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# Parameters for the Assessment of the Impact of Internationalisation Policy on Quality in Higher Education and its Influence on the Development of Society: The Lithuanian Case

**ABSTRACT:** *The article discusses the envisaged outcomes of internationalisation policy of higher education in the context of the European Higher Education Area, and the effect of internationalisation policy on quality in higher education. In Lithuania, internationalisation of higher education is supported by large amounts of public finance, in the hope that internationalisation will provide added value to the quality of higher education. However, there are no tools for collecting evidence of whether that investment is properly used. The research question of the study is how the internationalisation policy impact on quality in higher education and its influence on wider society may be measured in a particular national context. The article presents exploratory research findings based on an extensive literature review and views of policy-makers, higher education administrators and academics evaluated as a set of indicators and criteria to be used in assessing the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in higher education and its influence on wider society.*

**KEYWORDS:** internationalisation policy; higher education; quality in higher education; indicator; criteria; Lithuania

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## INTRODUCTION

The European Commission's strategy on higher education (HE) promotes actions in the area of increasing academic mobility, cooperation and partnership of higher education institutions (HEI), and internationalisation of study programmes. As such, internationalisation policy is one of the key priorities in the development of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). The Bologna Process is the main driving force stimulating the internationalisation of HE.

The main goal of internationalisation is stated as the improvement of quality in HE (Huisman, Luijten-Lub & Van der Wende, 2005; Radzevičienė, 2007). In Bologna Process documents<sup>2</sup> and scientific research (Radzevičienė, 2007; Culver, Puri, Spinelli, DePauw & Dooley, 2012; Urbanovič & Wilkins, 2013; Heffron & Maresco, 2014; Costello, 2015), the impact of internationalisation on quality in HE and its influence on society is treated positively.

In many countries, internationalisation has become a relevant topic for scientific research; there is a wide range of publications on internationalisation of HE. Publications include special international scientific journals (*International Higher Education* since 1995, the *Journal of Studies in International Education* since 1997, the *Journal of Research in International Education* since 2002, etc.) analysing various aspects of internationalisation, including strategies and practice as well as both the concept and the policy of internationalisation. Horta (2009), Yemini (2014), Cantwell and Maldonado-Maldonado (2009) have also noted the increasing interest in internationalisation in the HE literature.

In Lithuania, the internationalisation of HE (development of joint degree programmes, strengthening of competencies of academic staff, mobility programmes of students and lecturers, etc.) is supported by large amounts of public finance, in the hope

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<sup>2</sup>Prague Communiqué, 2001; Berlin Communiqué, 2003; Bergen Communiqué, 2005; London Communiqué, 2007; Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqué, 2009; Bucharest Communiqué, 2012; Yerevan Communiqué, 2015.

that internationalisation will provide added value to HE. During the period 2007–2013, significant financial support with a funding of €2093.8 million provided from the EU Structural Funds (SF) (Lithuanian Education in Figures, 2013: Studies; the website of EU Structural Assistance) and Erasmus programme (Lithuanian Education in Figures, 2013: Studies) for internationalisation of Lithuanian HE.

In comparison, the state budget expenditure on HE for 2014 year was €226.2 million (Official Statistics Portal). However, there is no evidence whether that investment was properly used, as it requires appropriate assessment parameters suited to the context of the phenomenon valued – in this case, the Lithuanian context. In both theoretical and practical methodologies used for the assessment of institutional quality and quality of study programmes, there are no indicators and criteria for the comprehensive assessment of added value provided by internationalisation policy to HEIs, people and society. The relevance of the topic is conditioned by the fact that assessment of the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society is significant for both HE policymakers and administrators when determining whether expectations are met in respect of internationalisation providing added value to HE and society. Therefore, there is a research question as to how internationalisation policy has an impact on quality in HE and its influence on wider society may be measured in a particular national context. The subject of the exploratory research is to assess the parameters for the assessment of the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society, while the goal of the research is to determine such parameters.

## INTERNATIONALISATION POLICY OF HE

The most suitable definition of internationalisation in terms of various levels and different countries, cultures and educational systems is proposed by Knight (2003, p. 2), who states that ‘internationalisation at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global indicator into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education’.

When analysing the internationalisation policy, it is important to understand and clearly define the motives that stimulate the internationalisation of HE. These motives concern economic profit, strengthening the quality of HE and socio-cultural reasons, and they are relevant at both national and institutional levels (Juknytė-Petreikienė, 2011). At the national level, internationalisation is aimed at creating conditions for as many people as possible to acquire education and high qualifications; it is also aimed at enhancing mutual cross-cultural understanding and respect, security and peace, and economic development. At the institutional level, there are expectations of international cooperation of HEIs, improvement of quality in HE, creation of international reputations, elevation of staff competencies, creation of new knowledge, and additional income. Duoblienė (2010) notes that the national educational system should adapt to global challenges while also meeting domestic expectations. According to Baršauskas, Kriščiūnas, Jensen, Kazlauskaitė, Lanskoronskis, Markevičienė, Ramonienė and Turauskas (2007), internationalisation faces the global challenge of harmonising the preparation of graduates according to the needs of the labour market at the same time instilling national values and sense of identity. As Stier and Börjesson (2010) have noted, HEIs should be ‘working both locally and globally, ensure tradition and looking toward the future’.

