

Assessment of Colleges' Activity Quality: the Bologna Process Dimensions

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The demand for science and study internationalisation and study quality is increasing, the characteristics of higher education institutions are fluctuating because of expediting processes of integration in the whole world, globalisation, developing knowledge economics. Higher education institutions face new challenges of changing surroundings; the challenges condition the demand for discussions about structural changes of study and science in higher education institutions. One of the most important questions is: how can higher education institutions become (remain) competitive and attractive in the global surroundings of today? As Lithuania is already a part of the common European study and science area, it is topical to analyse the readiness of higher education institutions to become equal, attractive and competitive partners of the common European higher education area where one of the underlying tasks is study quality assurance. These processes do not leave aside the new Lithuanian link of the binary system of higher education – colleges whose aim is to perform non-university higher studies – vocational studies that are oriented to practical activities and these studies allow to get a professional qualification that is based on applied scientific research and (or) applied scientific activities. It is meaningful for Lithuanian colleges to analyse and assess the fundamental changes in their external surroundings, new challenges to their activities and the common tendencies in the higher education area both on a national and European scale, prepare and implement strategies for the strengthening of their attraction and competitiveness. It is also topical to evaluate to what extent Lithuanian institutions of quality assessment recommend and request for implementation of the Bologna process dimensions into studies and other activities of higher education institutions. The article strives to discuss the Bologna process dimensions of international agreements that are topical to colleges and evaluate the requirements that are necessary for colleges aiming at the implementation of the Bologna process tasks while analysing the legal acts that regulate the assessment of Lithuanian colleges.

Keywords: *the Bologna process, European higher education area, study quality, internationalisation of studies, international agreements, the competitiveness and attraction of European higher education area, area of activity, criterion, indicator.*

Introduction

In 2000 the reform of higher education that was started to establish and was conditioned by Lithuania's integration

into the EU, with the intent to develop well-run international students' and teachers' mobility, achieve acknowledgment of qualification and the like, shaped the binary system of higher education – sector of universities and colleges. Lithuania's involvement in the common area of European science and studies, the development of knowledge society, increasing demands of labour market, increasing importance of education and professional competences claim for more attention to assurance of science and studies quality at all education levels and sectors and skilled specialists' preparation. Ambitious European reforms (academic mobility, ECTS and the like) promote the performance of structural changes of study programs, paying more attention to international cooperation and study quality assurance. In recent years the topic of study quality assurance and assessment as well as the internationalisation of study and science has become very important both on a national and international scale (Palionis, 1996; Vengris, 1998; Čičas, 1999, 2001; Campbell, Wende, 2000; Adomaitienė, Ruževičius, 2002; Savickienė, Pukelis, 2003; Stumbrys, 2003; Jucevičienė, 1998, 2003; Misiūnas, 2003; Michel, 2003; Ruškus; Liukinevičienė, 2003; Baršauskienė, Guščinskienė, 2003; Zuzevičiūtė, 2003; Chreptavičienė, Kondrotas, 2003; Gynnild, 2003; Cecevičiūtė, 2004; A. Augustinienė, 2004; Zamorski, 2004; Žekevičienė, 2004). The policy of Lithuanian higher education emphasizes an objective of internationalisation, but still not all science and study institutions and individual scientists are successful at realising this. Openness to the world at the same time increases requirements for education quality – studying people in Lithuania want to get higher education that is relevant to continuous studies and labour market both in Europe and in the world. That is why a complex way of striving for quality awaits. (Jucevičienė, 1998).

It is possible to notice formulated tasks that are topical for the Bologna for some of areas of higher education institutions activities or even criteria that are raised for the quality of activity:

- for the content of study programmes, those objectives of today must be not only the giving of professional skills, but also the training of common competence that allows easy integration and adaptation to global labour market. (Cecevičiūtė, 2004; Baršauskienė, Guščinskienė, 2003; Chreptavičienė, Kondrotas, 2003; Ruškus, Liukinevičienė, 2003);
- for teaching and learning methods, aimed at switching from learning for life-long to life-long learning.

