



STUDIJŲ KOKYBĖS VERTINIMO CENTRAS

**LIETUVOS EDUKOLOGIJOS UNIVERSITETO
STUDIJŲ PROGRAMOS
IKIMOKYKLINĖ EDUKOLOGIJA (621X20013)
VERTINIMO IŠVADOS**

**EVALUATION REPORT
OF *PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION*
STUDY PROGRAMME (621X20013)
AT LITHUANIAN UNIVERSITY OF EDUCATIONAL
SCIENCES**

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DUOMENYS APIE ĮVERTINTĄ PROGRAMĄ

Studijų programos pavadinimas	Ikimokyklinė edukologija
Valstybinis kodas	621X20013
Studijų sritis	Socialiniai mokslai
Studijų kryptis	Edukologija
Studijų programos rūšis	Universitetinės studijos
Studijų pakopa	Antroji
Studijų forma (trukmė metais)	Nuolatinė (2), iššęstinė (3)
Studijų programos apimtis kreditais	120
Suteikiamas laipsnis ir (ar) profesinė kvalifikacija	Edukologijos magistras
Studijų programos įregistravimo data	1997 05 19 Nr. 565

INFORMATION ON EVALUATED STUDY PROGRAMME

Title of the study programme	Pre-school Education
State code	621X20013
Study area	Social sciences
Study field	Education
Kind of the study programme	University studies
Study Cycle	Second
Study mode (length in years)	Full time (2 years); part time (3 years)
Volume of the study programme in credits	120
Degree and (or) professional qualifications awarded	Master in Education
Date of registration of the study programme	No. 565 of 19 May 1997

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This evaluation is conducted in accordance with the Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania (30 April 2009 No XI-242) which established the “principles of quality assurance in higher education and research” and in accordance with the “Procedure for the External Evaluation and Accreditation of Study Programmes” approved by Order No ISAK-1652 of 24 July 2009 of the Minister for Education and Science of the Republic of Lithuania (*Official Gazette*, 2009, No 96-4083). It takes due cognisance of the Order of the Minister for Education and Science approving the general requirements of the first degree and integrated study programmes (9 April 2010 No V-501) pursuant to Articles 47.8, 48.3 and 48.7 of the Law on Research and Higher Education of the Republic of Lithuania (*Official Gazette*, 2009, No. 54-2140) and also takes due account of the Order of the Minister of Education and Science “Concerning Approval of the Pedagogues’ Training Regulations” No. V-54 of 8 January 2010 and subsequent amendments (12 December 2012 No. V-1742).

An External Evaluation Team (hereinafter EET) has conducted an Evaluation of Pre-school Education Study Programme (state code 621X20013) at Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (LEUS). In conducting their evaluation of the Study Programme, EET have acted in compliance with the “Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes” (Order No 1-01-162 of 20 December 2010 of the Director of the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education) as well as being guided by the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area*.

The External Evaluation was conducted in the period August 2013 to October 2013 with in-country evaluation taking place during the period 14 October 2013 to 19 October 2013. The Evaluation included a one-day field visit to LUES on Friday, 18th October 2013.

This report does not paraphrase or re-present the range of information presented in the Report of the Self-Evaluation Group (hereinafter SEG). Instead, it focuses on issues raised in the Self-Evaluation Report (hereinafter SER) as well as raising some issues not addressed in the SER but which came to the attention of EET during the course of the Team’s time in Lithuania, and, specifically, during the course of the field visit.

In addition to its examination of the SER, EET collected information, data and evidence on which to base its conclusions in the course of the field visit through meetings and other means:

- Meeting with administrative staff of LEUS
- Meeting with the staff responsible for the preparation of the Self-Assessment Report
- Meeting with teaching staff
- Meeting with students
- Meeting with graduates
- Meeting with employers of those who have graduated from the programme
- Visiting and observing various support services (classrooms, library, computer services, staff developments, laboratories, etc.)
- Examination and familiarization with students' final works, examination material.

At the end of the field visit, the initial impressions of the team were conveyed to the teaching staff of the programme.

We would like to express our appreciation to the authorities of LEUS for the manner in which we were made welcome and for the manner in which our queries and our exploration of various key issues were addressed in a professional and positive way by those with whom we came in contact at the University.

The EET would like to pay tribute to the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education in Lithuania and most especially to Agnė Tamošiūnaitė for all of the support given to EET before and throughout the visit to Lithuania.

I. INTRODUCTION

The SER notes that the Masters-level study programme Pre-school Education has been implemented in the Faculty of Education of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences (LUES) since 1994, and has been registered since 1997. The Faculty of Education offers 14 Master's programmes, (the SER tells us 13 but EET was informed during the visit that there are 14 Masters programmes in the Education field in this Faculty) in addition to 8 Bachelor's programmes. In 2011 the Faculty of Education was born out of the Faculty of Pedagogy and Psychology and the Institute of Cultural and Arts Education. This was in order to improve organisation and management quality. In addition, based on the Resolution of the Parliament of Lithuania No. XI-1398 of 19 May 2011, the name of Vilnius Pedagogical University was changed, the new name of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences and the new Statute were approved. The University has 7 Faculties and 2 Institutes and the Faculty of Education has 9 departments and three laboratories, the Study Room of Pedagogy and the Institute of Educational Research, which hosts the School of Doctoral Studies in Education.

