

AUTO-EVALUATION OF UNIVERSITY TEACHER AS A BASIS FOR QUALITY AND PROFESSIONALISM IN THE UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

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Abstract

The author of the submission studies some general patterns in the transformation processes and the processes of internationalization in the higher education, which started with the adoption of Bologna Declaration and the Lisbon Strategy. The author pointed out the quality and professionalism of higher education as well as the opportunities for improving its quality, which are currently the most pressing issues concerning a teaching profession. The results of the questionnaire survey, which was carried out in 2009, 2010 and 2011 and in which 114 future pre-primary and primary school teachers participated, form part of the university teacher's auto evaluation. The auto evaluation is one of the elements that determine the improved quality of higher education and enhanced professional competencies of future pre-primary and primary school teachers. The aim of the survey was to gather opinions on the quality of higher education and on the educational needs of students in the field of Pre-school and elementary pedagogy. The survey became the starting point for solving of the research task¹.

Keywords: Autoevaluation, university teacher, the quality of higher education, professional competencies, teacher training graduate

Introduction

Resolution of higher education issues and intensification of transformation processes have begun in the Italian Bologna in June 1999 at the meeting of 29 ministers from signatory states who adopted ***Bologna Declaration*** on establishing the *Higher Education Area - EHEA* by 2010 and on improving the overall system of European higher education.

The Bologna Declaration sets basic areas of long-term purposes:

- *to improve* international transparency of studies and to recognise qualifications through gradual convergence toward general framework of qualifications and educational levels;
- *to divide* higher education to three levels: bachelor, master and doctoral;
- *to propose* a general system of degrees for graduates in bachelor level and for graduates of master and doctoral level (EACEA, 2009);
- *to unify system of higher education in order to allow smooth transition from one university to another and to enable students to get education in all of Europe without restrictions;*
- *to introduce a uniform credit system* (ECTS) as a tool enabling comparison of achieved study results in all Central European countries and to allow transfer and recognition of earned credits and experience from one institution to another both at home and abroad (www.euroactiv.sk);
- *to facilitate* student and teacher mobility within the European area and their integration into the European labour market.

The creation, reinforcement, provision and implementation of Bologna process purposes have been supported by European national and supranational organisations, by governments of all 47 signatory countries, national rectorial conferences, educational institutions, colleges, universities, centres, associations as well as by trade unions. The Council of the European Union is one of very important institutions organising regular meetings of the highest representatives of countries and European Union Member States' governments. The Educational Committee regularly deals with issues of education, science, research and development at the European level and measures adopted by the Committee are transferred to national levels.

March 2000 presented a significant milestone for *transformation processes*. 47 members from signatory countries met in Lisbon, Portugal. **Lisbon Strategy** has been adopted at the meeting. The European Council representatives have agreed on an ambitious goal to "make Europe, by 2010, the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion, and respect for the environment by 2010" (<http://vedomostnaspolocnost.vlada.gov.sk>).

The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Jobs defines several priorities. Two basic priorities have been set for issues related to **education, research and development**:

- *better education and acquisition of skills* which means that the educational system needs to be adapted at all levels in order to make creation of knowledge society possible;
- *to invest in research and development*, that is to emphasise education, science and research as the basis of a knowledge society which can ensure competitiveness of a country.

As for research and development, the Lisbon Strategy builds on the idea of creating the European Research Area (ERA) enabling free movement of researchers, scientific knowledge and technologies. The creation of the European Research Area was influenced by recognising the lack of appropriate environment for stimulating research and development and for applying their results in practice, recognising the fragmentation of activities and deficiencies in funding with diffused resources. The idea in Lisbon Strategy from January 18 2000 became the foundation for developing new global projects and global policy.

The second half of 2008 was unfavourable for Europe as we began to see effects of the world economic and financial crisis in great intensity. Measures to overcome the effects were proposed at a meeting of Member States' and governments' representatives. Despite anti-crisis measures all Member States confirmed their interest to continue in common strategy even beyond 2010. Ideas on how to continue in the Strategy and what should be its content beyond 2010 have been included in the *proposal for continuation of the Lisbon Strategy in 2010-2020* entitled **Europe 2020**. The new strategy defines common objectives for all Member States, however, implementation of objectives and the way of reaching them has been left in the competence of each EU Member State.

Internationalisation of Higher Education

Higher education is currently becoming more and more international. Educational institutions are being internationalised and there is an emphasis on the need to increase quality and professionalism both at national and international level. It is *sine qua non* for ensuring competitiveness of universities and at the same time it is the way to increase international acceptance.