(Zuzevičiūtė, 2003; A. Augustinienė, 2004; Gynild, 2003);

- for research activities that should not be separated from the study process and would form obligatory competences for a modern specialist. (Juzevičienė, 2003; Zamorski, 2004);
- for international cooperation that could quicker internationalise studies, increase academic mobility, implement European dimensions in study process and help collectively formulate common standards of international studies. (Juzevičienė, 1998, 2003; Campbell, Wende, 2000; Čižas, 2001; Savickienė, Pukelis, 2003).
- for the assurance of internal study quality in higher education institutions based on the principles of internal study quality aiming at managing all technical, administrative, human and other factors that have influence on quality of studies and other processes. (Palionis, 1996; Pocūtė, 2003; Adomaitienė, Ruževičius, 2002; Žekevičienė, 2004).

Considering the aim of the Bologna process – to create the common European higher education area, it is meaningful to analyse and rate of the extent of Lithuanian study quality assessment institutions' recommendations and demands for colleges to implement international mobility, implant European dimension in studies, life-long learning, prepare and implement strategies for increasing their attraction and competitive ability. Undoubtedly, it is necessary to pay attention to political, i.e. the country's strategic problems, because while trying to achieve the raised aims of the Bologna process, colleges' possibilities for implanting activities and study quality standards, directly depend on the success of their solutions.

It is topical to thoroughly analyse both on a macro and micro scale the influence of compatibility of qualifications, recognition of studies, study programmes relevance to the demands of labour market, study internationalisation in Lithuanian higher education institutions. That is why the impact of the Bologna process on the quality of higher education institutions' activities and the strengthening of competitiveness and attraction is a **scientific research problem**.

The goal of the article – to analyse and accentuate international declarations and conventions aimed at non-university studies and their fluctuation, colleges' evaluation sectors, criteria and indicators that are used for the realisation of the tasks of the Bologna process; evaluate subjective and objective obstacles that hinder international agreements from introducing them into colleges' activity.

The subject of the research – the expression of the Bologna process dimensions in the requirements for quality of the activity.

Methods of the research – the analysis of legal acts, documents of international agreements and scientific literature, generalization of its results, formulation of conclusions.

International agreements topical for colleges while uniting the common area of studies and science

The Bologna process signifies collective attempts to create the common area of European higher education.

This aim is in conformity with the most significant task of the European Union to achieve that the economy of the European Union became the most competitive in the world till 2010. The crucial role falls on the competence of human resources and the biggest task is raised for institutions of higher education. That is why the majority of the Bologna process agreements are very topical to colleges.

The fundamental aim of the Bologna process – to create the common European higher education area. Striving for this, there are defined the main, equally important for the European governments and for every European higher education institution goals: international competitiveness of European higher education area, mobility and employability (Lourtie, 2001).

The first steps of the Bologna process towards the united European study and science area began in 1997 when the Lisbon Convention for the recognition of qualifications connected with higher education in the European region was signed (Lisbon Convention, 1997). In June of 1999 the Bologna Declaration was signed and it laid the foundations for the creation of the common area of higher education till 2010. In the declaration the objectives for introducing the common system of European credit transfer system (ECTS), agreeing on that it takes at least 3 years to get a bachelor degree, promoting the cooperation in quality assurance in study and science, stimulating the implantation of European dimension in higher education were confirmed (Bologna Declaration, 1999). In 2001 with the aim to strengthen the Bologna process, the Prague Communiqué was signed and there were priorities for developing ability to study life-long and increasing competitive ability and attraction of the common European area of higher education were distinguished, while emphasizing the main elements of the European area of higher education (Prague Communiqué, 2001). In 2002 the Copenhagen Declaration that is very important for the sector of colleges, for paying maximum attention to inter-institutional cooperation and strengthening quality assurance in vocational training was signed. Its aim is to improve the quality and attraction of vocational training (including the situation of vocational training in the framework of general education). This can be achieved creating the means at the European level and increasing the transparency and recognition of qualifications and competences, defining the dimensions of the reform of national vocational training systems, accenting the adaptation of these systems to the demands of knowledge society and the ambition for becoming flexible systems, oriented to the supply of individual needs and to the students (Copenhagen Declaration, 2002). In 2003 the Berlin Communiqué defined a few priorities, one of them – the essential demand to develop collectively adopted quality assurance criteria and methods (Berlin Communiqué, 2003).