The study programme to be evaluated is the only pre-school education Master study programme in Lithuania. According to the SER, the earlier expert assessment of the Master study programme *Pre-school Education* was carried out in 2005. The international expert group proposed full accreditation for the study programme. Therefore, the study programme was granted unconditional accreditation until the next external assessment.

The SER gives details of the changes that have been made after the above mentioned expert assessment in the Master study programme *Pre-school Education*. They are the following:

Due to changes in documents that regulate Lithuanian higher education:

a) The change of the title of the study programme from *Pedagogy of Pre-school Education* to *Pre-school Education*. The title was changed reregistering the study programme according to the newly approved '*List of Study Areas and Fields in which Studies are Offered in Higher Education Institutions and List of Qualification Degrees*' (the Resolution of the Government No. 1749 of 23 December 2009) in 2010. The study programme was registered under the study field 'Education Science (621X20000)'; therefore its title had to comply with the study field.

b) Transfer from Lithuanian credit system to ECTS. The changes in '*Law on Higher Education and Research of RL*' (95 str. 2 d.) Žin., 2009, No. 54-2140) resulted in introduction of ECTS into the Master study programme *Pre-school Education* 1 September 2011. The changes were registered in the Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education (SKVC) in 2011.

Changes introduced striving for higher quality of studies, for integration into European Higher Education Area, striving for more intensive international mobility of students and teachers:

a) Striving for international mobility of teachers and students, for an increase in open character of studies and realising principles of credit accumulation, the module-based structure of the Master study programme *Pre-school Education* was introduced. The study subjects were joined into the study modules but changes in the study subjects were minimal and did not exceed the allowed 30 percent.

b) The learning outcomes of the study programme *Pre-school Education* were clearly formulated, which was missing in the study programme assessed in 2005.

Changes, introduced striving for better addressing of needs of the labour market and students.

a) Two most topical specialisations were left in the study programme: a) specialisation of consultant on quality of pre-school education curriculum and b) specialisation of management of pre-school education institutions.

Recommendations of external assessment were taken into account:

- a) To introduce the study module of Education Management. The module of specialisation of Management of pre-school education institutions was introduced.
- b) Attempts to increase higher scientific level of Master papers.
- c) Improvement of provision of studies with ICT.
- d) Better linking of practice and theory.

EET is pleased to note that the SEG has analysed and listed the changes that have been made to the programme. This indicates the ability to take the societal changes into account when developing the programme. It also shows the willingness to learn from the feedback provided.

II. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

1. Programme aims and learning outcomes

2.1.1 As to whether **the programme aims and learning outcomes are well defined, clear and publicly accessible, the SER gives the following information.**

The SER describes the following aims of the Preschool Education programme:

To train a Master in Education, who is able to perform as:

- *pre-school education analyst-researcher*, who is able to independently create and apply efficient and research-based strategies for improvement of quality of children education and who creates new possibilities for self-education of pre-school children;
- *consultant on quality of pre-school education curriculum*, who is able to manage quality processes of development and implementation of innovative educational programmes and models;
- *leader in pre-school education*, who identifies priorities in education and is active in development of policy on pre-school education.

In the study programme analysis Section 1 Relevance and Justification of aims and intended learning outcomes of the Master study programme of the pre-school education, the SER presents the following points: the aims; the developed competences; the learning outcomes; professional activity areas of the specialists trained in the assessed Master study programme Pre-school Education, and their aims and intended learning outcomes of the study programme and study modules learnt; the results of research on professional activities that justify topicality of intended learning outcomes; compliance of learning outcomes with legal acts and other regulations that provide for academic and professional requirements and requirements for qualification of trained specialists; data on periodicity of revision of learning outcomes,

participation of social stakeholders; sources, where programme aims and intended learning outcomes are announced, other ways of informing, and the study programme among the other programmes of the same study field provided by the higher education institutions. The aims are related to both education policy making and an attitude of lifelong learning and awareness of students' position in working society.

According to the SER, the aims are meant to support lectures to deepen students' knowledge of the field of pre-school education and equip participants with the requisite advanced knowledge, understanding and skills to carry out educational research using traditional and emerging research designs informed by a critical awareness of developments at the forefront of policy and practice in pre-school education. The particular programme aims are designed to broaden the researcher role to include a critical understanding of the issues in the context of both practice and policy in pre-school education.

The SER also presents the following competences that comply with those acquired in the second study cycle and qualification Level 7: subject specific competence in pre-school education; scientific researcher competence; competence of consultant on educational programme development; competence of management of educational institutions; professional communication competence; personal competence.

The process in which the aims and learning outcomes have been defined is multi-layered and clearly described in the SER. In addition, the learning outcomes of the programme are periodically revised. They are followed through into modules as presented in the Table 1. Annex 1 describes how they are followed into assessment.