Motives for internationalisation determine the instruments of internationalisation policy. The Bologna Process has become the main driving force in defining the framework of the study system. Many authors (Huisman et al 2005; Radzevičienė, 2007; Galkutė & Fadeeva, 2012; Urbanovič & Wilkins, 2013) consider this process as the promoter of internationalisation. The development of internationalisation requires suitable legislation; since the beginning of the Bologna Process, substantial work related to the restructuring of the study system has been carried out in all EU countries. The role of the state has changed from a position of almost full control to one of steering at a distance, resulting in greater HEI autonomy (Huisman et al., 2005; Horta, 2009 and 2010). In the Netherlands, there is an assumption that autonomous HEIs can adequately adapt to global challenges, however, in the United Kingdom, the government has set stricter conditions for public funding (Huisman et al., 2005).

As Stier (2010) noted, internationalisation ‘plays a central role’ in bringing about a change in HEIs. As noted by many authors (Huisman 2005; Cantwell, Maldonado-Maldonado, 2009; Horta, 2009; Yemini, 2014), HEIs have focused on international collaboration, English-language initiatives, foreign students and inclusion of international staff. Beyond Europe, in Korea for example, development of dual-degree programmes allowed HEIs to establish partnerships and increase both student and staff mobility. As Stier and Börjesson (2010) pointed out, international students provide a significant source of revenue for HEIs all over the world. In

Korea, foreign students are seen as valuable assets not only to Korean HEIs but ‘to Korea as whole as future trade partners and allies’ (Palmer & Cho, 2012). European HEIs also increased the number of programmes in English with the aim of attracting more foreign students (Cantwell, Maldonado-Maldonado, 2009). English-taught programmes comprised nearly 6 per cent of all programmes across Europe in 2014 (Wachter & Maiworm, 2014). Most HEIs aim to project an international image and reputation (Horta 2009; Stier & Börjesson, 2010). Throughout the EU, HEIs demand to be more entrepreneurial, an attitude that has led them to increase their cross-border activities (Horta, 2009; 2010). As Stier and Börjesson (2010) have pointed out, ideological convergence of higher education can be seen, where attention is drawn to global competitiveness, benchmarking and the knowledge society. The Bologna documents highlight the importance of competencies and employability for sustainable development (Stier, 2010). In the twenty-first century, acquisition of employees with international knowledge and skills has become necessary for the survival of each society (Yonezawa, Kitamura, Meerman & Kuroda, 2014).

The goals mentioned above cannot be achieved by HEIs without public funding (Horta, 2009). Financial support from the government was important in Korea when \$6.92 million was provided for the project to recruit leading scholars (Palmer & Cho, 2012). As noted by Horta (2010), the position of Portuguese universities in the global arena also depended on governmental financial support. Financial issues were a major consideration for students studying abroad (O’Reilly, Hickey & Ryan, 2015). Thus, public funding and support is significant for HEI’s competitiveness in the global arena (Horta, 2009).

Funding is the most essential support stimulating internationalisation at both the national and European level. An increasing amount of funds is provided for Lithuanian student mobility (Overview of the Status of Lithuanian Study, 2013). EC’s financial support for the Erasmus programme had been increasing annually since 2002, and reached €7.8 million in the period 2012–2013 (Lithuanian Education in Figures, 2013: Studies). According to statistical reports of the Erasmus programme during the period 2008–2014, it has seen not only a constant increase in the budget, but also in the number of both students and staff taking part. In 2008–2009, 198,523 students and 36,389 staff spent time abroad with a budget of €416.36 million, while the Erasmus programme had supported 272,497 students and 57,488 staff with a funding of €580 million in 2013–2014. Overall, with a budget of around €3.68 billion, the Erasmus programme has provided more than 3.3 million students and 470,000 staff with the opportunity to go abroad since its launch in 1987 (Statistical Overview of the Erasmus programme, 2010; 2011; 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015).

During the period 2007–2013, quite high financial support was provided for the preparation of joint degree programmes in Lithuania. During that period, 15 joint degree programmes were registered with funding of €35 million provided from the EU Structural Funds (SF) (Lithuanian Education in Figures, 2013: Studies). In 2014, the number of joint degree programmes increased to 31 (Lithuanian Education in Figures, 2014: Studies); up until 2008, there had been only three joint degree programmes in Lithuania (Promotion Programme of Internationalisation of Higher Education for 2008–2010). Moreover, until April 2014, there were 88 study programmes offered in the English, Russian and Polish languages (Navickaitė, 2014). According to research data from Wachter and Maiworm (2014), Lithuania is among the top 10 countries from a total of 28 according to the indicators of offering and developing English-taught study programmes and the share of students involved in them. Lithuania offers the highest number of English-taught study programmes (49%) in comparison with other Baltic countries. The mentioned research revealed positive effects of English-taught study programmes provided in Lithuania, as follows: improved support for foreign students, including delivery of information and services in the English language (77%); improved international profile and awareness of HEIs (69%); increased employability of students (69%); strengthened international cooperation of HEIs (62%); more flexible admission of foreign students (67%); and increased offer of English-taught courses (42%).

During the period 2007–2013, significant financial support was also provided for the improvement of competencies of lecturers of Lithuanian HEIs (funded training, internships in foreign HEIs, etc.). Funding was provided for 11 projects to the tune of €36,701,685.95 (the website of EU Structural Assistance). The research by Wachter and Maiworm (2014) revealed that managers of the English-taught study programmes in Lithuania were satisfied with the English language skills of the academic and administrative staff.

