programme as non-degree should be reconsidered, as it is currently confusing and consequently does not provide clear guidance for designing programme objectives and Intended Learning Outcomes (ILOs).

# II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

## 1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The programme aims and learning outcomes are well defined and publicly available. The aims of the programme are clearly determined by the Lithuanian teacher education policy that is aimed at staffing the schools with qualified teachers and the outcomes of the programme are based on EU directives and Lithuanian “Regulation of teacher training” (2010). Also, the aims and learning outcomes are consistent with the type and level of the studies. The name of the programme “Pedagogy” is rather vague as it is does not say practically anything what this programme is about as the term pedagogy could mean different things. The programme’s learning outcomes and qualifications that it offers are compatible with each other. The categorisation of the programme as non-degree is rather inappropriate and even misleading, as it does not inform at which level the programme should is offered.

*Strengths:* The programme has legitimate, clear and well defined aims and learning outcomes.

*Weaknesses:* The title of the programme is non-informative and the category of the programme is not satisfactorily determined.

*Actions for improvement:* The title of the programme should be stated in a more informative terms and the category of the programme should be more clearly determined in the Lithuanian educational legislation.

## 2. Curriculum design

Apart from the substantial issue concerning the teaching practice, which is being discussed in detail hereinafter, the curriculum design presents also some other points of concern.

First, in the subject didactics courses students are not always supported by teachers of their specific subject. This fact raises some concerns as students who miss an opportunity take courses of subject didactics with subject specialists may eventually be not adequately prepared for teaching these subjects at school.

Second, in the SER the dissertation was reported to amount 4 credits, while the legal requirement is 3. The explanation that the relevant documents were not yet approved by the university administration at the time of the SER preparation is not justified because it changes the extracurricular workload of students. The university needs to be operative in observing changes in legislation.

Third, the curriculum design and the organisation of studies are built up in a way that the students are responsible for taking the initiative of for consulting with lecturers While this approach proves to be very flexible and effective in many cases , there is a risk that more restrained and humble students receive less lectures’ support and attention. This issue is further discussed in section 5.

These shortcomings must be removed as soon as possible.

Fortunately, this programme has many positive sides as well.

First, the curriculum design is in line with the requirements of Lithuanian teacher training regulations from 2010. The study courses and modules are spread logically and the themes are not repetitive. The content of the subjects and modules is consistent with the type and level of the studies (in terms of achieving the programme aims). Also, the content and methods of the subject courses are suitable for achieving the intended learning outcomes of the theoretical subject courses.

It is worth to mention that the programme offers many elective subject courses, including a course of special education. However, this course is being cancelled and its contents are being distributed across the other subject courses. Although partially understandable, this decision raises some doubts due to the increasing need of specific training for equipping teachers with the knowledge and practice necessary for dealing with disadvantaged pupils. This need was also pointed out by students and employers, who emphasised the importance of preparing prospective teachers for meeting the needs of gifted students as well.

Second, the scope of the programme is sufficient to ensure intended learning outcomes but considering that the majority student teachers are working whilst simultaneously being in the programme, it is problematic that they have sufficient time for learning.

Third, the content of the programme reflects latest achievements in the field and theoretical subjects taught in the framework of the programme are based on modern textbooks.

*Strengths:* The curriculum design has clear and logical structure and it provides elective subjects, among them a course of special pedagogy.

*Weaknesses:* A 60 credits programme to be completed in year period by student teachers who are simultaneously working at schools does not favour the achievement of stated learning outcomes. There is lack of clarity on the amount of the final thesis in credit points, and there is some mismatch between subject specializations offered and the expertise of the university teaching staff. Moreover, while there is an increasing need of equipping teachers with knowledge and skills necessary for dealing with special needs pupils, the current curriculum design foresees closing optional courses like special education instead of enhancing its relevance and introducing a course teaching how to meet needs of gifted students.

*Actions for improvement:* In order to create better conditions for achieving intended learning outcomes, an option of extending the study period to 1.5 or two years is necessary. The dissertation workload must be clarified. The subject didactics specializations must correspond to the expertise of the available university teaching staff. It is necessary to reflect on the need of courses for minority populations, such as special needs or gifted students.

## 3. Teaching staff

The study programme (in terms of theoretical studies) is provided by a staff meeting the requirements of the Lithuanian teacher training regulations. Practically all staff members have school experience over 5 years and 86% of them have doctoral degrees.

In general, the qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes, except mentors at schools supervising the student teachers pedagogical practicum.

