

Management of a Study Programme in the Context of Quality Assurance in Higher Education

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Abstract: Quality assurance has become an issue of importance in higher education, and its significance is determined by many factors. A variety of quality assurance initiatives are launched at different levels of a modern university including the programme level. Quality assurance procedures are implemented in the framework of the comprehensive management of study programmes; they include various organizational activities associated with the programme development and improvement. Quality assurance initiatives are all aimed at enhancing as the overall academic quality of the study programme, as the programme-related service areas. It is especially important in the context of the international accreditation, which confirms that the study programme is compliant with European quality standards. The aim of the study presented in the paper was to identify to what extent various assessment criteria, which might be used in the context of evaluation of a study programme in the course of its development and improvement, are essential from the point of view of programme directors and students of the corresponding programmes. The paper is based on 1) the analysis of theoretical literature on quality assurance and official EU documents on quality assurance in higher education; 2) a survey conducted in two higher education institutions of Latvia – Riga Technical University (RTU) and Transport and Telecommunication Institute (TSI). The results of the study performed in the paper suggest that programme directors have to evaluate and update their study programmes working in close cooperation with the university's stakeholders, taking into account the recommendations of its administration, academic staff, students, graduates and employers.

Keywords: university education, quality assurance initiatives, study programme.

Introduction

In terms of the modernisation agenda of the “Europe 2020” strategy, three priorities have been identified: smart, sustainable and inclusive growth; they are all intended on stimulating economic growth, competitiveness, innovation and social cohesion (Europe 2020..., 2010). The implementation of Europe's 2020 strategy necessitates improved quality and performance on the part of modern universities.

Since the late 1990s the pace of change in European higher education has accelerated, mainly on the basis of two strategic developments aimed at reforming the “fragmented” higher education, research and innovation systems into a more powerful and integrated knowledge-based economy (Benneworth et al., 2012; Bologna Declaration..., 1999).

Policy goals for the “Europe 2020” strategy include, among others, improving the quality and relevance of higher education, which in turn, involves adjusting quality assurance and funding instruments for accomplishing success in equipping students for the labour market (Europe 2020..., 2010). Ensuring quality higher education is vital in the framework of creating the European Higher Education Area – EHEA (Bologna Declaration..., 1999; Berlin Communiqué..., 2003; The Role of the Universities..., 2003; Standards and Guidelines..., 2005; Standards and Guidelines..., 2009; London Communiqué..., 2007, The European Higher..., 2012, Report to the European Commission..., 2013; Standards and Guidelines..., 2015).

Modern universities are now under great public pressure to establish their educational quality and to implement quality mechanisms (Cheng, 2016). Quality assurance has become an increasingly central topic in higher education; its importance is determined by many factors: the growth of student populations; understanding that higher education is vital for the success of the EU economy; understanding that higher education has become an international and competitive market area (Bringing out the best..., 2009). Various quality assurance initiatives are developed at different levels of a university; at the programme level, these initiatives are aimed at assessing and enhancing the design, content and delivery of the study programmes (Henard, Roseveare, 2012).

The aim of the study presented in the paper was to identify to what extent various assessment criteria, which might be used in the context of evaluation of a study programme in the course of its development

and improvement, are essential from the point of view of programme directors and students of the corresponding programmes. The paper is based on the analysis of theoretical literature on quality assurance and official EU documents on quality assurance in higher education, and a survey conducted in two higher education institutions of Latvia.

Methodology

The paper is based on 1) the analysis of theoretical literature on quality assurance and official EU documents on higher education; 2) a survey conducted in two higher education institutions of Latvia – Riga Technical University (RTU) and Transport and Telecommunication Institute (TSI). The research population involves 203 students and 19 programme directors; the programmes include IT/Telecommunications, Transport and Logistics, Economics and Management, and Engineering. An original questionnaire was developed by the authors. A list of assessment criteria (aspects) was developed on the basis of European documents on quality assurance in higher education.