The programme **aims and learning outcomes are publicly accessible**. They are "publicly announced on the official website of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences at: www.leu.lt, on internet website of Faculty of Education at [://www.vpu.lt/ef/Page.aspx?pageID=579](http://www.vpu.lt/ef/Page.aspx?pageID=579), on the internet website of the Open Information, Counselling and Guidance System at: www.aikos.smm.lt, on the website of the Lithuanian Higher Institutions Association for Organizing Joint Admission (LAMA BPO) at: www.lamabpo.lt. Information on Master study programme is disseminated in the international conferences 'Mokymasis. Studijos. Karjera' held in Vilnius and in fairs of Higher Education in Kaunas, distributing flyers published by Department of Childhood Studies during events of Open Days."

The SEG reported about the problem that **arise because** national strategic documents do not provide for broader career possibilities and remuneration increments for graduates from Master study programmes, with exception of candidates for posts of heads of institutions, where this fact is an advantage. Such a situation does not encourage teachers to pursue Master's degree. Despite this opinion of SEG, EET could, during the field visit observe that the graduates and their professional competences are highly valued among the employers. EET also learned that the programme is really enhancing the career of the graduates. This became evident in the meetings with alumni, employers and social partners. Thus, the graduates' qualifications meet the expectations of the social partners and employers in the wide area, not only in the kindergartens but also including business operations.

Consequently, EET evaluates the **programme aims and learning outcomes to be well defined, clear and publicly accessible.**

2.1.2 The **programme aims and learning outcomes are based on the academic and/or professional requirements, public needs and the needs of the labour market.** The aims of the study programme also correspond to the demands of the internationally known competence areas in the field on ECE. This is seen for example in Annex 1, in which each part of the study modules are briefly described regarding to topicality, links with other parts of the study module and other study modules. These abstracts show that the content of the study models has been considered from multiple perspectives indicating that national, international, theoretical and practical discussions and viewpoints have been taken into account. Also the section 1.5 in the SER presents the same issues.

2.1.3 **The learning outcomes** presented in the SER **are explicit and consistent with the type and level of studies (Level 7) and the level of qualifications offered** (1.3 chapter). However EET believes that on viewing the final thesis, though the team have made good efforts to improve the standard of this work even more could be done here to match EU level expectations.

2.1.4 In relation to the extent to which **the name of the programme, its learning outcomes, content and the qualifications offered are compatible with each other,** EET is satisfied that this programme can be regarded as a Level 7 programme. EET observed only one problem related to the name of the programme. It appears that in Lithuania there exists various

interpretations of the concept and phenomenon of the phrase *Pre-school*. EET noted during visits to colleges and universities various beliefs about what the term means, which are not consistent and therefore confusing to EET and possibly to prospective students at Bachelors and Masters degree in the area. Therefore, the name (and the focus of the programme) could be differently interpreted from the original definition. EET recommends that the name of the programme to be revised and elaborated. Other countries in the EU use terms such as Early Childhood Studies and Care or Early Childhood Education and Care. These terms are more positive than the one now in use.

2. Curriculum design

2.2.1 As to whether **the curriculum design meets legal requirements**, the SER of the programme *Pre-school Education* presents comprehensive information about the structure of the programme. EET approves the move to a module based programme which is designed to aid international mobility. It is clear from the SER and the site visit that the programme meets the requirements for Master's level study the 'Description of General Requirements for Master Study Programme', 2010 and in the document 'On Approval of Description of Full-time and Part-time Studies', 2009. The descriptions of study modules have been enhanced and attempts have been made to link aims of modules to the learning outcomes and competences to be developed in the study programme. The credits system has been changed as required by law to use ECTS. EET was interested to see that the level of achievement of students is presented using qualitative descriptions which are linked to marking levels. There has been a clear attempt to focus the study modules towards the learning outcomes of the programme. EET also noted the changes to the Master's papers in response to previous advice and their link to *Studiju darbu metodinēs rekomendācijas* (Methodological Recommendations for Study Papers).

According to the SER, the curriculum design meets legal requirements. The design of the Master study programme *Pre-school Education* meets all the requirements provided for in 'The Description of General Requirements of Master Study Programmes' and is the same for full-time and part-time studies (table 3,4).

2.2.2 **The study modules and their components (study subjects) are spread evenly; none of their themes are repetitive.** The studies are organised in study modules: studies of each study module start with contact work, then a student studies self-dependently completing assignments

provided for in the programme of the study module, the studies of the module are finalised with final accounting or examination.