The number of teaching staff is adequate to ensure learning outcomes related to the theoretical subject courses in the programme. The teaching staff turnover is able to ensure an adequate provision of the programme. Lecturers’ professional development is regulated and promoted by university management and is stipulated by the Scholar’s Qualification Competence Description of Vilnius University. The University provides financial support to lecturers for attending international conferences and mobility visits. During the period under consideration many lecturers attended international training events in many countries. However, there is no evidence that visiting lecturers coming from abroad have been involved in this programme. The teaching staff of this programme are involved in different research activities, have membership of several professional associations in the field, and take part in international research projects. Also, the teaching staff publish extensively in local publications but the number of publications in peer reviewed international scholarly journals and collections of papers is still rather modest.

*Strengths:* The subject courses in the programme are taught by lecturers that have extensive experience of teaching at schools and the majority of them have doctoral degrees. The institution supports staffs’ financial needs for attending conferences abroad and mobility initiatives, many staff members have participated in in-service workshops abroad.

*Weaknesses:* No foreign experts visiting Vilnius University are involved in the programme. Also, the publication of articles in international peer reviewed journals still deserves too little attention among the staff members.

*Actions for improvement:* To pay more attention to inviting visiting lecturers from abroad and to their involvement to the programme design. Also, more attention should be paid to creating conditions supporting publication of staff’s research findings in the international journals.

## 4. Facilities and learning resources

Overall, the VU premises and learning equipment are adequate both in size and quality; still, an element of concern regards the limited availability of school textbooks for studies of subject didactics and for using at teaching practice. The visits to the library and meetings with the staff revealed that only a limited selection of these materials is available at the library, but these materials are typically available in the schools were the student teachers have their practicum. This is inappropriate considering that student teachers need to have a critical overview of existing textbooks and other study aids and learn to select the most adequate instruments for their work.

Wireless internet is available at the faculty, the students and teachers can use it free of charge.

Some classrooms and auditoria are equipped with whiteboards, computers and distance learning equipment. Areas designated for education, study and work are provided with informal areas for rest and socializing.

The library offers a wealth of resources and good spaces for the students.

On the negative side it cannot be ignored that, the student teachers’ needs for practice-based studies are not satisfactorily addressed, which is a fact that leaves the External Evaluation Team with serious concerns. On the positive side, the stakeholders’ commitment to the programme and readiness for collaboration deserves appreciation of the EET.

*Strengths:* The programme has excellent facilities and resources for ensuring student teachers’ learning.

*Weaknesses:* The limited availability of school textbooks for teaching subject didactics and making preparations for teaching practice, and insufficient arrangements for this practice.

*Actions for improvement:* Ensuring that a wide variety of school textbooks necessary for teaching subject didactics is available at the University library in sufficient number of copies. Further work for ensuring the quality of the arrangements for teaching practice is necessary.

## 5. Study process and students‘ performace assessment

Regardless of all the positive features presented in the previous paragraphs, the most vibrant concern in terms of the quality of the programme relates to the quality and assessment of the student teachers’ school practice. This is the major component of pre-service teacher education, which qualifies successful students to be teachers anywhere in the EU. However, the problems with this programme start already from the ineffective selection of the candidates. More specifically, the concerns of the EET, which have been extensively described in the general report, involve worries over selection of candidates, amount of practice, variety of schools experienced by students, the training of mentors, quality and amount of feedback given by mentors, university staff’s involvement in the supervision of practice, assessment of practice, quality assurance of that practice, overrating students‘ performance and lack of any failures.

One of serious concern relates to the student enrolment. Vilnius University practices an admission and tuition fee policy for selecting students into the programme that enables a relatively limited number of applicants to be enrolled as the study positions that are not publicly funded are very costly. Thus, the current tuition fee policy reduces the attractiveness of the programme. Although the selection process discourages non motivated students for taking the programme, it is still abnormal that there are hardly any failures at the graduation from the programme. The students not graduating on time are mostly those who drop out for individual reasons but not for their underachievement in the programme.

The assessment system of students’ performance is clear and publicly available but its objectivity and reliability is not always satisfactory, especially when it comes to assessing student teachers’ professional skills in school practice.

Moreover, the university does not ensure any supervision of student teachers’ school practices (practicum). Students and employers confirmed that mentors observe student teacher classes only 4 times in the year. This is not sufficient to ensure that students develop their practical knowledge and skills and learn to reflect on their learning.

Not all mentors are prepared for supervising the school practice, and this fact undermines the suitability of the teaching practice arrangements for obtaining a qualification that would be valid across Europe.