Such aims of the Bologna process as the comparability and recognition of qualifications and degrees, establishment of the ECTS system, promotion of international mobility, the concept of life-long learning, promotion of European dimensions in higher education and strengthening of attraction and competitive ability of the common European area of higher education indicate the tendencies of europeanisation, internationalisation and globalisation in higher education area. Most of international documents of

the Bologna process unexceptionally emphasize the importance of quality while aiming at implementation of the main objectives of the Bologna process, tasks for aiming at objectives and means directed to tasks. Neither of the main objectives of Bologna – international competitiveness, mobility and employability is possible to be reached without the reliable system of study quality assurance on an institutional, national and international scale.

In this case quality becomes an essential element defining the competitive ability and attraction of European

system of higher education worldwide. Quality becomes not only an essential condition, aimed at the quality and compatibility of awarded degrees of qualifications, but also the base of the common European area of higher education. After systematizing aims and tasks of the Bologna process, the creation of European higher education area can be diagrammatically depicted as a construction with quality standing for a base. Quality can be named as a foundation – stone for building a palace of European higher education area (Figure).

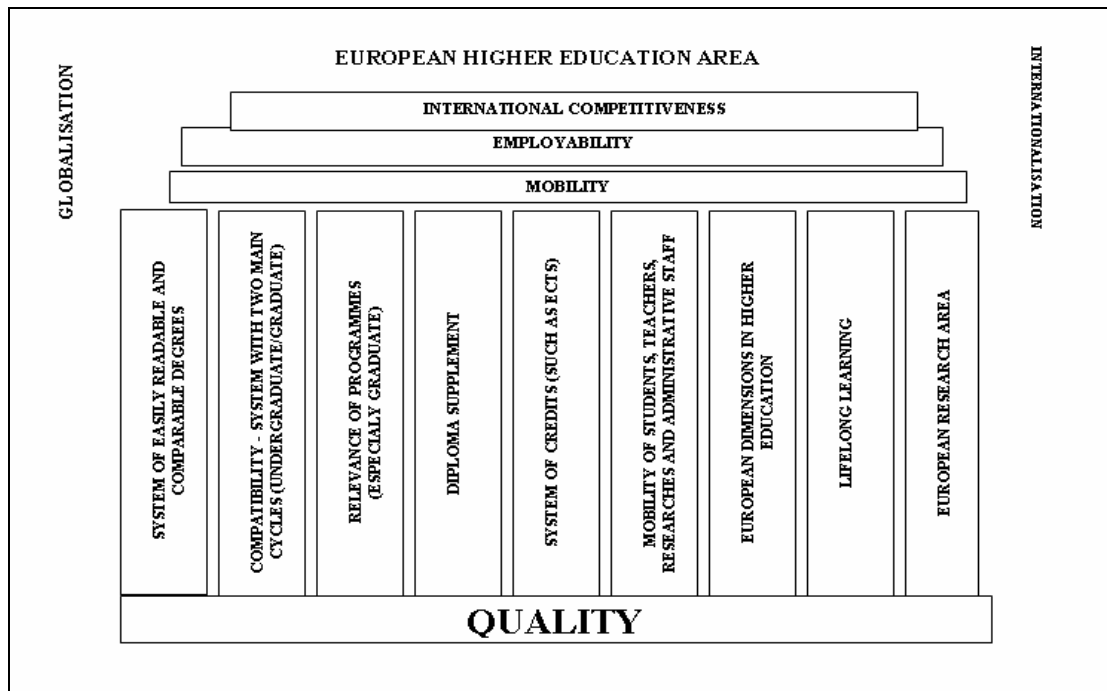


Figure. Prepared according to: Lisbon Convention (1997), Sorbonne Declaration (1998), Bologna Declaration (1999), Prague Communiqué (2001) and Berlin Communiqué (2003).

The dimensions of international agreements in assessment of colleges' activity

A lot of groups are concerned with the activity quality of higher education (students, employers, teachers, government, e.c.). These groups have different opinions and attitudes towards the quality in higher education system (Vengris, 1998; Čižas, 1996, 1999). Nevertheless, the notion of study quality in a higher education institution is multifaceted and complex and it is difficult to define it collectively. Connecting notions of quality and studies Savickiene and Pukelis suggest to define it as the availability of conditions that are given for the development of self-education and the acquisition of qualification in the university or college. The authors of this notion state that it is necessary to analyse the whole of these conditions according to separate aspects and dimensions when assessing the feasibility of these conditions. The dimensions of study quality should be analysed according to the defined standards and criteria. Suggesting to define standards and criteria, Savickienė and Pukelis agree that quality is assessed by a lot of concerned groups. That is why their opinion about different dimensions of study quality may differ. Everybody can separate perfection from degradation but

nobody can make an absolute decision what is right and what is wrong but on the whole it is possible to make a decision about the achieved level of quality resting on different groups' opinion. (Savickienė, Pukelis, 2003).