In scientific research (Huisman et al., 2005; Juknytė-Petreikienė, 2006, 2011; Radzevičienė, 2007), internationalisation policy is treated as a measure of quality assurance and, in turn, quality in HE stimulates internationalisation (Frølich & Veiga, 2005; Juknytė-Petreikienė, 2006). According to Leisyte and Westerheijden (2014), more transparency and accountability from HEIs are required as ‘research excellence has been evaluated at the national level through national research evaluation exercises following the calls for imperatives for knowledge economies coming from the European Commission’. On the other hand, high quality in HE is a necessity in order to compete in the global arena (Huisman et al., 2005).

According to the industrial model of education, which includes the context, inputs, processes and products (Pukelis et al., 2008), inputs and outcomes (consequences and impact) are most important at the macro-level. Inputs include resources (human, financial and material) and documents regulating the activities of the educational institution. Products include student achievement, student satisfaction, efficiency of institutional management, institutional image, outcomes, experienced impacts and consequences for society. It is necessary to compare expenditure and results in order to determine the economic efficiency of investment in higher education (Gižienė & Markauskienė, 2012). Moreover, matching outcomes with expenditure could increase the accountability of public sector to taxpayers (Estache, Gonzalez & Trujillo, 2007). As Ota (2014) has noted, society and taxpayers expect HEIs to be able to explain the impact of internationalisation on HEIs.

Therefore, when assessing the impact of internationalisation on quality in HE and its influence on society, it is important to discover the efficiency of allocations for internationalisation policy, i.e. to evaluate return of inputs in relation to outcomes.

## QUALITY IN HE AND ITS ASSESSMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF HE INTERNATIONALISATION POLICY

The relationship between HE internationalisation and quality phenomena is first of all based on the fact that HE internationalisation acts as a catalyst for the improvement of HE quality, i.e. quality improvement is the key aim of every HEI, national government, and internationalisation activity and programme implemented and funded by the EC (Juknytė-Petrekienė & Pukelis, 2007; Urbanovič & Wilkins, 2013; Juknytė-Petrekienė, 2013; Bologna Process documents). Thus a reasonable assumption could be that internationalisation inspires HE changes at learner, teacher, scientific researcher, HE system and society levels, where change means quality. This understanding of the relation between internationalisation and quality allows grounding internationalisation quality assessment parameters in Harvey and Green's (1993) conception of HE quality, i.e. quality as transformation. Quality in HE is the wholeness of conditions provided by the HEI, which determines the transformation of people, institutions and societies. In its first decade, the Bologna Process stimulated changes in the areas of academic achievement of graduates and teaching and learning methods, as well as encouraging integration of teaching, scientific research and innovation in order to contribute to the formation of knowledge-driven societies (Galkutė & Fadeeva, 2012).

In the area of internationalisation and, notably, mobility, improvement of quality in HE, personal and economic development are expected, as well as the enhancement of mutual understanding and peace (Teichler, 2015). The results of research by the European University Association (EUA) in 2013, with the participation of 47 EHEA countries, revealed the following positive impact of HEI internationalisation policy: HEI partnerships developed with other regions and countries; higher numbers of students sent to foreign countries; increased number of foreign students hosted in the countries; more study programmes offered in foreign languages; joint and double degree programmes and recruitment of foreign researchers and staff in the countries (internationalisation in European higher education: European policies, institutional strategies and EUA support, 2013). The research carried out by Urbanovič and Wilkins (2013) shows internationalisation to be stimulating increased allocations of the state budget for HE; more opportunities provided for students to be employed in international companies; increased student mobility; inter-cultural experience included in study programmes; institutional purchase of educational literature in foreign languages; and the quality assurance system of Lithuanian HE as among the leading QA systems at the international level. Research (Juknytė-Petrekienė & Pukelis, 2007; Radzevičienė, 2007; Brodin, 2010; Stier, 2010; Campbell, 2012; Culver et al., 2012; Sample, 2012; Heffron & Maresco, 2014; Costello, 2015) shows change and improvement of conduct, knowledge, perception, views, values and skills of students, and improvement of the skills of academic staff. International experience led many students to learn not only about foreign culture but also about their own cultures and identities, with an increased level of speaking confidence, and helped to improve inter-cultural communication competence (Campbell, 2012). International study programmes have a positive impact on students' ethno-relative worldview, and enhance their inter-cultural competence (Sample, 2012). Increased academic commitment, future employment opportunities, improved communication skills, international competence, deeper self-awareness and a disposition to critical thinking were outlined by Costello (2015) as benefits of experience of studying abroad. Heffron and Maresco (2014) found that, after studying abroad, students become more open to include international opportunities in their future plans, and increase their personal and social development. Research by Culver et al. (2012) shows that particular HE stakeholders, i.e. students, alumni, faculty, and employers, overall perceived that joint degree programmes were beneficial to students as it bestows personal growth, communication skills and

inter-cultural skills in them. International student exchanges improve students' international knowledge as well as skills characterising international awareness or understanding of global issues, and develop abilities to solve problems, skills in English, team work, learning and responsibility (Brodin, 2010).

Despite the positive impact of internationalisation on quality in HE, it is clear that there are potential risks (Van Der Wende, 2007; Knight, 2007, 2013). Issue areas encompass low-quality providers, loss of cultural or national identity, commercialisation and commodification of education programmes (Van Der Wende, 2007; Knight, 2007, 2013; Urbanovič and Wilkins, 2013), brain drain (Teichler, 2015), lower barriers between schools and HEIs and focus from the national level to cosmopolitan competencies (Yemini, 2014).