2.2.3 As to whether the **content of the subjects/modules is consistent with the type and level of the studies**, the SER and Annex 1 give good information. The programme content is designed to meet Level 7 requirements as per Bologna levels and national regulations. The content together with the specific aims of each study module are meeting the level 7 requirements studies. The SER describes the main ideas of the programme design as following. - *The group of core modules of the study field* consists of: a) deeper specialised and comparative theoretical studies (discourses of children's education, quality theories, conceptions of change, curriculum theories, theories of children learning) - 4 modules (40 ECTS); b) Methodology of Educational Research on Childhood and Dissemination of Research Results - 2 modules (20 ECTS); - The group of the university-prescribed alternatives elective modules undertaken by the student consists of two specialisations, which are available for students' choice: a) the study modules dedicated to acquisition of specialisation of consultant on quality of pre-school education curriculum (3 modules, 30 ECTS); b) the study modules dedicated to acquisition of specialisation of management of pre-school education institutions (3 modules, 30 ECTS). The first specialisation is of particular topicality because pre-school education institutions create local education curricular and the demand for consultants has already been identified. One study module in this specialisation aims to help pre-school and pre-primary teachers acquire new competences of adult education (mentoring); - All the students of the assessed study programme write a Master's paper: preparation of theoretical study of the problem of MA paper, preparation of the project of the research strategy, carrying out of empiric research and writing of Master paper - 2 modules (30 ECTS).

In the future, the relation between the modules focusing on the consultations and the modules focusing on the management should be more clearly clarified. EET was wondering if some synthesis from the perspective of pedagogical leadership could be developed.

2.2.4 The content and methods of the subjects/modules seem to be appropriate for the achievement of the intended learning outcomes. Annex 1 indicates that a rich variety of methods is used. The students have possibilities to study the key contents alone and together with the other students. The clear criteria of the assessment also help the students to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

2.2.5 According to the study plan in semesters **the scope of the programme is sufficient to ensure the learning outcomes** (contact work hours make up about 30 % of the volume of study module and 26 % of the volume of the study programme, individual teacher-student tutorials make up 3.31 % of the volume, whereas self-dependent work equals 74 % of the volume of the study programme). Full-time and part-time studies do not differ in their learning outcomes, design and number of credits. The duration of part-time studies does not exceed that of full-time studies more than 1.5 times. Each semester students study 20 ECTS, 2 modules; thus 45 ECTS per year is not exceeded.

The SER mainly justifies the new module –based curriculum design from the international mobility point of view. It is reasonable to support the internationalisation processes this way. Yet, EET recommends more perspectives to be taken into account when justifying and developing the module-based curriculum. For example the module-based curriculum design offers a good possibility to approach the programme aims and learning outcomes from the interdisciplinary perspectives.

2.2.6 As to whether **the content of the programme reflects the latest achievements in science, art and technologies**, EET was generally satisfied. The content descriptions of the study modules show that the staff members are familiar with the recent scientific discussion related to Early Year’s Pedagogy, the learning and development processes in preschool age as well as the issues related to the changing childhood. EET was also informed of the plans for the nursery so students can observe children in the university. In relation to the new technology, the Smart boards were available.

3. *Staff*

2.3.1 According the SER, the Master study programme *Pre-school Education* is implemented by 6 teachers of the Department of Childhood Studies, 3 teachers from other departments of Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences and 1 teacher from a different institution. The Chairperson of the Examination Commission was a teacher from Šiauliai University. Each teacher has a sufficient number of research papers on the themes analysed in the taught study subjects. In addition, EET were delighted to observe, during the site visit and meetings, the harmonious and team oriented attitude of the staff. Their enthusiasm and commitment to achieving excellence was outstanding together with a forward looking, self-critical approach. EET were quickly made aware that this was a team determined to improve and give of their best

to the students of the programme. Energy levels of the staff were high and it was obvious that this attitude affected the students' commitment to the learning outcomes of the programme. It quickly became obvious to EET that good leadership of the programme was having a positive effect. Thus, it can be stated that **the study programme is provided by the staff meeting legal requirements.**

2.3.2 The qualifications of the teaching staff are adequate to ensure learning outcomes. The MA and PhD degrees the teaching staff have are compatible with the study modules they are in charge of. That is evident on the basis of Annex 3 that describes the curriculum vitae of the teaching staff. In addition, EET was satisfied that many of the staff have practical experience of working in the field of preschool. The discussion with the social partners showed that the professors of the programme are highly respected among the employers and social partners that also indicates the relevance of the teaching staff qualifications.

2.3.3 The staff–student –ratio seems to be appropriate. The number of teachers in the study subject is optimal: each teacher delivers from 1 to 5 parts (study subjects) of the study module. Teachers' academic load is optimal, distributed according to areas that are topical to a teacher and is properly regulated. However, the use of staff student ratios related to numbers of student on the programme and hours of teaching and support time given to the programme, would allow EET to make a more appropriate judgement of the staff provision for the programme. In many ways, this appears generous, as student numbers are low in comparison with Master's programmes in other EU countries.

2.3.4 The structure of teaching staff according to age groups is appropriate. Teaching staff turnover is able to ensure an adequate provision of the programme. The number of incoming teachers was similar to that of outgoing ones. Besides, young researchers became involved in the process of the Master studies implementation, which EET applauds as a strength of the programme.

2.3.5 The university creates conditions for the professional development of the teaching staff necessary for the provision of the programme. Teachers' professional development is ensured by the attestation system, which is regulated by the resolutions of LUES Senate, Rector's orders. Teachers go through attestation every 3–5 years and teachers' pedagogical, research, artistic and educative activities are assessed. Thus, the teachers' professional development is ensured at all administrative levels (department, study committee, faculty and university), and relevant

information is publicly announced on the internet websites of the Department, Faculty and University. All the teachers are provided with equal and appropriate conditions for formal and non-formal professional development.