Since 2005 the organisation of colleges' accreditation² will be performed by Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education and Methodological Centre of Vocational Education. These institutions, guided by the assessment experience of foreign countries, prepared the *Methodology for External Quality Assessment of Colleges' Activity and Methodological Recommendations for Self-Assessment of College's activity (2004)* (15, 19). There are defined the assessed activity areas, their criteria and indicators.

The initiated demand of the Bologna process for developing collectively adopted the criteria and methods of quality assurance in the whole Europe makes the match of procedures of national external quality assessment and assurance between the demands of Bologna central object

² The process of external quality review used in higher education to scrutinize colleges, universities, and higher education programs for quality assurance and quality improvement. Success results in an accredited institution and/or program (13).

in this process, i.e. between European compatibility and transparency, that will make the access to the European labour market easier for students and promote the attraction and competitive ability of European higher education together with collectively adopted systems of quality assurance. (24).

Quality assessment of college's activity involves these areas: 1) management; 2) planning and performance of studies; 3) research and relations with Lithuanians partners; 4) international relations; 5) material and financial resources; 6) personnel; 7) system of quality assurance of internal quality; 8) system of graduates' qualifications assessment; 9) demand of prepared specialists. While analysing the criteria and indicators of assessed activity areas, it is noticed that from 9 assessed areas the demands for colleges aiming predefined tasks of the Bologna process are raised in the 6 assessed areas. First, in the assessed area of *management* one of the criteria of activity quality assessment is the importance of college's external integrating processes, its indicators – college management orientation to the demands of regional community, changes that are in the process in different areas of Lithuanian and European society life and the formation of college image in the society and regional society. Second, the assessed area of *planning and performance of studies*, the criteria of study programmes demand is excluded and one of its indicators is external and internal factors, conditioning unequal demand for programmes, applied means for increasing the demand for programmes, the criterion of rationality of study programmes as a whole and the criterion of the match for regional needs and one of its indicators is the association of the aims of study programmes with the demand of labour market, employers' interests, students' needs and other. Third, in the assessed area of *research and relations with Lithuanian partners* the criterion of relations with external surroundings and utility for studies is distinguished. In this case the indicators of efficiency of perfection of study programmes, efficiency of reaching common aims of a college, efficiency of organising the practical training are assessed. Much attention is paid to the creation of the common European higher education area with the aim to join it in the fourth assessed area – *international relations*. The criteria of activity quality that are singled out are the systematics and efficiency of the organisation of international relations and one of the indicators of the criteria is a link of international relations with the priorities of a region, a state and the European Union; the criterion of the influence of international relations on the development of studies, its indicators – the use of international cooperation experience for preparation and perfection of study programmes and the influence of international relations on the content fluctuation of studies and quality of a college's activity; the criterion of an institution's preparation for performance of international study programmes, its indicators – college's teachers' competence to teach subjects in the English language and the assurance of comparability of college's study programmes with the study programmes in foreign institutions, the criterion of the extent of participation in international projects and the influence on a college's activity; the criterion of intensity and balance of students' and teachers' interchange programmes. In the seventh assessed area – the

assessed area of *system of quality assurance of internal quality* the criteria of the system of rationality, level of regulation and efficiency are distinguished. In the ninth assessed area – the assessed area of the *demand of prepared specialists* the college's activity quality is assessed according to indicators of the level of preparation for adult life-long learning, the extent of formal and informal adult life-long learning and its implementation, indicators of a college's activity aiming to join the implementation of means of a priority of human resources development.

The analysis of documents of colleges' activity quality assessment indicates requirements to colleges for forming purposefully their strategy connecting it with the strengthening of competitiveness and attraction of both Lithuanian colleges and higher education – to orientate to priorities of the European Union, increase the attraction of study programmes, strengthen inter-institutional relations with social partners, develop skills of life long learning with the aim to prepare employees who are skilled for practice, competitive and capable constantly renew their knowledge; implement international academic mobility and European dimensions in study process, i.e. prepare curriculum, courses and study programmes containing European content, develop the system of quality assurance of study programmes with the aim that Lithuanian colleges would quicker internationalise study content and graduates have an easy access to the European Union labour market.