This weakness is topped by the fact that the reliability of grading of the student teachers’ practical skills is very low if not inexistent. In fact, although some common evaluation criteria exist, the candidates are assessed by one teacher only meaning that there is no cross-checking of the grades to ensure that an 8 given by teacher A to student X corresponds to the 8 given by teacher B to student Y.

There is still a certain “grandeur” in the titling of final works, which results in a mismatch between the research aims and the content of the work produced. Although there is evidence of the use of different research methods and there is some reflection on the results, we continue to find some weaknesses that can be identified across all the programmes reviewed in the country. First, there is only a limited use of international references. Provided that most of the academic literature is developed in English, it would be advisable that students made a more systemic reference to these sources. Second, even when used, international references are relatively outdated and there is scarce or no reference to the most recent sources (i.e. articles from the past decade or past 5 years). Provided that the library has access to such resources, we cannot but heavily stress the need to directing students towards actually using such resources. Third, which follows directly from the previous two points, the literature reviews in the final theses tend to be extremely limited or superficial. It is crucial that students understand that a research work starts from the identification of a theoretical framework and contextual conditions that will direct the study. Fourth, the discussion part of the dissertations – although more extensive than in many other instances around the country – is still limited and should be heavily strengthened.

Although there is some evidence of teacher mobility (7 teachers involved in exchange programs according to the SER), there is no notice on the mobility of students. It is partially understandable that the students have limited mobility opportunities due to the fact that they are working full time in schools, but this limitation should be addressed at least by enhancing their possibility to being exposed to new methodologies and alternative approaches through seminars and workshops offered by foreign staff.

Of course, the student command of English is an element of foremost importance for them to fully take advantage of these training opportunities, thus the programme should further promote activities that reinforce student knowledge of the English language.

Last but not least, while the availability and commitment of the teaching staff should be praised, some doubts remain on the suitability of the policy for identifying the needs of the students who are too modest and – potentially – remain unnoticed that would eventually undermine the quality of their studies.

*Strengths:* The students are offered an adequate level of academic support in terms of different consultation. There is some evidence of teacher mobility.

*Weaknesses:* The amount of practice-based studies, the variety of schools experienced by student teachers, the training of mentors, quality and amount of feedback given by mentors, university staff’s involvement in supervision of school practice, assessment of practice, quality assurance of that practice, the overrating of student competences via marking and lack of any failures in practice-based (field) studies undermine the credibility of the entire programme.

The dissertations are rather weak and the use of international literature is very limited.

*Actions for improvement:* The quality of organisation, content, supervision, and assessment of school practice must be significantly improved.

## 6. Programme management

Regardless of the serious problems raised in the previous section that concerned the organization and assessment of the teaching practice, the University of Vilnius has shown the existence of good practices in the internal quality assurance process. The Self-Assessment Team has done a careful job of identifying the characteristics of the programme and suggesting existing strengths and improvement needed. In doing so, the management, the SA Team and the staff have also shown that the outcomes of internal and external evaluations of the programme are used for reflecting upon possible avenues for the improvement of the programme.

The stakeholders appreciate the work carried out and are at least partially involved in the evaluation and improvement processes.

*Strengths:* In general, the measures taken for programme management are satisfactory.

*Weaknesses:* The quality student teachers’ school practice low.

*Actions for improvement:* To maintain a close look to the up-dating of the organisation and content of student teachers’ field studies in the programme.

# III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The name and categorisation of the programme as non-degree should be reconsidered.

2. The quality of school practice supervision must be ensured. It is necessary to ensure that the mentors supervising student teachers field practice are qualified. The university should eventually undertake directly the assessment of the teaching practice quality.

3. Although there is some evidence of staff mobility, the mobility of students and especially their exposure to western literature is limited and should be improved. One possibility is organizing seminars and workshops with foreign staff and providing students with opportunities for learning English.

4. Ensuring that a wide variety of school textbooks for studying subject didactics is available at the University in sufficient number of copies for covering the needs of all student teachers. Further work for ensuring the quality of the arrangements for teaching practice is necessary.

5. Provide more options for specialisation in subject didactics.

6. A 60 credits programme to be completed in year period by student teachers who are simultaneously working at schools does not favour the achievement stated learning outcomes. Thus, the programme duration should possibly be extended to 18 months.

# IV. SUMMARY

The study programme on Pedagogy (631X10001, 62207S133) at Vilnius University serves the national and regional needs of providing the necessary pedagogical qualification to teachers who are currently working in Lithuanian schools and have not acquired such qualifications previously.