Scientists and national and international organisations have developed different models for the assessment of internationalisation. For example, in 1999, an internationalisation quality review process model was developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Institutional Management in Higher Education and Academic Co-operation Association; it is adapted to HEIs that want to evaluate, assure and improve internationalisation. In 2001, Knight offered a methodology for tracking quality and progress of internationalisation in HEIs; in 2005, the National Agency for Higher Education in Sweden, concerned with quality assessment of studies, published results of a three-year internationalisation evaluation of all Swedish HEI first and second cycle study programmes. An analogous national assessment of institutions' internationalisation results is conducted by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) in cooperation with the Nova Scotia bank, giving rewards to HEIs for contributions to internationalisation. In 2007, Radzevičienė proposed an assessment of the internationalisation of HEI faculties (Juknytė-Petrekienė, 2013). In 2010, a set of indicators was established by the German Academic Exchange Service for HEIs to evaluate their level of internationalisation (Gao, Baik and Arkoudis, 2015). A Guide to Assessing the Quality of Internationalisation (2014), developed by the European Consortium for Accreditation in HE intends to guide the self-assessment of the quality of internationalisation.

The above-mentioned models are designed to assess the internationalisation at only the individual institutional level, and many of them are aimed at determining the number of HEI internationalisation activities.

In Lithuania, internationalisation of HE is also assessed using indicators and criteria defined in the Methodology for Conducting an Institutional Review in Higher Education (2010). The impact on regional and national development falls under one of the four indicators, and the criteria of the same encompass inclusion of themes pertaining to national and regional development in students' training practice. The remaining assessment areas related to the internationalisation of HE encompass conformity of the HEIs' strategic activity plan with provisions of EHEA and the European Research Area, conformity of qualifications with the European Qualification Framework, dynamics of international mobility and its impact on HEI activity, participation in international projects and international mobility of researchers and (or) artists.

Following the Methodology for Evaluation of Higher Education Study Programmes (2010), internationalisation of study programmes implemented in Lithuania and its impact on quality in HE is not being assessed in fact, with the exception of one criterion, which is concerned with conditions for students to participate in mobility programmes.

Therefore, despite European and national political decisions to stimulate internationalisation by various legal and financial instruments of public policy and to enhance its impact on HE quality, both theoretical and practical methodologies designed for assessment of institutional quality and quality of particular study programmes do not contain indicators and criteria for comprehensive assessment of value addition provided by internationalisation policy to HEIs, personnel and society. Efforts to internationalise HE studies should become characterised by the concept of quality in HE as the wholeness of conditions provided by the HEI, which determines change in the student, staff, institutions and society.

Consequently, outcomes of internationalisation policy, i.e. changes in the HEIs, competencies of students/graduates and development of national societies and EU regions according to their proximity, are combined in certain areas – indicators for assessing the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society. Based on the above-presented literature review, the following criteria and indicators for assessing the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society can be suggested (Table 1).

**Tab. 1:** Indicators and criteria for an assessment of the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society

Indicators	Criteria
Impact of change of HEI on quality in HE as a result of internationalisation policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened relations between HEI in the European context and contacts made with HEI of other continents</li> <li>• Development of membership of HEI in international networks</li> <li>• Implementation of international projects among HEI</li> <li>• Closer cooperation among quality assurance agencies and HEI of European countries in the area of quality assurance</li> <li>• More opportunities for international academic mobility</li> <li>• Improved general and special competencies of academic and administrative staff of HEI ensuring competent activity in the international area</li> <li>• Developed study programmes (under franchise, twinning, validation agreements, double/joint degree study programmes, and distant studies)</li> <li>• Developed international scientific research and its dissemination and application at the international level</li> <li>• Compliance of activities of HEI with international requirements for studies and research</li> <li>• Created international image and reputation of the European HEI</li> <li>• Additional financial income for HEI from degree-seeking foreign students</li> <li>• Updated infrastructure of scientific researches and studies, and library stock.</li> </ul>
Impact of quality in HE on competencies of students/graduates as a result of internationalisation policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gained skills and knowledge corresponding to the changing labour market</li> <li>• Readiness to perform professional activity in the international, inter-cultural environment</li> <li>• Readiness to study in foreign HEIs</li> <li>• Competitiveness in the national and international labour markets</li> <li>• Perceived national identity and gained basics of international citizenship herewith.</li> </ul>
Impact of quality in HE on the development of national societies as a result of internationalisation policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equal opportunities for accessibility and acquisition of HE at international level through cooperation of HEI and stakeholders</li> <li>• Maintaining and updating of competencies of employees at international level through cooperation of stakeholders</li> <li>• Innovative and creative society due to modern international scientific research and its international dissemination</li> <li>• Enhanced cross-cultural understanding and respect, peace and security</li> <li>• Maintained national ethnic and cultural identity through international cooperation of HEI and increase of mutual cross-cultural understanding and respect.</li> </ul>
Impact of quality in HE on EU development as a result of internationalisation policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitated recognition of diplomas and qualifications</li> <li>• Increased professional mobility at the European level</li> <li>• Increased attractiveness of the EHEA worldwide</li> <li>• Fostering social cohesion of nations</li> <li>• Economic growth in the EU region through strengthened cooperation among European HEIs</li> <li>• Gained competitive advantage of the EU region at an international level.</li> </ul>

## METHODOLOGY

*Data collection:* The exploratory research was based on a technique, which engages a group of identified experts in detailed examinations on a particular issue for the purpose of policy investigation, goal setting and forecasting future situations and outcomes (Encyclopedia of Research Design, 2010). It began with a written questioning of experts in public HE policy (hereafter HE policy experts) and finished with questioning the experts in quality and internationalisation of HEIs (hereafter HEI experts). Questionnaires with closed and open questions were sent to experts by e-mail. This method ensured the scientific objectivity of the study, as selected experts did not know of each other's participation in the study. This helped ensure that the experts with relevant authority in the field did not influence the others. Experts were asked to rate the statements and were encouraged to express any scepticism, questions and justifications regarding the statements. This allowed a full and fair disclosure of what each expert thinks or believes is important

concerning the issue being investigated, as well as providing experts with an opportunity to share their expertise, a principal reason for their selection for participation in the study (Encyclopedia of Research Design, 2010). Some expert comments on open questions were clarified by e-mail correspondence with them.