2.3.6 LEUS actively encourages academic staff to become involved in research and in projects with universities abroad. The teachers of the Department of Childhood Studies are constantly involved in applied research activities, which are conducted under openly-announced tenders. Also the number of academic staff members with a research degree is high. The teaching staff of the programme is involved in research (art) directly related to the study programme being reviewed which is a strength of the programme. Some of the research projects have been conducted in cooperation with students

EET noticed that the trend in the international mobility, international publishing and research collaboration is increasing. However, EET encourages the LEUS to increase the amount of the international mobility and international research publishing.

4. Facilities and learning resources

2.4.1 As to whether **the premises for studies are adequate**, the evidence provided in the SER and by the site visit, indicated that the classrooms are well equipped with multimedia and additional classrooms were recently provided for the use of the Faculty within the university. From this year (2013) onwards students have access to rooms for self-study all of which are equipped with computers, internet access, copying equipment, accumulated scientific and methodological literature, students' course papers, Bachelor's and Master's papers.

2.4.2 Classroom have been equipped with interactive whiteboards and staff trained in their use whilst new computers have been acquired for students and staff. Reading rooms, specialised laboratories and study rooms are available for students to use. Specialised software for research analysis is available. Students can access material on line from remote access, as well as in the institution. The library is well equipped with access to a wide variety of data bases, journals and national periodicals. Books are purchased annually and the SER claims that the provision of resources is adequate for the programme to be delivered successfully. The Laboratory of Childhood Studies (Room 304) is a specialised library of pre-school education, housing a collection of video films, catalogues of methodological materials and defended study works.

2.4.3 The University has adequate arrangements for students' practice with regard to conducting research but they do not undertake teaching practice as such. The students of the Master study programme of Pre-school Education have their research practice and conduct research of the project of the Master paper in pre-school education institutions, pre-primary groups, centres for non-formal education and others. The agreements regarding conducting of research are signed with Vilnius Municipality and local governments of Vilnius district. Research carried out at national level is agreed with the Ministry of Education and Science. The number of places appropriate for research practice is sufficient. Places for practice are suggested by the practice tutor but the final decisions are made together with students.

2.4.4 EET's field visit confirmed the facts presented in the SER. The new library is still waiting rebuilding, so many books have to be stacked, as opposed to being on open display, but the change in students' learning habits has lowered the need for reading rooms and the provision of open access computers, as many students possess their own laptops. Thus, EET came to the conclusion that **the premises for studies are adequate both in their size and quality**. Also, **teaching materials are adequate and accessible**.

The Moodle-environment is used in the studies, but mainly the cooperation between the students and teachers was noticed to be implemented via emails. EET recommends that the virtual learning environment needs to be improved further.

5. Study process and student assessment

2.5.1 **The admission requirements** are well-founded. The entrants to the Master study programme *Pre-school Education* are admitted to the study programme indicated as priority in the application and according to the highest competitive point, which consists of the sum of weighted averages of study subjects of the fundamentals in the study area of social sciences, the specialist education study subjects in the study field of educational science and the average of final examinations. The procedure for admission is regulated by the Regulations for Admission to Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences and approved by the Order of Rector.

The programme enrolls students straight from bachelors but also graduates with working experience. All of them should provide evidence that they have skills and abilities for further studies.

The SER expressed one problem that was revealed – not all the admitted students start studies. There seem to be multiple reasons for this. Certainly, part of the reasons is more related to the situation in the labour market than to the programme as such. For example, the SEG observed the problem that national strategic documents do not provide for broader career possibilities and remuneration increments for graduates from Master study programmes, with exception of candidates for posts of heads of institutions, where this qualification is an advantage. Such a situation does not encourage teachers to pursue Master's degree.

According to the ratio between students admitted to the study programme and successful graduates about 70-75 % of the students successfully graduate from the Master study programme *Pre-school Education*. Students who fail to complete the Master study programme due to a number of reasons: maternity leave, a new job, etc.

2.5.2 The organisation of the study process ensures an adequate provision of the programme and the achievement of the learning outcomes. The SER's Annex 15 clearly describes the links of learning outcomes with intended learning outcomes of study subjects and methods of studies and achievement assessment. During meetings with staff and students it became clear that the focus of the programme was clearly linked from the learning outcomes of the programmes to individual modules and that staff and students were clear as to how these interlinked. There was a clarity of intent as to what was to be achieved, not only in the written programme details, but also in the understanding and attitudes demonstrated by staff and students during the visit.

2.5.3 Students are encouraged to participate in research, artistic and applied research activities. According to the SER, Master study programme students are actively involved in scientific activities. Five (5) Master programme students participated in the joint research together with their teachers. The report on this research is available on the internet. On the basis of research conducted while writing their Master papers, students made presentations and participated in conferences, wrote and published scientific papers individually and in cooperation with their teachers. Every two years the Department of Childhood Studies and the Department of the Fundamentals of Education organise the conference 'The World to Child: Education Realities and Perspectives', where Master study programme students may participate and deliver their presentations. The conference proceedings are published in a two-volume publication: Part 1. Research Papers; Part 2. Presentations. Thus, possibilities are offered for involvement of Master

programme students and Masters into research activities. During the meeting with the programme's students, the EET was presented with many examples from these kinds of joint research projects. These joint research practices seem to support the students in their academic development. In addition, improving the quality of the dissertations is moving in the right direction (the changes are presented in the SER 2.6). However, some things need to be taken into account.