Difficulties of increasing colleges' competitiveness and attraction

The analysis indicates that criteria and indicators of assessed areas of most colleges' activity quality are concentrated on internal weaknesses and strengths of institutions. It is possible to envisage only few requirements and recommendations for analysing and evaluating the external environment of an institution – it could be the orientation of a college's mission to development tasks of regional competitiveness, management orientation to changes that are in process in different spheres of Lithuanian and European society life, the connection of aims of study programmes with demands of labour market, coherence of international relations with priorities of a region, state and the European Union, assurance of comparability of college's study programmes with implemented study programmes of foreign institutions. However, constantly strengthening internationalisation and globalisation of higher education claim more analysis and assessment of external opportunities, threats and their position in the market of European higher education in order to be able to compete in the common European higher education area. Primarily, it is important to evaluate the competitive field of higher education institutions on a national, European Union and international scale – the division of a market, images of universities and colleges, homogeneity/heterogeneity of higher education and degree of competitiveness/cooperation among higher education institutions. It is necessary to evaluate demographic changes, students'/teachers' migration, fluctuation of young people's (present and future students) interests and needs, development of mass education methods – the development of distance and independent learning forms and other in order to form strategies for the strengthening of their attraction. This

will allow adequately evaluate colleges' present conditions and future perspectives and return to tasks of strategic management and study quality assurance. These tasks are the determination of long-term development trends of colleges' activity, constant improvement and efficiency, creation of quality culture and openness to the external environment.

Objective external factors, not depending on quality of colleges' activity, that will allow to implement international agreements on the creation of the common European higher education area and strengthen international attraction and competitiveness of Lithuanian higher education and specifically of colleges, depend also on acceptance of governmental strategic decisions requesting for political will. These decisions are conferment of a professional bachelor degree to college's graduates, creation of normative base for preparation and implementation of common "Joint degree" study programmes, investments to the perfection of colleges' staff's skills of scientific applied activity, compatibility and comparability of quality assessment criteria of activity of the same level European higher education institutions and other. Such decisions would make Lithuanian higher education system closer to the Bologna process provision and existing practice of acknowledgment of academic and professional qualifications would strengthen the attraction of colleges to foreigners. At the same time it would reduce the disproportion of university and college students, harmonize still uneven, single-sided international interchange, make possibilities for colleges to demonstrate quality of activity to many interested groups in order to attract not only European, but also students from all over the world.

Conclusions

These conclusions can be drawn when the analysis of the Bologna process documents and normative documents on Lithuanian colleges' activity quality assessment is done:

1. One of the main aims of uniting process of the common European science and study area – strengthening of attraction and competitiveness of the common European higher education area and quality become the main factor and basis of this.
2. The methodology of Lithuanian colleges' activity quality assessment (accreditation) prepared according to the assessment experience of foreign countries, theoretical principles of quality assessment, becomes a stimulus for colleges for that implementation of international agreements of the Bologna process and connecting their activity with the priorities of the common European science and study area, while internationalising study content and implementing international models of study quality assurance.
3. Internationalisation and globalisation of higher education and study markets claim for more attention not only employing internal possibilities and resources but also external factors, conditioning their activity quality in order to become and remain attractive and a competitive institution of higher education and studies. This needs the improvement of criteria of colleges' quality assessment.
4. Important strategic decisions accepted by govern-

mental institutions and strengthening attraction and competitiveness of Lithuanian higher education system, especially colleges, would be a huge motive for the improvement of study quality.