Internationalisation is one of the tools for increasing quality, not only of higher education but also of scientific and research activity. Higher education institutions need to cooperate on research tasks in international projects, exchange knowledge and experience, apply educational methods considering the international dimension and develop common

international high quality curricula. Mobility of students, teachers and scientists should enable development of language and intercultural competences. International cooperation, extending creative and innovative capacities should be mutually beneficial for human resources, it should increase the quality of education, research and development and encourage employment. Reinforcement and support of cooperation between European higher education institutions and their global partners plays a significant role in promoting quality and excellence (Official Journal of the European Union).

The aim of the internationalisation of higher education is to reinforce social, cultural and economic development and support active citizenship of individuals and organisations, create moral values and increase requirements for ensuring quality higher education at the same time. To ensure quality of higher education across borders, the whole of university sector requires in-depth restructuring, modernisation and correspondence between tools and objectives of international classification systems in order to achieve transparency and comparability.

Internationalisation of higher education in Slovakia has not yet become the focus of politicians' attention because the strategy for development and support of internationalisation in higher education or the strategy for integrating Slovak universities in international cooperation has not been yet developed. There is also lack of methodology for quality assessment and when issuing accreditation teachers in higher education should be assessed not only on the basis of their involvement in research tasks but also on the basis of their *international educational activities*. Therefore, there is need to develop methodology for preparation and accreditation of common international study programmes (Conclusions from national seminar, 2010).

Internationalisation, support of international cooperation in higher education according to the Bologna process means creation and implementation of common study programmes, joining projects and networks for international educational and research cooperation, support for international research and last but not least increase in number and quality of mobility, not only of students but especially of researchers and educators. This is the only possible way of reinforcing professionals with higher education in their educational and training efforts and of reinforcing principles contributing to shaping such graduate profiles which are in line with the current requirements of the labour market.

Quality and Professionalism in Higher Education

Professionals have already been dealing with issues of quality and professionalism in EU countries with more or less success for several years. According to Bednaříková (2011) many world experts (Elton 1992, Váňová 1995, Honzík 1996, Hausenblas 1997, etc.) focus on quality of teaching in higher education and connect quality of teaching with professionalism of teachers.

Professionalism of teachers means that teachers should be educated professionals in the field of training and education and equipped with competences enabling them to perform their work with high level of autonomy and responsibility for those being trained.

In September 2003 ministers from 47 signatory countries urged the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) by means of the Berlin Communiqué to develop a set of standards, procedures and guidelines for quality assurance and peer review system. Efforts have been made to create generally acceptable set of basic values and best practices aimed at quality assurance of higher education institutions in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). For this reason the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education developed *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* in 2003 which were to serve as the basis for each EU Member State developing own quality assurance system in higher education.

European standards and guidelines have been proposed in such manner so as to be applicable for all European higher education institutions regardless of their structure, size or national system. They recognise the significance of institutional autonomy and primary responsibility for ensuring quality of higher education which lies with the particular higher education institution itself.

Pursuant to Act No.131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions which had been amended several times prior to 2011 and to currently effective Act No. 363/2007 Coll. schools are responsible for ensuring quality of higher education. Considering the fact that higher education institutions publish only such information in their reports which they find appropriate, measures have been taken to establish external quality assurance bodies. Besides schools themselves, accreditation commission also deals with quality of education. However, the commission is only interested in quantifiable indicators and educational activities of teachers, the teaching process and its quality as well as qualification or teaching skills of teachers are not the focus of attention.

Since 2008-2009 and pursuant to Act No. 131/2002 Coll. on Higher Education Institutions as amended, Slovak universities have been conducting a sociological survey among students focusing on assessment of teachers and evaluation of study programmes at their faculties. Results of the survey are discussed by the Rectorial board and forwarded to deans of faculties who are responsible for passing the results to heads of departments and for adopting measures in order to improve quality of teaching. The results of both student surveys can be found at the university website.

However, to discuss quality of education today is, to say the least, inappropriate or even impossible. Considering the analysis by Kosová (2011) who states that the number of students at Slovak higher educational institutions has increased **fourfold**, volume of academic activities have increased **sevenfold** and the number of students per one teacher has increased almost **threefold** since 1989. Moreover, since 1999 public expenditures from GDP decreased from 5.49% to 3.59% by 2008, which is the lowest percentage of all European Union countries (Kosová, 2011, pp. 105 – 106).