Eventually, the following assessment criteria (aspects) were chosen for empirical analysis: C1 – “The study programme corresponds to EU standards and requirements set for the university degree”; C2 – “The study programme ensures the development of students’ personalities”; C3 – “The study programme is based on internationally recognised research”; C4 – “The study programme has appropriate technological and financial support to correspond to the requirements that a modern university must meet”; C5 – “The study programme is aimed at developing students’ intercultural competence to help them succeed in a multicultural environment of the modern labour market”; C6 – “Administrative staff and management work continuously in close cooperation to monitor and improve the study programme in terms of academic content and learning environment”; C7 – “The study programme ensures a positive learning atmosphere based on cooperation and well-organized communication”; C8 – “Relevant academic content and appropriate planning of the study programme is ensured”; C9 – “The study programme is developed in collaboration with employers”; C10 – “The study programme is regularly evaluated and updated; the results of internal evaluation are compared with the results of the external dialogue with graduates and employers”; C11 – “Academic staff is involved in the process of the programme development and enhancement on a regular basis”; C12 – “Students are involved in the process of the programme development and enhancement on a regular basis”.

Students of the above programmes and programme directors were asked to rate the above items on a five-point Likert scale, as follows: 1 – not important, 2 – somewhat important, 3 – sufficiently important, 4 – rather important, 5 – highly important. The obtained data were processed using SPSS software package.

Results and Discussion

Analysis of theoretical literature and official EU documents on quality assurance in higher education

Today, the majority of universities declare in their strategic plans that “commitment to quality, quality assurance and improvement” is vital for accomplishing success in the modern education market (Hamalainen, 2003).

In Europe, the creation of quality assurance structures was stimulated by the Bologna Process aimed at matching higher educational structures within the European Higher Education Area; so, the Bologna Process pursues to guarantee comparability of standards and quality in European higher education (Ganseuer, Pistor, 2017). According to Bollaert (2014), “one of the most successful action lines of the Bologna Process has been in quality assurance”, a full-bodied quality assurance being necessary for improving European higher education and building international trust in its quality as inside the European Higher Education Area as beyond it.

The term “quality assurance” is utilized to refer to all activities within the continuous improvement cycle – that is assurance and enhancement activities (Standards and Guidelines..., 2015). Quality assurance presumes the establishment of specific organizational bodies, standards, models and assessment procedures (Todorosca, Greculescu, Lampac, 2014). The development of quality assurance in EHEA has been stimulated by the adoption of the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (Standards and Guidelines..., 2005; 2009; 2015), and their succeeding implementation (Hopbach, 2014).

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the EHEA provide the general logical framework establishing the standards for effective and reliable national higher education quality assurance systems (De la Rosa-Gonzalez, 2008). The four principles of quality assurance in European higher education formulated in the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)* (Standards and Guidelines..., 2015) are as follows:

- higher education institutions have main responsibility for the quality of their provision and its assurance;
- quality assurance is related to the variety of higher education systems, institutions and programmes;
- quality assurance is related to the variety of student populations;
- quality assurance presupposes the development of a quality culture;
- quality assurance considers the needs and expectations of students;
- quality assurance considers the needs and expectations of other stakeholders and society.

As education includes many interrelating dimensions of quality in many different contexts (Gibbs, 2010), quality in this area is regarded a multidimensional concept, and quality evaluation must take into account the complexity of the educational process (Cheng, 2016). The standards for quality assurance in a modern university include a) internal quality assurance of a higher education institution; b) external quality assurance; c) quality assurance of external quality assurance agencies (Standards and Guidelines..., 2009). They are all interconnected, together forming the basis for a European quality assurance framework (Standards and Guidelines..., 2015).

According to C. Ganseuer and P. Pistor (2017), internal quality assurance refers to the “procedures, instruments and measures” a university uses autonomously for meeting some external standards (criteria) and accomplishing its own development goals in its “various fields of activity”. The internal standards may embrace different areas: approval, monitoring and regular review of programmes and awards, evaluation of students, quality assurance of teaching staff, learning resources and student support, information systems, and public information (Standards and Guidelines..., 2015). For each area, strategic objectives must be formulated in the agenda of supporting the goals set in the frame of an overall university’s strategy.

Support for quality teaching in a modern university is provided at different inter-dependent levels (Henard, Roseveare, 2012): 1) at the institutional level, institutional quality assurance policy is designed, and support to the organisational quality assurance system is ensured; 2) at the programme level, actions to measure and improve the design, content and delivery of the study programmes are developed and taken; 3) at the individual level, initiatives assisting teachers to achieve their mission, are planned.

Therefore, quality assurance policy in a contemporary university covers different organizational activities, development and improvement of study programmes being in the focus of the higher education institutions’ teaching mission (Standards and Guidelines..., 2015). Supporting quality teaching at the programme level is key for ensuring improvement in quality teaching across the higher education institution (Henard, Roseveare, 2012).