5. In order to strengthen colleges' ability to compete in the common European higher education area, it is recommended to improve the criteria for the assessment of colleges' quality: the requirements should be raised not only for the assessment and improvement of their internal institutional strengths and weaknesses of the realisation of study programmes, teaching and learning methods, scientific research activity and the like, but also it is necessary to request for self-evaluation of the condition in the competitive field of higher education institutions on a national, European union and international scale: the division of a market, images of universities and colleges, homogeneity/heterogeneity of the market of higher education, competitiveness/cooperation among higher education institutions. At the same time it is essential to evaluate demographic changes, students' / teachers' migration, fluctuation of young people's (present and future students) interests and needs, development of mass education methods – the development of distance and independent learning forms and other. It is necessary to assess the quality of study and science internationalisation for colleges in order to become competitive and attractive in the common European higher education area. For assessment there can be adapted the model of Internationalisation Quality Review Process that was created in 1998 (23) by OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), IMHE (Programme on Institutional Management of Higher Education) and ACA (Academic Co-operation Association). It is designed achieve institutional aims and tasks of quality internationalisation and quality evaluation and the improvement of the expression of international dimensions in the underlying institutional activity. It will allow an adequate evaluation of the present state of colleges and future perspectives in the context of European higher education area.

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Bolonijos proceso dimensijos kolegijų veiklos kokybės vertinime

Santrauka

Visame pasaulyje spartėjant integracijos procesams, globalizacijai, vystantis žinių ekonomikai, auga mokslo ir studijų internacionalizavimo bei studijų kokybės poreikis, kinta aukštųjų mokyklų veiklos charakteristikos. Lietuvai įsitraukus į bendrą Europos studijų ir mokslo erdvę, aktualu analizuoti jos aukštųjų mokyklų pasirėngimą tapti lygiaverčiais, patraukliais ir konkurencingais bendrosios Europos aukštojo mokslo erdvės partneriais, kur vienu iš prioritetinių uždavinių tampa studijų kokybės užtikrinimas. Šie procesai nepalieka nuošalyje ir naujosios Lietuvos dvinarės aukštojo mokslo sistemos grandies – kolegijų, kurių tikslas vykdyti neuniversitetinės aukštąsias studijas – į praktinę veiklą orientuotas profesines studijas, sudarančias sąlygas įgyti taikomaisiais moksliniais tyrimais ir (ar) taikomąja mokslinė veikla grindžiamą profesinę kvalifikaciją. Atsižvelgiant į Bolonijos proceso tikslą – sukurti bendrą Europos aukštojo mokslo erdvę, prasminga analizuoti ir vertinti, kiek Lietuvos studijų kokybės vertinimo institucijos rekomenduoja ir reikalauja, kad kolegijos vykdytų tarptautinį mobilumą, diegtų europinę dimensiją studijose, mokymąsi visą gyvenimą bei rengtų ir įgyvendintų strategijas savo patrauklumui ir konkurencingumui didinti.

Pastaraisiais metais tiek nacionaliniu, tiek tarptautiniu mastu ypač aktuali tapo studijų kokybės užtikrinimo ir vertinimo bei studijų ir mokslo internacionalizavimo tema. Mokslininkų tyrinėjimuose galima išvystyti formuluojamus aktualius Bolonijos procesui uždavinius kai kurioms aukštųjų mokyklų veiklos sritims ar net keliamos veiklos kokybės kriterijus: studijų programų turiniui, mokymo ir mokymosi metodams, mokslinei tiriamajai veiklai, tarptautiniam bendradarbiavimui, vidinės studijų kokybės užtikrinimui aukštosiose mokyklose.

Stripsnio tikslas – išskiriant neuniversitetinėms studijoms ir jų kaitai aktualius tarptautinių deklaracijų ir konvencijų tikslus, išanalizuoti kolegijų vertinimo sritis, kriterijus ir rodiklius, kuriais siekiama Bolonijos proceso uždavinių įgyvendinimo; įvertinti kliūtis, neleidžiančias, diegti kolegijų veikloje tarptautinių susitarimų. Tyrimo objektas – Bolonijos proceso dimensijų raiška kolegijų veiklos kokybei keliamuose reikalavimuose. Kolegijų veiklai aktualūs tokie Bolonijos proceso tikslai kaip kvalifikacijų ir laipsnių palyginamumas ir pripažinimas, ECTS sistemos sukūrimas, tarptautinio mobilumo skatinimas, mokymosi visą gyvenimą koncepcija, europinės dimensijos aukštajame moksle diegimas bei bendros Europos aukštojo mokslo erdvės patrauklumo ir konkurencingumo didinimas. Dauguma tarptautinių Bolonijos proceso dokumentų pabrėžia kokybės svarbą siekiant įgyvendinti pagrindinius Bolonijos proceso tikslus, uždavinius tikslams pasiekti bei įdiegti priemones uždaviniams įgyvendinti. Nė vieno iš Bolonijos pagrindinių tikslų – tarptautinio konkurencingumo, mobilumo bei aukšto absolventų įsidarbinimo lygio arba sėkmingos integracijos į Europos darbo rinką įsėimanoma pasiekti nesant patikimai studijų kokybės užtikrinimo sistemai tiek instituciniu, tiek nacionaliniu, tiek tarptautiniu mastu. Bolonijos proceso inicijuotas poreikis vystyti bendrai priimtus