- A clear discussion and justification for the type of methods used to gather data – students should explain the perspective adopted and the variety of methods used to ensure triangulation, validity, reliability and avoid bias. It is essential that consideration should be given to the use of mixed methods and in some cases qualitative methods alone when attitudes and feelings are being explored.
- The discussion of research methods should be supported by references to research practice theory from respected sources.
- A section to discuss the ethics of the research being undertaken, again supported by references to theory, needs to be included.
- A final part which discusses the analysis of the findings of the research, in contrast to the material presented from the original literature search. Did the student find new or different information or were the findings similar in type to previous work? This in many ways is the most important part of the work and should include a critique of the research process undertaken and suggestions for improvement.

2.5.4 Students have opportunities to participate in student mobility programmes. According to the SER, from 2008 to 2012 eight (8) students of the assessed study programme were involved into programmes of academic mobility programmes: each year 2 students went to Poland, Spain, Norway, Cyprus and Turkey. The number of incoming students to the Department of Childhood Studies was similar: 11 students from foreign universities learnt about the system of pre-school education in Lithuania: 5 from Finland, 6 from Kazakhstan. Students' mobility has been promoted through module-based organization of the studies. The level of the students' mobility is going into the right direction, but more exchange projects are required in the future.

2.5.5 The University ensures an adequate level of academic and social support. The studies of the study module start with session of contact work, when theoretical studies of problems are conducted; self-dependent assignments in the module studies are explained. The Master study programme students study independently in the University Library and other libraries, research and practical assignments are conducted in institutions related to pre-school education. During

their self-dependent studies, Master programme students successfully consult teachers while solving problems, searching for theoretical and methodological trends in studies, discussing different approaches, etc. The studies of the module are finalised with self-dependent presentation of learning outcomes and assessment of achievement of learning outcomes of the module. The laboratory staff members of the Educational Research Institute of the Faculty of Education Science consult students regarding issues of statistical analysis of quantitative data. Students attend meetings with specialists of Career Centre of LUES. The Centre of Psychological Consulting of the University provides students with individual psychological support.

2.5.6 Principles of the system of achievement assessment are also presented in the SER. The system of student achievements in the Master study programme *Pre-school Education* enables teachers to identify if a student has attained the aims and learning outcomes of the study programme. The learning outcomes are achieved studying one or several related study modules. Studying modules, interim evaluation (of parts of study modules, i.e., their components) and final evaluations of learning outcomes of the study module are conducted. Various methods and forms of assessment are employed. Students' knowledge and abilities are evaluated employing a ten-point system and two forms of summative assessment prevail. The assessment criteria are clearly described in Annex 1. On the whole, **the assessment system of students' performance is clear and adequate**. The dropout rate of students, who start studies, is low.

Since working with pre-school children teachers requires higher level of competences of consultant on quality of pre-school education curriculum and some of them need leaders' competences, the Master study programme offers two specialisations: *specialisation of consultant on quality of pre-school education curriculum* or *specialisation of management of pre-school education institutions*. Every year (with one exception in 2011) about 6-9 graduates complete the assessed Master study programme. A minimal demand for 12 – 15 Masters may be forecast every year. It can be noted that professional activities of the majority of graduates meet the programme providers' expectations.

6. Programme management

2.6.1 Implementing the Master study programme *Pre-school Education*, the quality is ensured at the 4 levels: University, Faculty, and Department and Study Programme Committee levels. Therefore, responsibilities for decisions and monitoring of the implementation of the programme

are clearly allocated depending on the level. The overall coordination of studies at the University, their monitoring and administration is conducted by the Vice-Rector for Studies. The Dean is in charge of the study process and quality in the Faculty. The head of the department initiates development and renewal of study programmes, periodically checks the implementation of the planned work of a teacher, attends lectures/practical, classes/seminars delivered by teachers, expresses the opinion about the quality of work to the Department and the Council of the Faculty and assesses this work. The Committee of Master Study Programme *Pre-school Education* is in charge of development of the study programme, its renewal and improvement, observation of its quality and self-assessment. The responsibilities and functions of the Study Programme Committee and the Department are determined in the document 'Functions of the Committees of Study Programmes at the University' approved by the Senate of the University of 28 March 2011.

2.6.2 According to data on information collection, **participation of social stakeholders in the process of evaluation and improvement of the study programme**, the survey on Master programme students' satisfaction with studies was conducted in 2012, which shows that the majority of students are satisfied with the quality. Every year, the survey on graduates' opinion about the study programme and success of their career is conducted. Summarising, the evaluation and improvement processes involve stakeholders and information and data on the implementation of the programme are regularly collected and analysed.