Although the programme Pedagogy taught at the Faculty of Philosophy of VU corresponds in main to the Lithuanian regulation of teacher education, doubts remain on the suitability of the programme for really achieving its objectives due to the lack of University control over the student teacher school practice. Such weakness substantially undermines the validity of a programme that would be otherwise rather convincing, even if work would still be needed for strengthening its overall quality.

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

The title of the programme is too general to be truly informative. Moreover, the programme is hindered by the same problem already identified in the General Report and related to the legislative decision of categorizing these programmes as “non degree”. In fact, such decision leaves the teaching staff in charge in a situation of uncertainty as they do not have a clear reference for devising the programme aims and learning outcomes.

Nonetheless, the VU staff have adopted a consistent approach devising a programme that should be offered at level 5 and identifying learning outcomes and qualifications that are compatible with each other.

2. Curriculum design

Although the curriculum offered has clear and logical structure, and it also provides the students with the opportunity of opting for elective subjects; some concerns must be addressed in order to improve the quality of the programme.

First, the length of the programme would require some further reflection. In fact, a 60 credits programme to be completed in year period by student teachers who are simultaneously working at schools does not favour the achievement of stated learning outcomes.

Second, there is lack of clarity in the official documents on the amount of credit points for the final thesis (legally 3, but stated 4), which could prove confusing for the students.

Third, the rationalization process currently undertaken could hinder the programme quality and should be carefully thought through. For example, the subject of special didactics, which is regarded as relevant by employers and currently offered at VU, will not be offered in the next year to integrate its components in other courses. The effectiveness of an approach that would in practice reduce the opportunities for specialization of the students should be carefully reconsidered.

Last but not least, there is some mismatch between subject specializations offered and the expertise of the university teaching staff so that subject didactics are not always taught by subject specialists.

3. Teaching staff

One major strength of the programme relates to the extensive experience of the teaching staff as school teachers, which provides them with the subject specific knowledge and the necessary sensibility for addressing school and school didactics issues. Moreover, the majority of staff have doctoral degrees, participate to research projects, and publish in Lithuanian journals. Yet, only a limited number of staff has published in internationally peer reviewed journals.

In terms of international mobility, VU supports staffs’ financial needs for attending conferences abroad and mobility initiatives, and many staff members have participated in in-service workshops abroad. The institution also attracts foreign experts for seminars and visiting programmes. Yet, no foreign experts visiting Vilnius University are involved in the programme. This fact reduces the opportunities for the students to be exposed to different materials and points of view, especially when taking into account that student mobility is almost non-existent (most students are working students and have families) and that the publication of articles in international peer reviewed journals still deserves too little attention among the staff members.

4. Facilities and learning resources

In general, VU – and hence the programme – has excellent facilities and resources for ensuring student teachers’ learning. Still, during the visit it emerged that the library has only limited availability of school textbooks for teaching subject didactics and making preparations for teaching practice. Although many materials are to be found in schools, it is necessary for the students to acquire a broad overview of the quality of instruments available and such expertise must be acquired while in University.

The stakeholders interviewed appear to be truly committed to the programme and eager to collaborate.

5. Study process and students' performance assessment

As indicated in the general report, even if many of the courses provided are well suited to the programme, the poor quality of the student teacher school practice is an issue that needs to be addressed at national level.

Indeed, the amount of real practical studies, the variety of schools experienced by students, the training of mentors, quality and amount of feedback given by mentors, university staff’s involvement in supervision of school practice, assessment of practice, quality assurance of that practice, the overrating (marking) of student competences and lack of any failures in practice-based (field) studies undermine the credibility of the entire programme.

Mentors must be trained, particularly if they are to be relied upon to teach specific subject didactics, which appears to be the case provided that there is no evidence of university direct assessment of teaching practice work. Although only a limited number of applicants actually enrols in the programme, marks are too high and there are no failures. This fact raises some concern as not everyone is not suited to becoming a teacher even if highly motivated. There needs to be some overall strategy for confirming that the marks awarded in different schools and for different subject teaching are standardised across the programme and nationally.

6. Programme management

There are good relationships with schools and the staff team are aware of the problems they face in teaching this programme. In general, the measures taken for programme management are satisfactory, and there is regular revision of the programme taking into account the views of students and staff.

Yet, the team would need to address urgently the issues concerning the support and assessment of teaching practice.

# V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Pedagogy* (state code – 631X10001, 62207S133) of Vilnius University is given **negative** 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. | Teaching staff | 3 |
| 4. | Facilities and learning resources  | 3 |
| 5. | Study process and students' performance assessment  | 1 |
| 6. | Programme management  | 3 |
|   | **Total:**  | **15** |

\*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.

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