visoje Europoje kokybės užtikrinimo kriterijus ir metodus, centriniu dėmesio objektu šiame procese daro nacionalinių išorinių kokybės vertinimo ir užtikrinimo procedūrų atitiktį Bolonijos reikalavimams, t.y. europiniam suderinamumui ir skaidrumui, kurie kartu su bendrai pripažintomis kokybės užtikrinimo sistemomis palengvins studentų priėjimą prie Europos darbo rinkos ir skatins Europos aukštojo mokslo patrauklumą ir konkurencingumą.

Aukštosios mokyklos veiklos kokybe yra suinteresuota daug grupių (studentai, darbdaviai, dėstytojai, vyriausybė ir t.t.), kurios turi skirtingus interesus, o tai sąlygoja skirtingas nuomones ir pozicijas kokybės aukštojoje mokykloje atžvilgiu. Nepaisant to, kad studijų kokybės sąvoka aukštojoje mokykloje yra daugiaspektė ir kompleksiška bei sunkiai vienodai apibrėžiama, I. Savickienė, K. Pukelis (2003), susiedami kokybės ir studijų apibrėžimus, vis dėlto studijų kokybę siūlo apibrėžti kaip sąlygų, suteikiamų asmens saviugdai plėtoti ir kvalifikacijai įgyti universitete ar kolegijoje, tinkamumą. Šio apibrėžimo autoriai teigia, kad, vertinant sąlygų tinkamumą, reikėtų šių sąlygų visumą analizuoti pagal atskirus aspektus arba dimensijas. Studijų kokybės dimensijos turėtų būti tiriamos pagal apibrėžtus standartus ir kriterijus. Kolegijos Lietuvoje akredituojamos vadovaujantis užsienio šalių vertinimo patirtimi, kokybės vertinimo teoriniais principais, 2004 m. parengta *Išorinio kolegijų veiklos kokybės vertinimo metodika* ir *Kolegijos veiklos savianalizės suvestinės metodinės rekomendacijos*, kuriose apibrėžtos vertinamos veiklos sritys, jų kriterijai ir rodikliai.

Kolegijos veiklos kokybės vertinimas apima šias sritis: 1) valdymą; 2) studijų planavimą ir įgyvendinimą; 3) mokslo taikomuosius tyrimus ir ryšius su partneriais Lietuvoje; 4) tarptautinius ryšius; 5) materialiuosius ir finansinius išteklius; 6) personalą; 7) vidinę veiklos kokybės užtikrinimo sistemą; 8) absolventų kvalifikacijos vertinimo sistemą; 9) rengiamų specialistų paklausą. Analizuojant vertinamą veiklos sričių kriterijus ir rodiklius, pastebėta, kad iš 9 vertinamų sričių 6 vertinamose srityse kolegijoms keliami reikalavimai siekti Bolonijos proceso užsibrėžtų uždavinių. Kolegijų veiklos kokybės vertinimo dokumentų analizė rodo kolegijoms keliamus reikalavimus kryptingai formuoti savo strategiją, siejant ją tiek su Lietuvos kolegijų, tiek su šalies aukštojo mokslo konkurencingumo ir patrauklumo didinimu – orientuotis į ES prioritetus; didinti studijų programų atraktivumą; stiprinti tarpinstitucinius ryšius su socialiniais partneriais, ugdyti mokymosi visą gyvenimą įgūdžius siekiant rengti kvalifikuotai pasirengusius praktiniam darbui, konkurencingus ir gebančius nuolat atnaujinti savo žinias darbuotojus; vykdyti tarptautinį akademinį mobilumą; diegti europietiškus matmenis studijų procese, t.y. rengti modulius, kursus ir “europinio” turinio studijų programas, plėtoti vidinę studijų kokybės užtikrinimo sistemą, kad Lietuvos kolegijos sparčiau internacionalizuotų studijų turinį ir jų absolventams būtų lengviau prieinama bendroji Europos Sąjungos darbo rinka. Taigi Lietuvos kolegijų veiklos kokybės vertinimo (akreditacijos) metodika, parengta vadovaujantis užsienio šalių vertinimo patirtimi, kokybės vertinimo teoriniais principais,