2.6.3 **The outcomes of internal and external evaluations of the programme are used for the improvement of the programme.** Each year the Committee of Master Study Programme *Pre-school Education* discusses issues related to the implementation, assessment and improvement of the study programme, and may change the aspects of the study programme to respond to constantly changing requirements for the quality of studies provided for in legal acts. Conclusions of external expert assessment are presented on the website of the Faculty of Education, LUES. The SER notes the following changes have been made since the last visit by external experts:

- a) to introduce the study module of Education Management. The module of specialisation of Management of pre-school education institutions was introduced.
- b) attempts to increase higher scientific level of Master papers.
- c) improvement of provision of studies with ICT.
- d) better linking of practice and theory.

A new study module of Education Management has introduced and implemented. EET was able to read a range of MA thesis during the field visit. This reading showed that there were changes in the thesis for example changing from page counts to word count, trying to bring in more foreign literature, using a more mixed-method approach in the research.

2.6.4 During the field visit, EET noticed the extremely good communication between the employees, social partners and the staff that makes possible the continuous development of the programme's practices.

2.6.5 Generalising it may be stated that **management of the study programme and the internal quality assurance measures are effective and efficient**, responsibilities are distributed at various levels: Study Programme Committee, the Department, the Dean Office, the Council, the Senate, etc.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. It seems to exist various interpretations of the concept and phenomenon *Pre-school* in Lithuania. Therefore, the name (and the focus of the programme) could be differently interpreted from the original definition. EET recommends that the name of the programme be revised and elaborated.
2. The international research collaboration should be increased and developed further.
3. The improvement of the quality of the dissertations is moving in the right direction. However, some issues must be elaborated further. These are related to the research ethical issues, the need for a clear discussion and justification for the type of methods used to gather data with references to research theory; the chapter of final discussion that includes theoretical and methodological reflections.
4. The international mobility must be increased, both for students and staff.
5. The virtual learning environment needs to be improved further. The students and teachers mainly communicate via email. The programme has the opportunity to use the Moodle environment and this possibility should be taken more seriously into account.
6. Clear staff:student ratios are essential, as is data with regard for local need for these graduates.
7. Consideration should be given to taking students onto the programme who have had some years of teaching experience in the same area, or at least to extending the length of the programme in order to allow the students to really develop to Master's level.

IV. SUMMARY

The analysis of SER and the field visit experiences of EET indicate that the programme is constantly improved and seriously developed. They also indicate that the external evaluation feedback has been heard and the recommendations have been put into practice.

The learning resources for implementing the programme's activities are very good. It is clear the programme has a clear vision of where it wants to go: it is very clearly focused on the child and high quality preschool education. The programme also has an international dimension that is focussed on the aim of improving the international mobility and research collaboration. The international dimension is seen in the students' dissertations and their references, too.

EET was pleased to notice that the students really seem to achieve the learning outcomes. This became evident, especially in the discussions with the social partners and employers. Multiple examples were given concerning the professional competencies the graduates have brought to workplaces. Obviously, the programme is enhancing the career of the students and it is very clear for the social partners and employers that this is happening in the wide area not only in the kindergartens but also including business.

EET noticed that the communication between the staff, students and social partners is extremely good. The staff members also seem to work as a community when reflecting and developing the teaching and research practices. The programme seems to be an important part of a larger network developing preschool education in the whole country.

EET would like to present some issues the staff should elaborate further.

EET recommends that LEUS give careful consideration to the title of the Preschool programme so as to clarify the key idea which it is addressed. EET has noticed that there exist various interpretations concerning the concept of preschool and preschool education in Lithuania. Therefore, the EETE recommends revision of the programme's title. Titles such as the "Early Childhood Education and Care" or the "Early Years Education" might be more appropriate.

Even if the trend in international mobility and research activities is increasing, they must be developed further. Also the virtual learning environment needs to be improved further.

The improving the quality of the dissertations is moving into right directions. However, some things need to be taken into account as EET has previously recommended in the section 2.5.3.

V. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

The study programme *Pre-school education* (state code – 621X20013) at Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences 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	3
3.	Staff	4
4.	Material resources	3
5.	Study process and assessment (student admission, study process student support, achievement assessment)	3
6.	Programme management (programme administration, internal quality assurance)	3
	Total:	19

*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:

Dr. Gillian Lesley Scott Hilton

Grupės nariai:
Team members:

Prof. dr. Peadar Cremin

Prof. dr. Kirsti Karila

Tatjana Kriliuvienė

Rūta Bikulčiūtė

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V. APIBENDRINAMASIS ĮVERTINIMAS

Lietuvos edukologijos universiteto studijų programa *Ikimokyklinė edukologija* (valstybinis kodas – 621X20013) vertinama teigiamai.