The quality management procedures of the programme should comply with the quality policy of the higher education institution (Ropponen, 2015). Quality assurance procedures are implemented in the framework of the comprehensive management of study programmes. Study programme director oversees a study programme, representing an “interface” between stakeholders of the programme and the university administration, in the process managing pedagogical, operational, financial and administrative issues (Roskosa, Stukalina, 2017).

In Table 1, the authors have summarized some basic standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance in the context of managing a study programme in a modern university.

The *Standards* also presuppose that students and other stakeholders must be involved in the development and improvement of a study programme (Standards and Guidelines..., 2015). Stakeholders are internal (students, academic staff and attending staff, administrating staff) and external (employers, sponsors, suppliers, government agencies, professional associations and interest groups). Engaging students in quality assurance activities is now gaining importance in the context of improving quality standards in

higher education (Elassy, 2013). In the EU, student participation in quality assurance has largely progressed since 2007 (Rauhvargers, Deane, Pauwels, 2009).

Table 1

**Standards and guidelines for internal quality assurance
in the context of managing a study programme**

Standard description	Guidelines
1. Universities should establish processes for the design and approval of their programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Programmes are subject to a formal institutional approval process in the agenda of the institutional strategy - External expertise is involved in the process of designing and approving programmes
2. The programmes should be designed so that they meet specific objectives, and include the related learning outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Overall programme objectives are consistent with the institutional strategy - Programmes provide students with both academic knowledge and a variety of skills, which may influence students' personal development and enable smooth student progression in the course of learning
3. The awarded qualification should be clearly identified in conformity with the level of the national qualifications framework for higher education/the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)	<p>Programmes reflect the four purposes of higher education stated by the Council of Europe:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - setting a common framework for quality assurance systems for learning and teaching at European, national and institutional level; - enabling the assurance and improvement of quality of higher education in the European Higher Education Area; - facilitating recognition and mobility within and across national borders in the agenda of life-long learning and internationalization of higher education; - providing information on quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area

Source: (Standards and Guidelines..., 2015)

The programme assessment procedures include regular evaluation of the educational activities integrated in the programme, as well as the programme-related service areas. It is especially important in the context of the study programme international accreditation, which confirms that the programme is compliant with European quality standards. Universities may apply the accreditation standards as a tool in the assessment and development of their programmes, the quality management procedures of the programme being consistent with the quality policy of the university (Ropponen, 2015).

In this regard, one of the ways of defining quality is to select key quality indicators – that is the criteria, standards and aims of evaluations, which indicate what is considered as essential in teaching and learning, and which also focus on the areas having the biggest importance for the development of the study programme (Hamalainen, 2003).

The obtained information would be utilized by the university administration in various contexts (Roskosa, Stukalina, 2017): to launch activities in the department; to address some urgent issues; to monitor, modify and enhance the study programme; to provide students with necessary information on their programme and their academic progress; to provide other stakeholders with necessary information on the programme; to provide well-timed assistance to the students and academic staff engaged in the implementation of the programme; to build efficient communication channels across the higher education institution needed for the efficient management of the study programme.

Analysis of the empirical study results

The study findings are presented in Table 2, Table 3, Figure 1 and Figure 2. The analysis of the obtained results is provided hereinafter.

Table 2

Summary statistics: means, standard deviations and medians (students).