*Research sample:* Experts are likely to be positional leaders, as authors discovered from a review of professional publications concerning the topic and these people have first hand relationships with the target issue. The latter group often consists of individuals whose opinions are sought because their direct experience makes them a reliable source of information (Encyclopedia of Research Design, 2010). Therefore, first, we sent the questionnaire to individuals experienced in the areas of public HE policy, particularly in internationalisation and/or quality in HE, i.e. to members of the Lithuanian National Team of Bologna Experts, and representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Education Exchange Support Fund. In total, nine HE policy experts participated in written expert assessment.

Based on data provided on the website of the EU Structural Assistance ([www.esparama.lt](http://www.esparama.lt)), we found that 32 Lithuanian HEIs (12 universities and 20 colleges) were funded from the EU SF for internationalisation with a total amount of €18,039,178.8. In total, 59 HEI experts participated in the research, including nine heads of international relations offices, five heads of quality assurance offices, 14 heads of projects on internationalisation of studies, six senior managers of international relations offices, who were managing projects on internationalisation of studies and two senior managers of quality assurance offices, who were managing projects on internationalisation of studies. Of these, 42 were academics. Universities were represented by 32 HEI experts, and colleges by 27 experts. More information on research-relevant internationalisation characteristics of institutions, represented by HEI experts, can be found in Annex 1.

*Research tools:* The first structured questionnaire was based on the literature review and used as a platform for questionnaire development in a subsequent iteration (Encyclopedia of Research Design, 2010). Nine HE policy experts were requested to rank according to a 5-point Likert scale, and comment what indicators and criteria would be the most important in the context of Lithuania. Criteria rejected by HE policy experts in a further iteration of the exploratory research were discarded, and new criteria suggested by experts were included in the questionnaire.

Fifty-nine HEI experts received a second questionnaire and were asked to evaluate suitability of indicators and criteria for Lithuanian HEIs on a 5-point Likert scale and provide comments on it.

*Data analysis:* Judgements and insights offered by the experts were analysed and summarised by employing both quantitative and qualitative technique of data analysis. Measures of central tendency, i.e. means, were calculated for all ranking of statements of both expert groups. To indicate whether the HEI experts' opinion depends on the internationalisation characteristics of represented HEIs, the chi-square test ( $\chi^2$ ) was carried out, and Spearman's correlation coefficient ( $\rho$ ) was applied. Data of written comments were reviewed by both researchers (in order to prevent the bias) based on the inductive qualitative content analysis approach (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007). The process included open coding, abstraction and delivering of new statements.

*Research ethics:* The exploratory research was carried out voluntarily, i.e. experts were informed of the exploratory research goal, with an explanation of the knowledge that would be enhanced by their participation in it.

*Research limitation:* The results of the exploratory research would have been more comprehensive if more experts had participated. Some of them, due to work pressure, were not able to participate in the exploratory research in the beginning of the study. Another limitation is related to the shortage of previous research on the same topic, which did not allow a comprehensive comparison of results.

## FINDINGS

### Indicators

The exploratory research aimed at defining what indicators should be prioritised in the assessment of the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society (on the scale 'The most important' was 5, 'The least important' –1). According to HE policy experts, priority should be given to the impact of quality in HE on competencies of students/graduates (mean=4.6) and to the impact of change in HEIs on quality in HE (mean=4) as a result of internationalisation policy. The indicator of the impact of quality in HE on development of national societies as a result of internationalisation policy (mean=3) and the indicator of impact of quality in HE on EU development as a result of internationalisation policy (mean=3) were evaluated as an important medium.

HEI experts did not evaluate any indicator as inappropriate (In the scale ‘Definitely yes’ was 1, ‘No opinion’ –5). They evaluated the indicator of the impact of quality in HE on the competencies of students/graduates as the result of internationalisation policy as the most important (mean=1.8) and quality in HE impact on EU development as the result of internationalisation policy as the least important (mean=2.7).

Therefore, the attitude of the HEI experts coincides with the attitude of the HE policy experts. The arrangement in importance of indicators represents that the highest priority should be given to assessment of direct outcomes of impact on quality in HE, such as change of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of students/graduates as the result of internationalisation policy, and less importance should be given to assessment of impact made by the results of activity of internationalisation policy on long-term influence on the development of society.

## Criteria

### Impact of quality in HE on competencies of students/graduates as the result of internationalisation policy

When researching the indicator of impact of quality in HE on competencies of students/graduates as the result of the internationalisation policy, the aim was to discover the prioritising of its assessment criteria. The following three criteria were evaluated by the HE policy experts as the most important for this indicator: readiness to perform professional activity in the international, inter-cultural environment (mean=4.6); students/graduates’ knowledge and skills corresponding to the changing labour market (mean=4) and competitiveness in the national and international labour markets (mean=4).