The European Research Area was established in 2000 based on the recognition of the lack of appropriate environment for stimulating research and development and for applying their results in practice, recognising the fragmentation of activities and deficiencies in funding with diffused resources (EHEA, 2011). We can say that Slovak higher education in 2011 is doing worse than in 2000. I believe that this is the result of non-critical adoption of Bologna Process purposes and tasks based on the Lisbon Strategy without respecting the state of the art and traditions and without observing the principle of harmonisation of accepted changes and the current state of affairs in education, science and especially in economy in Slovak school system.

Based on the above I can make an observation that to discuss quality or efforts to achieve quality of higher education is impossible unless legislative provisions are adopted in order to ensure funding from public resources in the first place just as we see it in surrounding EU and OECD countries. This will be equally impossible unless measures are adopted to restrict the constantly increasing volume of activity of teachers in higher education and of researchers as well as measures restricting the increasing number of students per teacher. Teachers in higher education are responsible for applying results and knowledge from own research activity in practice but especially for sharing them with students in order to train competent professionals for practice and to raise own successors. With *sevenfold increase in the volume of activities* which they must perform with *500 – 700 students*, teachers can hardly pursue quality science, research or apply teaching mastery which requires sufficient time for each student, being their advisor, counsellor, guide and support in their studies, etc.

To raise the status of teachers, to raise their salaries which are currently the lowest among EU countries is another important measure (see Kosová, 2011). Other discouraging and socially destructive aspects include absence of male teachers, outflow of qualified professionals from school services, outflow to foreign countries, reluctance to work as teachers, the burnout syndrome, stagnation in self-development, innovation, etc., which can threaten the existence of school and the teaching profession, as I have mentioned in the beginning.

I believe that besides quality assessment forced upon us in a controlling way by European institutions – this includes threats of non-acceptance and alleged incapability to succeed in competitive environment – it is also important to consider quality of life of teachers in higher education and of researchers. This quality means meeting social and cultural needs, material welfare, social acceptance, physical health as well as feeling good about performed work, good working climate, contentment, autonomy in scientific and pedagogic activities and other. Such quality of life of teachers in higher education presents the basis for the quality of education, scientific and research activity and shaping their personality.

In its report (2005) ENQA states that all higher education institutions should strive to increase quality of higher education, research and development in so that their *“staff are ready, willing and able to provide teaching and learner support that will help its students achieve those outcomes; and that there is full, timely and tangible recognition of the contribution to its work by those of its staff who demonstrate particular excellence, expertise and dedication”*. However, systemless and directive implementation of bureaucratic provisions and control measures, the constant increase in volume of activities of teachers, the rise of number of students and insufficient funding do not contribute to presented efforts for increasing quality, responsibility and improvement of higher education, research and development.

Professionalism in Higher Education, Research and Development

Improvement, refining of higher education, research and development can be achieved through professionalisation of teaching. In her publication, Vašutová (2004) discusses issues of training for teachers in higher education and defines the term teacher educators referring to highly qualified professionals educating future teachers during their institutional training phase as well as practicing teachers in further or continuous education (Vašutová, 2004, s. 53).

Highly qualified professionals providing education to students should be experts not only in their field but especially in professional sharing of scientific expertise. In order to be capable of sharing this expertise, to develop creative capacities of students, their abilities to study in a rational way, to develop their critical thinking and key competences during the teaching process, these educators must be competent higher education teachers. This competence can be achieved through completing a course in higher education pedagogy and through years of own teaching experience.

Prior to 1989, higher education pedagogy was included in teacher studies and it was not necessary to integrate it in other fields of study. For this reason, the quality in higher education is widely discussed today and the requirement to graduate from higher education pedagogy applies for all teachers in higher education. Turek (2010) says that this is why higher education institutions offer opportunities for acquisition of pedagogic competence in higher education pedagogy courses, which – although not accredited – have become popular (Turek, 2010, p. 4).

However, I believe that if a teacher in higher education should acquire pedagogic competence and knowledge of higher education pedagogy which is the basic tool of

professionalisation, it should be done through an accredited study programme, most appropriately through doctoral studies. There is one simple reason for this. Only persons with tertiary education and PhD degree can currently aspire to become teachers in higher education. According to Sirotová (2000), higher education pedagogy should be one of the criteria for continuing in habilitation and inauguration. I believe this will be true only temporarily until a quality study programme of higher education pedagogy becomes an integral part of doctoral studies.