Transport and Logistics			Engineering			IT and Telecommunications			Management and Economics			Total		
Mean	St.deviation	Median	Mean	St.deviation	Median	Mean	St.deviation	Median	Mean	St.deviation	Median	Mean	St.deviation	Median
4,57	0,63	5,00	3,85	1,23	4,00	4,27	0,87	4,00	4,30	0,82	4,00	4,25	0,92	4,00
3,68	0,82	4,00	3,62	0,82	4,00	3,79	1,06	4,00	4,22	0,70	4,00	3,80	0,96	4,00
4,11	0,74	4,00	3,47	1,13	3,50	3,98	0,89	4,00	4,07	0,73	4,00	3,93	0,92	4,00
4,50	0,75	5,00	3,62	0,92	4,00	4,22	0,90	4,00	4,41	0,80	5,00	4,18	0,91	4,00
4,04	1,00	4,00	3,21	0,98	3,00	3,89	1,04	4,00	4,00	1,14	4,00	3,81	1,07	4,00
4,11	0,88	4,00	3,50	0,79	4,00	3,87	0,91	4,00	4,04	0,76	4,00	3,86	0,88	4,00
4,18	0,82	4,00	4,21	1,04	5,00	3,96	0,93	4,00	4,11	0,85	4,00	4,05	0,93	4,00
4,32	0,86	5,00	3,65	0,73	4,00	3,96	0,85	4,00	4,15	0,72	4,00	3,98	0,83	4,00
4,50	0,75	5,00	3,85	0,86	4,00	4,01	0,98	4,00	3,81	0,92	4,00	4,02	0,94	4,00
4,07	1,12	4,00	3,94	1,10	4,00	3,99	0,93	4,00	4,07	0,83	4,00	4,00	0,97	4,00
3,86	0,76	4,00	3,74	0,93	4,00	3,75	0,88	4,00	3,56	0,89	3,00	3,74	0,87	4,00
3,68	0,90	4,00	3,29	0,94	3,00	3,73	1,13	4,00	3,63	0,74	4,00	3,64	1,03	4,00

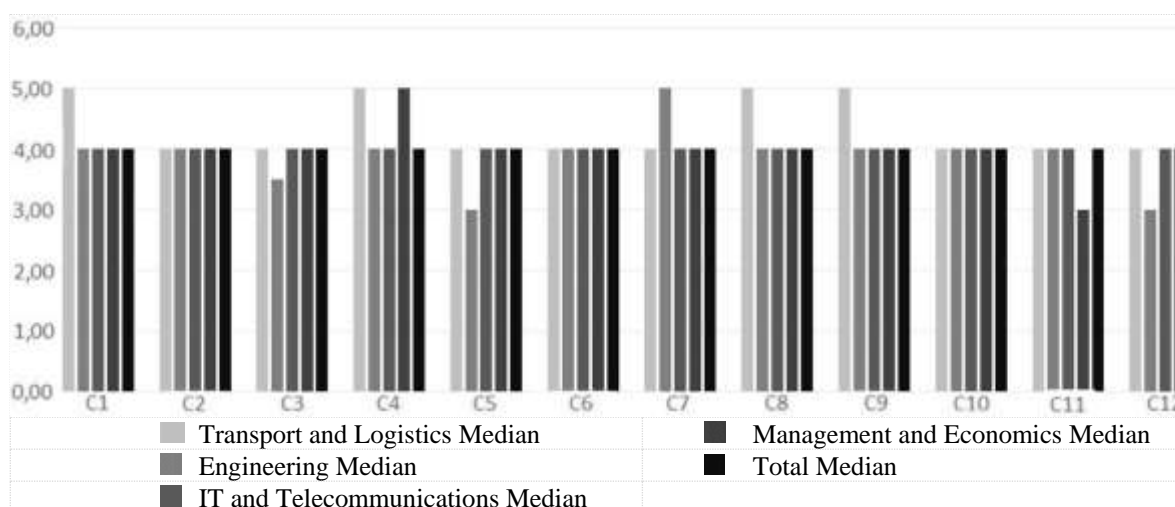


Figure 1. Importance of the programme assessment criteria as perceived by students of the corresponding programmes.

One of the aspects researched in the survey was the correspondence of the study programme to EU standards and requirements set for the university degree (C1). The programme directors of IT/Telecommunications and Economics and Management evaluated this aspect as very important – 5.0 points. This aspect was also quite significant for Transport and Logistics and Engineering programme directors – 4.5 and 4.0 points. The students of the above-mentioned programmes also consider this aspect to be very important. The students of Transports and Logistics evaluated it with 5.0 points; the other students assessed it with 4.0 points. The data show that total evaluation is also very high – the programme directors – 5.0 points, and the students – 4.0 points respectively.

Table 3

Summary statistics: means, standard deviations and medians (programme directors).