The following two criteria were evaluated as of medium importance: readiness to study in foreign higher educational institution (mean=3); perceived national identity and gained basics of international citizenship (mean=2.8).

HEI experts indicated the readiness of students/graduates to perform professional activity (mean=1.6) and gained skills and knowledge corresponding to the changing labour market (mean=1.9) as the most important criteria. The least importance was given to perception of national identity and gained basics of citizenship (mean=2.3).

Attitudes of both sets of experts coincide. Arrangement of importance of criteria reveals that the highest priority in evaluation of impact of HE internationalisation policy should be given to students’ readiness to perform professional activity in the international, inter-cultural environment and skills and knowledge corresponding to the changing labour market.

### Impact of change of HEI on quality in HE as the result of internationalisation policy

In the indicator of the impact of change in HEIs on quality in HE as the result of internationalisation policy, HE policy experts evaluated the following seven criteria as the most important: improved general and special competencies of academic and administrative staff of HEI ensuring competent activity in the international area (mean=4.6); more opportunities for international academic mobility (mean=4.2); developed international scientific research and its dissemination and application at international level (mean=4.2); developed internationalised study programmes (mean=4.2); implementation of international projects among HEIs (mean=4.2); created international image and reputation of the European HEIs (mean=3.8); closer co-operation among quality assurance agencies and HEIs of European countries in the area of quality assurance (mean=3.2).

The following three criteria were evaluated as of medium importance: compliance of HEI activities with international requirements for studies and research (mean=3); updated infrastructure of scientific researches and studies, library stock (mean=3); additional financial income from degree-pursuing foreign students (mean=2.6).

The following two criteria were evaluated as the least important, and were rejected at a further stage of the exploratory research: strengthened relations between HEIs in the European context and contacts made with HEIs of other continents (mean=1); development of membership of HEIs in international networks (e.g. EUA, ESIB, etc.) (mean=1).

HE policy experts suggested a new criterion for this indicator, i.e. an increased number of degree-pursuing international students.

In evaluation of the criteria for this indicator by experts in quality and internationalisation of HEIs, the highest importance with respect to internationalisation was given to more opportunities for academic mobility (mean=1.6), implementation of international projects (mean=1.7), compliance of activity of HEI with international requirements for studies and research (mean=1.7), improved competencies of staff (mean=1.7) and development of internationalised study programmes (Mean=1.8). According to HEI experts,

internationalisation policy is the least important in respect of closer cooperation among quality assurance agencies and HEIs of European countries in the area of quality in HE assurance (mean=2.6).

Attitudes of HE policy experts and HEI experts differ regarding one criterion – closer cooperation among quality assurance agencies and HEIs of European countries in the area of quality assurance. While the HEI experts did not evaluate any criterion as inappropriate, they indicated the mentioned criterion as the least important, and the HE policy experts evaluated it as one of the most important.

The consensus among opinions of both the expert groups in respect of other criteria demonstrates that the highest priority in assessing the impact of internationalisation on quality in HE should be given to international academic mobility and development of internationalised study programmes.

The results of the chi-square test conducted revealed that the criterion ‘Additional financial income for HEI from degree-seeking foreign students’ was indicated as appropriate by a majority (27) of HEI experts representing HEIs, which host on average 300 or more foreign students (including mobility and degree-seeking ones) per study year ( $\chi^2=52,401$ ,  $df=24$ ,  $p=0,001$ ). In the study, 47 of the 59 HEI experts representing HEIs that host on average 50–100 foreign students per study year indicated the same criterion as appropriate.

When evaluating the criterion ‘Developed internationalised study programmes’, the results of the calculated Spearman correlation coefficient revealed that statistically significant correlations ( $p=0,000$ , i.e.  $p<0,01$ ) was noticeable among those respondents who represented HEIs implementing double/joint degree study programmes. Those HEI experts who represented HEIs implementing double/joint degree study programmes evaluated positively the criterion ‘Developed internationalised study programmes’, and those who represented HEIs not implementing the mentioned study programmes tended to evaluate this criterion as not very important.

When evaluating the criterion ‘Increased number of degree-seeking international students’, a statistically significant correlation ( $p=0,027$ , i.e.  $p<0,05$ ) was noticeable among those respondents whose represented HEIs that offered topic studies and had research centres (international/intercultural centres, e. g. Asian studies, American studies centre, etc.). The results revealed that HEI experts who represented HEIs, which offered topic studies and had research centres, evaluated positively the criterion ‘Increased number of degree-seeking international students’ and those who represented HEIs, which did not have such topic centres tended to evaluate this as a not very suitable criterion for Lithuanian HEIs.

### **Impact of quality in HE on development of national societies**

When researching the indicator of impact of quality in HE on the development of national societies as result of internationalisation policy, the following three criteria were evaluated by the HE policy experts as the most important: enhanced cross-cultural understanding and respect, peace and security (mean=4.4); maintaining national ethnic and cultural identity through international cooperation of HEIs and increase of mutual cross-cultural understanding and respect (mean=3.6); innovative and creative society due to modern international scientific research and its international dissemination (mean=3.4).

One criterion – maintaining and updating of competencies of employees through international cooperation of stakeholders (mean=3) – was evaluated as of medium importance. Another criterion – equal opportunities for accessibility and acquisition of HE at international level through cooperation of HEIs and stakeholders (mean=1) – was evaluated as the least important. This criterion was rejected at further stage of the exploratory research.