tampa paskata kolegijoms studijų procese diegti Bolonijos proceso tarptautinius susitarimus bei savo veiklą sieti su bendros Europos mokslo ir studijų erdvės prioritetais internacionalizuojant studijų turinį ir diegiant tarptautinius studijų kokybės užtikrinimo modelius. Analizė rodo, kad daugumos kolegijų veiklos kokybės vertinamų sričių vertinimo kriterijai ir rodikliai koncentruojasi į vidines institucijos silpnyles ir stiprybes. Galima įžvelgti tik keletą reikalavimų ir rekomendacijų analizuoti ir įvertinti institucijos išorinę aplinką – tai kolegijos misijos orientacija į regiono konkurencingumo kėlimo uždavinius, valdymo orientacija į įvairiose Lietuvos bei Europos visuomenės gyvenimo srityse vykstančius pokyčius, studijų programų tikslų siejimas su darbo rinkos paklausa, tarptautinių ryšių sąsaja su regiono, valstybės ir ES prioritetais, kolegijos studijų programų palyginamumo su kitų šalių institucijose įgyvendinamomis studijų programomis užtikrinimas. Tačiau aukštojo mokslo ir studijų rinkų internacionalizacija ir globalizacija siekiant tapti ir išlikti patrauklia ir konkurencinga aukštojo mokslo ir studijų institucija reikalauja, kad kolegijos didesnę dėmesį skirtų ne tik vidinėms galimybėms ir ištekliams, bet ir jų veiklos kokybę sąlygojantiems išoriniams veiksniams. Pirmiausia svarbu įvertinti aukštųjų mokyklų konkurencinį lauką nacionaliniu, ES ir tarptautiniu mastu – rinkos pasidalinimą, universitetų ir kolegijų įvaizdžius, aukštojo mokslo rinkos homogeniškumą ar heterogeniškumą, lenktyniavimo ar bendradarbiavimo tarp aukštųjų mokyklų laipsnį. Formuojant strategijas savo patrauklumui didinti, taip pat būtina įvertinti demografinius pokyčius, studentų ir dėstytojų migraciją, jaunų žmonių (esamų ir būsimų studentų) interesus ir poreikių kaitą, masinio švietimo metodų vystymąsi – distancinio ir savarankiško mokymosi formų plėtrą ir kt. Tai leistų adekvačiau įvertinti kolegijų esamą padėtį bei ateities perspektyvas ir grįžti prie strateginio valdymo bei studijų kokybės užtikrinimo uždavinių, tokių kaip kolegijų veiklos ilgalaikių vystymosi kryptių nustatymas bei nuolatinis tobulinimas ir efektyvumas, kokybės kultūros ir atvirumo išorei kūrimas. Tai reikalauja ir kolegijų kokybės vertinimo kriterijų tobulinimo. Objektvyūs, ne nuo kolegijų veiklos kokybės priklausantys, išoriniai veiksniai, leisiantys įgyvendinti tarptautinius susitarimus dėl bendros Europos aukštojo mokslo erdvės kūrimo ir galintys didinti Lietuvos aukštojo mokslo ir konkrečiai kolegijų tarptautinį patrauklumą ir konkurencingumą, priklauso ir nuo politinės valios reikalaujančių vyriausybės strateginių sprendimų priėmimo, tokių kaip profesinio bakalauro suteikimas kolegijų absolventams, norminės bazės sukūrimas bendroms “Joint degree” studijų programoms rengti ir vykdyti, investicijos į kolegijų pedagoginio personalo mokslinės taikomosios veiklos įgūdžių tobulinimą, to paties lygio Europos aukštojo mokslo institucijų veiklos kokybės vertinimo kriterijų suderinamumas bei palyginamumas ir kt.

Raktažodžiai: *Bolonijos procesas, Europos aukštojo mokslo erdvė, studijų kokybė, studijų internacionalizacija, tarptautiniai susitarimai, Europos aukštojo mokslo erdvės konkurencingumas ir patrauklumas, veiklos sritis, kriterijus, rodiklis.*

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