Eil. Nr.	Vertinimo sritis	Srities įvertinimas, balais*
1.	Programos tikslai ir numatomi studijų rezultatai	3
2.	Programos sandara	3
3.	Personalas	4
4.	Materialieji ištekliai	3
5.	Studijų eiga ir jos vertinimas	3
6.	Programos vadyba	3
	Iš viso:	19

* 1 - Nepatenkinamai (yra esminių trūkumų, kuriuos būtina pašalinti)

2 - Patenkinamai (tenkina minimalius reikalavimus, reikia tobulinti)

3 - Gerai (sistemiškai plėtojama sritis, turi savitų bruožų)

4 - Labai gerai (sritis yra išskirtinė)

IV. SANTRAUKA

Savianalizės suvestinės (toliau SS) analizė ir EG patirtis vizito metu patvirtino, kad programa nuolatos gerėja ir labai patobulėjo. Taip pat nurodoma, kad buvo atsižvelgta į išorinio įvertinimo metu gautą grįžtamąjį ryšį ir rekomendacijos buvo pritaikytos praktikoje.

Mokymosi resursai, skirti programos veiklų įgyvendinimui, yra labai geri. Neabejotina, kad programa turi aiškią viziją, ko yra siekiama: dėmesys sutelkiamas ties vaiku ir aukštos kokybės ikimokykliniu ugdymu. Programoje numatytas ir tarptautinis aspektas, kurio tikslas yra pagerinti tarptautinį mobilumą ir bendradarbiavimą atliekant tyrimus. Tarptautinis aspektas išvelgiamas ir studentų baigiamuosiuose darbuose bei juose pateikiamose nuorodose į literatūrą.

EG buvo malonu pastebėti, kad studentai iš tikrųjų pasiekia studijų rezultatus. Tuo ypač įsitikinta diskusijų su socialiniais partneriais ir darbdaviais metu. Buvo pateikta daugialypių pavyzdžių, susijusių su profesinėmis kompetencijomis, kuriomis absolventai pasižymi atėję dirbti. Akivaizdu, kad programa praplečia studentų karjeros galimybes. Socialiniams partneriams ir darbdaviams aišku, kad tai apima platesnę sritį, ne tik darželius, bet ir verslą.

EG pastebėjo, kad personalo, studentų ir socialinių partnerių bendravimas yra ypatingai geras. Personalas, reflektuodamas ir vystydamas mokymo ir tyrimų praktiką, dirba kaip bendruomenė. Veikiausiai programa yra labai svarbi didesnės sistemos, vystančios ikimokyklinį švietimą visoje šalyje, dalis.

EG norėtų paminėti keletą aspektų, kuriuos personalas turėtų toliau tobulinti.

EG rekomenduoja LEU gerai apsvarstyti ikimokyklinės edukologijos programos pavadinimą, tam kad būtų aiškiau atspindėta pagrindinė programos idėja. EG pastebėjo, kad Lietuvoje įvairiai interpretuojamos sąvokos „ikimokyklinis“ ir „ikimokyklinis ugdymas“. Todėl EG rekomenduoja iš naujo apsvarstyti programos pavadinimą. Tokie pavadinimai kaip „Ugdymas ir priežiūra ankstyvoje vaikystėje“ arba „Ugdymas ankstyvaisiais metais“ galbūt būtų tinkamesni.

Net ir didėjant tarptautinio mobilumo ir tyrimų veiklų tendencijai, tai toliau reikėtų tobulinti. Taip pat ir virtualią mokymosi aplinką.

Baigiamųjų darbų kokybės gerinimas vykdomas tinkamomis linkmėmis. Tačiau reikėtų atkreipti dėmesį į keletą aspektų, kuriuos EG rekomendavo 2.5.3 skyriuje.

III. REKOMENDACIJOS

1. Lietuvoje veikiausiai egzistuoja įvairių sąvokos ir fenomeno *ikimokyklinis* interpretacijų. Todėl pavadinimas (ir programos tikslas) gali būti suprastas ne taip, kaip originaliame apibrėžime. Ekspertų grupė (toliau EG) rekomenduoja peržiūrėti ir detalizuoti programos pavadinimą.
2. Reikėtų labiau bendradarbiauti ir toliau plėtoti tarptautinius tyrimus.
3. Baigiamųjų darbų kokybės gerinimas vykdomas tinkama linkme. Tačiau kai kas dar turėtų būti toliau tobulinama. Tai susiję su tyrimų etika, aiškaus naudojamų duomenų rinkimo metodų aptarimo ir pagrindimo poreikiu, pateikiant nuorodas į tyrimų teoriją; baigiamąją diskusijos dalimi, kuri apimtų tiek teorinę, tiek metodologinę refleksiją.
4. Reikėtų didinti tiek studentų, tiek personalo tarptautinį mobilumą.

5. Reikėtų toliau tobulinti virtualią mokymosi aplinką. Studentai ir dėstytojai daugiausia bendrauja elektroniniu paštu. Programoje numatyta galimybė naudoti „Moodle“ aplinką, todėl ją reikėtų rimčiau apsvarstyti.
6. Labai svarbu žinoti aiškų dėstytojų ir studentų santykį, taip pat kaip ir duomenis, apie vietinį tokių absolventų poreikį.
7. Reikėtų apsvarstyti, kaip į programą įtraukti studentus, kurie jau turi kelerių metų darbo patirties šioje srityje, arba bent jau kaip išplėsti programą, kad studentai iš tikrųjų pasiektų magistro lygį.

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