Transport and Logistics			Engineering			IT and Telecommunications			Economics and Management			Total		
Mean	St.deviation	Median	Mean	St.deviation	Median	Mean	St.deviation	Median	Mean	St.deviation	Median	Mean	St.deviation	Median
4,25	0,96	4,50	4,43	0,53	4,00	5,00	0,00	5,00	5,00	0,00	5,00	4,63	0,60	5,00
3,25	1,26	3,00	5,00	0,00	5,00	3,40	0,55	3,00	4,67	0,58	5,00	4,16	1,01	5,00
3,50	1,00	3,00	4,29	0,49	4,00	3,40	1,14	3,00	3,00	0,00	3,00	3,68	0,89	4,00
4,25	0,96	4,50	4,57	0,53	5,00	5,00	0,00	5,00	4,33	0,58	4,00	4,58	0,61	5,00
3,75	0,50	4,00	4,57	0,53	5,00	3,20	1,30	3,00	4,00	0,00	4,00	3,95	0,91	4,00
2,50	1,29	2,50	4,86	0,38	5,00	3,40	1,82	4,00	4,33	1,15	5,00	3,89	1,45	5,00
4,25	0,96	4,50	5,00	0,00	5,00	3,80	0,84	4,00	4,33	0,58	4,00	4,42	0,77	5,00
4,00	0,82	4,00	4,43	0,53	4,00	4,20	0,45	4,00	4,00	0,00	4,00	4,21	0,54	4,00
2,75	1,50	3,00	3,29	0,95	4,00	4,40	0,55	4,00	4,00	1,00	4,00	3,58	1,12	4,00
3,00	1,83	3,00	4,14	0,38	4,00	4,20	1,10	5,00	5,00	0,00	5,00	4,05	1,13	4,00
4,25	0,96	4,50	4,57	0,53	5,00	4,20	0,45	4,00	4,00	0,00	4,00	4,32	0,58	4,00
3,25	0,96	3,50	3,43	1,27	3,00	3,20	0,84	3,00	3,00	1,00	3,00	3,26	0,99	3,00

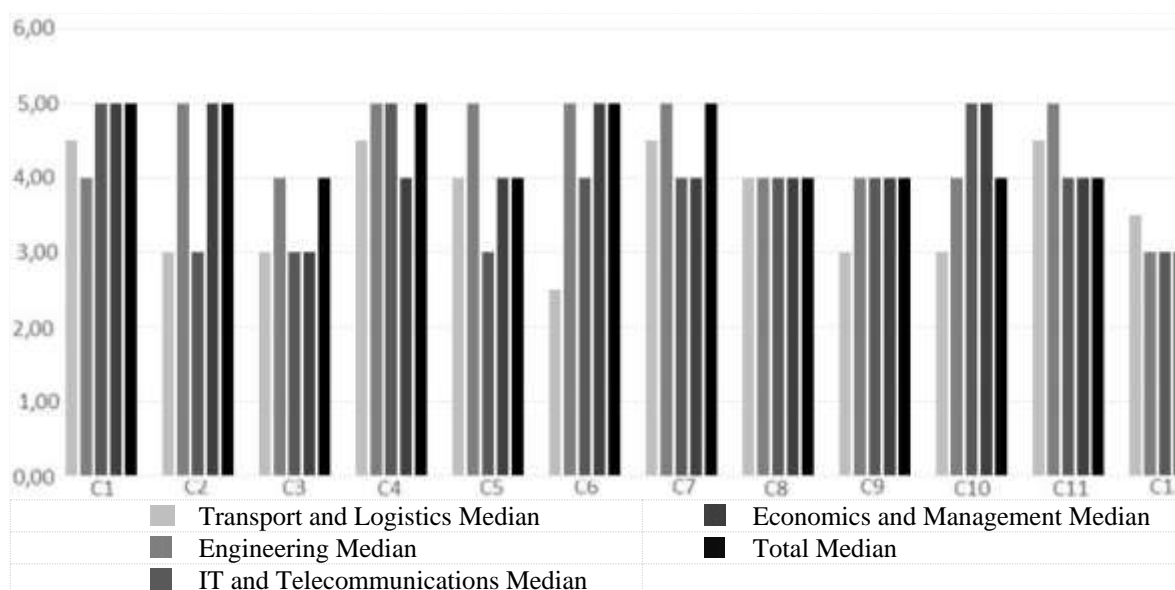


Figure 2. Importance of the programme assessment criteria as perceived by directors of the corresponding programmes.

The survey has also identified the respondents' point of view on the other substantial aspect of quality assurance in higher education – ensuring the development of students' personalities (C2). The results show that for the directors of Engineering and Economics and Management programmes, it is extremely important – 5.0 points. Whereas, the directors of Transport and Logistics and IT/Telecommunications programmes consider this aspect to be less significant – 3.0 points respectively. The students of the above-mentioned programmes similarly evaluated this aspect – 4.0 points. The total evaluation is also high – the programme directors' assessment is 5.0 points, and the students' evaluation is 4.0 points correspondingly.