In the evaluation of criteria of this indicator by HEI experts, increased cross-cultural understanding and respect, peace and security (mean=2.2), and innovative and creative society (mean=2.3) were indicated as the most important. The least importance of internationalisation policy was indicated with respect to maintaining national ethnic and cultural identity (mean=2.5) and maintaining and updating the competencies of employees (mean=2.7).

Here, the attitude of HEI experts coincides with that of HE policy experts. The arrangement of importance of criteria reveals that the highest priority in evaluation of impact of HE internationalisation policy should be given to enhanced cross-cultural respect, peace and security, innovative and creative society, and maintaining national ethnic and cultural identity.

### **Impact of quality in HE on the EU development**

In respect of the indicator of impact of quality in HE on EU development as a result of internationalisation policy, the following four criteria were evaluated by HE policy experts as the most important: facilitated recognition of diplomas and qualification (mean=4.4);

increased professional mobility at the European level (mean=4.2); increased attractiveness of the EHEA worldwide (mean=3.8); fostering social cohesion of nations (mean=3.8).

One criterion – economic growth in the EU region through strengthened cooperation among European HEIs (mean=3) – was evaluated as of medium importance. Another criterion – gained competitive advantage of the EU region at the international level (mean=1) – was evaluated as the least important. This criterion was rejected at a further stage of the exploratory research.

HEI experts indicated increased professional mobility at the EU level (mean=1.6), facilitated recognition of diplomas and qualifications (mean=1.9), and increased attractiveness of the EHEA (mean=2) as the most important criteria of this indicator. Fostering social cohesion of nations (mean=2.7) and economic growth of the EU region (mean=2.8) were indicated as the least important criteria.

The attitudes of HEI experts and HE policy experts coincide here. It can be seen from the arrangement of importance of criteria that the highest priority in the evaluation of impact of HE internationalisation policy should be given to a facilitated recognition of diplomas and qualifications, increased attractiveness of the EHEA worldwide and increased professional mobility at the European level.

## DISCUSSION

The findings of the exploratory research revealed that expectations expressed in the Bologna Process, national legislation, and scientific studies in respect of HEIs, students/graduates and societies at the EU level, are reasonable. HE policy experts and HEI experts in Lithuania evaluated all the indicators for an assessment of the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society, and they found the majority of the criteria as appropriate to be applied for measuring the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society in the Lithuanian context.

The choices of HEI experts in assessing the impact of quality in HE on students/graduates as a result of internationalisation policy demonstrate the focus of Lithuanian HEIs on providing students/graduates with skills and knowledge, which correspond to the changing labour market, thus ensuring their readiness to perform professional activity and competitiveness in the international inter-cultural environment. HE policy experts also indicated that it is essential, as a result of HE internationalisation policy, to analyse skills and knowledge gained by students/graduates, their readiness to perform professional activity and their competitiveness in the international environment. Such expectations are also supported by research of other scientists (Juknytė-Petrekienė & Pukelis, 2007; Radzevičienė, 2007; Stier, 2010; Culver et al., 2012; Heffron & Maresco, 2014; Costello, 2015) revealing that knowledge and skills of students who participated in the academic exchange under the Erasmus programme, or studying under double degree study programmes, improve, and students become prepared to both study and perform their professional activity in the international inter-cultural environment. In the twenty-first century, acquisition of employees with international knowledge and skills becomes necessary for the survival of each society (Yonezawa, Kitamura, Meerman & Kuroda, 2014). Also, internationalisation has positive impact on students' self-awareness, self-confidence and competence (Campbell, 2012; Costello, 2015). A slightly lower number of Lithuanian HEIs focus on the instilling of national identity and basics of international citizenship for students/graduates. According to Baršauskas et al. (2007), there should be a compromise between the need to prepare graduates for the needs of the labour market and significant national needs to prepare graduates with an instilled sense of national values and identity. As Stier and Börjesson (2010) noted, HEIs 'should be working both locally and globally'.

Choices made by the HEI experts in the assessment of the impact of change of HEI on HE quality as a result of internationalisation policy show the importance of internationalisation, as viewed by HEIs, in respect of academic mobility, improvement of competence of staff, international projects and international scientific research, conformity of activity of HEI with requirements of studies and research, internationalisation processes of HEI including internationalisation of study programmes, as well as creation and maintaining of the international reputation of HEIs. This is supported by the research of Wachter and Maiworm (2014), which revealed that the offer of English-taught programmes in Lithuania is the highest in the Baltic countries, and that managers of English-taught programmes in Lithuania are satisfied with English-language skills of academic and administrative staff. Moreover, the same research demonstrates that, when analysing the benefit of English-taught programmes implemented in Lithuania, an improved international image of Lithuanian HEIs was evaluated as one of the greatest advantages. Such expectations are also supported by research of other scientists (Horta 2009; 2010; Stier & Börjesson, 2010) who noted that most HEIs aim to project an international image and

reputation; research activity tends to be international and its excellence has been evaluated 'following the calls for imperatives for knowledge economies coming from the European Commission' (Leisyte & Westerheijden, 2014).

The results of our exploratory research show that, when evaluating the impact of change in HEIs on quality in HE as a result of internationalisation policy, members of the academic community see slightly less benefit from internationalisation in respect of additional financial income, increase of number of international degree-seeking students and updating of infrastructure of research and studies. However, correlations analysed in our exploratory research show that the HEI experts from institutions having international/intercultural centres, e.g. Asian studies, American studies centres, etc., implementing double/joint degree study programmes and hosting on average 300 and more foreign students (including mobility and degree-seeking students per study year) tend to see benefits from internationalisation in respect of an increase in numbers of international degree-seeking students, and the receipt of additional financial income from such foreign students. Cantwell and Maldonado-Maldonado (2009) also state that European HEIs increased the number of study programmes in English in order to attract more international students. With regard to income generation, Stier and Börjesson (2010) pointed out that international students provide a significant source of revenue for HEIs all over the world. Despite the fact that no one criterion was rejected, it can be seen that Lithuanian HEIs find the least importance of internationalisation policy in respect of closer cooperation of quality assurance agencies and HEIs of European countries in the quality assurance area, although HE policy experts indicated this criterion as particularly important.