The programme directors and students also expressed their point of view on the following issue – if it was important for the study programme to be based on internationally recognized research (C3). The data show that this aspect of the study programme was evaluated lower. The directors of Engineering programmes were of the point of view that it was rather essential – 4.0 points, whereas, the directors of Transport and Logistics, IT/Telecommunications, and Economics and Management programmes

assessed it with 3.0 points – as less significant. The students evaluated this aspect a little bit higher than programme directors. The students of Engineering assessed it with 3.5 points, whereas, the students of other programmes evaluated this aspect with 4.0 points. The total evaluation of both the programme directors and the students was the same – 4.0 points.

Another aspect related to the study programme quality assurance included the information if it was necessary for the study programme to have appropriate technological and financial support to correspond to the requirements that a modern university had to meet (C4). This aspect was assessed as the most essential for the directors of Engineering and IT and Telecommunications programme – 5.0 points. Other specialty programme directors also evaluated it highly – Transport and Logistics – 4.5 points and Economics and Management – 4.0 points respectively. The students evaluated this aspect as one of the most important among all researched aspects. The students of Transport and Logistics and Economics and Management assessed it with 5.0 points, whereas, the students of Engineering and IT and Telecommunications evaluated it with 4.0 points. The total evaluation for the programme directors was 5.0 points, and for the students it was 4.0 points correspondingly.

The study also researched questions dealing with globalization and multicultural environment of the present-day labour market identifying respondents' opinion on the following aspect – if it was important for the study programme to be aimed at developing students' intercultural competence to help them succeed in a multicultural environment of the modern labour market (C5). The answers of the programme directors were different. This aspect was highly appreciated by Engineering study programme directors – 5.0 points. The programme directors of Transport and Logistics and Economics and Management also assessed it quite highly – 4.0 points. Whereas, for the programme directors of IT and Telecommunications it was not so important – 3.00 points. The students of Engineering evaluated this aspect with 3.50 points, whereas, the students of other programmes evaluated it higher – 4.0 points. The total evaluation for both the programme directors and the students was the same – 4.0 points. It was interesting that there was a gap in evaluation for the programme directors and students of the same specialty – Engineering – 5.0 points for the programme directors, and 3.0 points for the students respectively.

The research focused on the importance of cooperation among the study process participants as well. Respondents were asked to evaluate if it was significant for the administrative staff and management to work continuously in close collaboration to monitor and improve the study programme in terms of academic content and learning environment (C6). The point of view of programme directors was different. Engineering and Economics and Management study programme directors highly evaluated the importance of cooperation – 5.0 points. The IT and Telecommunications programme directors also consider the role of cooperation as important – 4.0 points. Whereas, for Transport and Logistics programme directors this aspect was of a much lower importance – 2.5 points. The students of above mentioned programmes have the same point of view evaluating this aspect – 4.0 points. The total evaluation for both the programme directors and the students was high – 5.0 points and 4.0 points correspondingly.

Learning atmosphere created in the process of the study programme implementation was another aspect researched by the authors. Respondents expressed their opinion on the following issue – if the study programme had to ensure a positive learning atmosphere based on cooperation and well-organized communication (C7). The data show that this aspect is of a high importance for the programme directors of Engineering – 5.0 points, and also Transport and Logistics – 4.5 points. The programme directors of IT/Telecommunications and Economics and Management also consider this aspect as important – 4.00 points. The data show that this aspect is also highly evaluated by the students. The students of Engineering assessed it with 5.0 points – in the same way as the programme directors of this specialty. Other students also consider this aspect as significant – 4.0 points. The total evaluation is high as well the programme directors – 5.0 points, and the students – 4.0 points respectively.

The next task in the survey was to identify if it was necessary to ensure a relevant academic content and an appropriate planning of the study programme (C8). All above mentioned study programme directors have the same point of view: it is necessary – 4.0 points. The students also think that it was of a vital importance to ensure a relevant academic content and an appropriate planning. The students of Transport and Logistics evaluated this aspect with 5.0 points, whereas, other students assessed it with 4.0 points. The total evaluation for both the programme directors and the students was high – 4.0 points.

The respondents were also asked to evaluate if it was significant to develop a study programme in collaboration with employers (C9). Most of programme directors agreed that it was important – 4.0 points. Only programme directors of Transport and Logistics had a lower evaluation – 3.0 points. The students also evaluated this aspect as important. The total evaluation for both the programme directors and for the students was the same – 4.0 points. Most of students assessed it with 4.0 points. But the students of Transport and Logistics evaluated it with 5.0 points. It is worth mentioning that the view of the students of Transport and Logistics differed from the programme directors of this specialty who assessed this aspect with 3.0 points.

The research also included the information related to the following issue – if it was of a high importance regularly evaluate and update the study programme, and to compare the results of internal evaluation with the results of the external dialogue with graduates and employers (C10). This aspect was very highly assessed by programme directors of IT and Telecommunications – 5.0 points, and also rather high by Engineering – 4.0 points. Whereas, the programme directors of Transport and Logistics consider it as less significant – 3.0 points. The students of the above-mentioned programmes have the same point of view; they evaluated this aspect with 4.0 points. The total assessment for both the programme directors and the students was the same – 4.0 points.

The respondents were also asked to give their opinion if it was important for the academic staff to be involved in the process of the programme development and enhancement on a regular basis (C11). The results show that this aspect was evaluated highly by all programme directors: Engineering – 5.0 points, Transport and Logistics – 4.5 points, IT/Telecommunications and Economics and Management – 4.0 points. The students of all the above-mentioned specialties consider this aspect as important assessing it with 4.0 points. The total evaluation for both the programme directors and the students was also done in consonance giving 4.0 points.

The last aspect researched by the authors was about the role of students in process of the programme development and improvement (C12). The data show an interesting tendency – the programme directors do not highly appreciate students' involvement. Most of above mentioned programme directors did not consider this aspect as important – 3.0 points. Only programme directors of Transport and Logistics had a little higher evaluation – 3.5 points. The students assessed this aspect highly. Most of them evaluated it with 4.0 points. Only the students of Engineering assessed it with 3.0 points. Accordingly, the total evaluation of the programme directors is 3.0 points, and the total assessment of the students is 4.0 points respectively.

Conclusions

The analysis performed in the paper has allowed the authors to make the following conclusions.

- Modern EU universities cooperate and communicate on a large scale in the frame of strengthening the European Higher Education Area; thus, they have to comply with the same requirements and standards.
- As modern students' personalities are dynamic and keep developing, one of the tasks of contemporary universities is to help them succeed in this process. It is also worth mentioning that universities and the teaching staff also develop together with their students. It is inevitably a bilateral process.
- Contemporary universities are international and multicultural organizations, and their research activities have to be internationally recognizable.
- As modern students are advanced IT users, present-day universities keep with the development of modern technologies, which is closely related with providing substantial financial support. Increasing the number of foreign students may help invest their financial resources in the development of technologies.
- Programme directors are more knowledgeable and experienced to see the trends of modern labour market, which is becoming more multicultural. One of their main tasks is to prepare students to fit in such labour market and correspond to all its requirements.
- The specifics of duties and competence of programme directors involve cooperation and communication with administrative staff and management, which may face different challenges and problems. The cooperation and communication skills of all the study process participants have to be developed to succeed in solving the problems and finding the most appropriate solution.

- Cooperation and well-organized communication are the basis of a positive learning atmosphere. It is necessary for the administration and the academic staff of our modern – day universities to help students develop their communication and cooperation skills and be an example for students to take these skills after.
- Contemporary universities have to assure the quality of their study programmes, which is closely related with an appropriate planning and relevant academic content. It is of an essential importance for universities to succeed in the international competition in higher education.
- Programme directors are possibly more tended to help students grow academically and develop their theoretical competence, whereas, the students are more willing to increase their practical knowledge learning from employers. Nevertheless, both theoretical and practical knowledge is very significant to succeed in a present-day labour market.
- Programme directors have to evaluate and update their study programmes working in close cooperation with the university's stakeholders, taking into account the recommendations of its administration, academic staff, students, graduates and employers as all of them are interested in the result.
- It is important for programme directors to take into the consideration the point of view of the academic staff, because they closely work with students, know their opinion and may draw attention to pluses and minuses of a study programme helping to enhance it.
- Students' opinion is very important as students are the main target group of the study programme and the most interested party regarding educational outcomes, since they will determine graduates' competitiveness in the international labour market.

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