HE policy experts indicated as least important analysing strengthened relations between HEIs in the European context and contacts made with HEIs of other continents, as well as development of membership of HEIs in international networks. The research of Wachter and Maiworm (2014) also shows that, regarding benefits of English-taught study programmes in Lithuania, strengthened cooperation with foreign HEIs appears in the fifth position out of seven.

Evaluations by HEI experts regarding the assessment of the impact on the development of Lithuanian society as a result of internationalisation policy demonstrate that representatives of Lithuanian HEIs find the least benefit in the area of maintaining national ethnic and cultural identity. Therefore, in this respect, the results of the exploratory research do not coincide even partially with researches of scientists (Baršauskas et al., 2007; Duoblienė, 2010; Juknytė-Petreikienė, 2011) who affirm that acknowledgement of cultural and ethnic identity at national and international levels is a significant goal of internationalisation policy. As Stier and Börjesson (2010) noted, HEIs 'should ensure tradition and looking toward the future'.

The results of the exploratory research allow the statement that internationalisation policy conditions affect the following indicators of quality in HE: personal growth of students, improvement of competence of academic staff, maintaining and development of external relations, funding, improvement of studies, management and organisation, quality of teaching and institutional change. Internationalisation policy conditions have a long-term influence on the development of societies, in terms of enhanced cross-cultural respect, peace and security, an innovative and creative society, maintaining national ethnic and cultural identity and increased professional mobility at the European level.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

HE internationalisation policy is a response of the country's government and HEIs to globalisation. The main instruments of internationalisation policy are political agreements, funding, development of legislation and improvement in the competence of human resources. In the Bologna Process, documents and scientific studies, planned outcomes of internationalisation policy in the context of EHEA include outcomes in respect of HEIs, students/graduates and national societies at the European level. Our empirical exploratory research supports the assertion that the theoretical expectations expressed are reasonable.

HE policy experts consider that 24 (of a total 28) criteria of indicators designed by theoretical research for an assessment of the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society are significant in the context of Lithuania. HEI experts, representing HEIs, which received EU SF support for internationalisation, did not reject any indicator or criterion as insignificant or inappropriate for Lithuanian HEIs.

Members of the Lithuanian academic community experienced in internationalisation and quality issues most often associate quality in HE in the context of internationalisation with the international experience of graduates/students and change in HEIs. The least value of internationalisation and its advantages are found in long-term aspects of impact on the development of national society and the EU.

Indicators of the assessment of the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society, and criteria for these indicators, defined by the theoretical research, allow evaluating the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society, and can be used in national and international policy and management of higher education. The European Commission, national governments and ministries can rely on the parameters of assessment of the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society when assessing the impact of such policy on HE quality in order to measure whether the large amounts of public finance for the internationalisation of HE are properly used. We recommend that the Lithuanian Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education should include parameters of assessment of impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society in the external review of HEIs and study programmes. It is advisable for HEIs to include indicators for assessment of the impact of change in HEIs on quality in HE, and the criteria for these indicators in internal quality assurance systems.

We suggest that researchers should conduct more in-depth qualitative research and develop assessment indicators in order to prepare a more detailed and complex system of assessment to understand the impact of internationalisation policy on quality in HE and its influence on society in Lithuania.

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## APPENDIX 1 CHARACTERISTICS OF INSTITUTIONS REPRESENTED BY EXPERTS IN QUALITY AND INTERNATIONALISATION OF HEIS

**Tab. 2:** Distribution of experts in quality and internationalisation of HEIs according to the number of study internationalisation projects that were implemented by the represented institution during recent 5 years under supported of EU SF and other international funds

Projects	Experts
1-2	17
3-5	17
6-10	10
11-20	6
21 and more	9

**Tab. 3:** Distribution of experts in quality and internationalisation of HEIs according to the average number of foreign students (including mobility and degree-seeking students) hosted by the represented institution per study year

Foreign students	Experts
Up to 20	24
20-50	6
50-100	14
100-200	3
200-300	4
300 and more	8

**Tab. 4:** Distribution of experts in quality and internationalisation of HEIs according to the average number of foreign lecturers hosted by the represented institution per study year

Foreign lecturers	Experts
Up to 20	33
20-50	13
50-100	8
100 and more	5

**Tab. 5:** Distribution of experts in quality and internationalisation of HEIs according to the number of study programmes for foreign students, which are implemented in the represented institution

Study programmes	Experts
1-2	13
3-5	14
6 and more	28
None	4

**Tab. 6:** Distribution of experts in quality and internationalisation of HEIs according to the number of topic studies and research centres (international/intercultural centres, e. g. that of Asian studies, American studies, etc.) in the institution

Topic studies and research centres	Experts
1-2	13
3-5	9
6 and more	4
None	33

**Tab. 7:** Distribution of experts in quality and internationalisation of HEIs according to the number of double/joint study programmes implemented by the represented institution

Double/joint study programmes	Experts
1-2	17
3-5	12
6 and more	9
None	21