Accredited educational programmes in higher education pedagogy should become a part of continuous education of teachers in higher education and should be a component of increasing and achieving professionalism of teaching. Such professionalisation should include acquisition of the latest knowledge in pedagogy, psychology, ethics, sociology, innovation strategies in higher education teaching, in the area of use and application of the latest multimedia technologies in teaching process, especially acquisition of knowledge on developing interactive educational programmes, online questionnaires, information on developing online didactic tests, online interactive textbooks, information on organising online conferences and other information which will keep changing with changing social, scientific and technical development at home as well as world-wide.

Bednaříková (2011) says that Professor Lewis Elton (1992) questioned whether a teacher in higher education can be considered a real professional. Lewis Elton makes a link between quality of higher education and professionalism which is based on quality teaching and scientific and research work of a teacher. He says that to assess quality and professionalism of scientific and research work is easy, but to assess quality and professionalism of teaching which includes what a teacher should know, be capable of and what he or she needs to be is difficult (Bednaříková, 2011, p. 13).

According to ENQA report, teachers in higher education should not only mediate scientific knowledge in their field of expertise but should also guarantee satisfaction of students in the teaching process, support them in learning, be their adviser, counsellor and guarantor of high quality information which they acquire in order to place themselves in the labour market. Teachers in higher education should therefore have profound knowledge and understanding of the developing field and should be able to share this information, knowledge and experience effectively and in broad context. They should receive regular feedback regarding their performance which should become a part of their self-reflection, self-evaluation and an opportunity for further development of teaching mastery. Such view of professionalism of teachers in higher education is in line with European standards and rules for internal quality of tertiary education assessment (ENQA, 2005, p. 6).

Mobility presents another tool of professionalisation and world experts associate it with quality of higher education, science and research. Just as student mobility is considered one of the tools to enhance their competences, mobility of teachers in higher education and of researchers should become one of the basic instruments for developing and enhancing competences for performance of their professional career. Quality and professionalism of teachers in higher education and of researchers can be assessed and evaluated on the basis of achieving the highest level of performed activities referred to as professional competences.

Professional Competences of Teachers in Higher Education

Educating teachers in higher education aimed at acquisition of professional competences and especially at continued improvement of their teaching activity should prevent mediocrity of teaching in higher education and lead to real quality of teaching in higher education institutions. Competent teachers are persons who can master what is expected of them. Several authors discuss professional competences (Průcha 1998, Walterová, Mareš 2003; Turek 2006, Bednaříková 2011, Kosová 2011, and many others) and

describe them as a set of professional abilities, skills, knowledge and dispositions which teachers need to have in order to perform their profession effectively.

Competences of teachers in higher education are generally divided to *personal* competences (responsibility, creativity, problem solving capacity, team work, social responsiveness and reflection) and *professional* competences (knowledge of subjects taught, communication, diagnostic, management, planning, organizational, advisory and counselling competences).

Professional competences of teachers in higher education are equally presented by Průcha (1996, 1997) and Turek (2001) who later divides them to three basic areas of competences: *specialised – subject oriented* (knowledge of subject content taught), *scientific* (ability and competence to perform scientific and research activity in own field) and *pedagogic* (psycho-didactic knowledge, communication, diagnostic, planning, organizational, counselling and self-reflective abilities) (Turek, 2008, p. 4).

It is not always true that “an excellent expert and scientist is also an excellent teacher and that an excellent teacher is also an excellent expert and scientist”.

Developing of competences means enabling individuals to mobilise, apply and combine acquired knowledge not only in standard situations but also in complex and unpredictable situations. These capabilities are based on knowledge as well as on experience, values and dispositions which an individual develops by actively participating in education (Kučírková, 2010).

All teachers in higher education should pursue professional competences through continuous education by means of formal, informal as well as non-institutional education which fulfils various functions and objectives and forms a subsystem of lifelong learning (Rosa, 2000). Personal initiative of teachers, need of professional self-development and need of self-reflection form the basis for effective functioning of a continuous learning system.

Effective enhancement of professional competences of teachers in higher education assumes substantial change in teaching style, applying of new teaching methods and strategies and this already begins during the training phase to become a teacher in higher education (doctoral studies and continuous education). This requires awareness of the whole complex of professional competences, so called *professiogram* of teachers in higher education who are also researchers with high level of personal autonomy. For the sake of self-improvement and improvement in own professional field, teachers should keep pursuing higher degree of professionalism and continuously enhance and develop their professional competences:

- *Specialised* – teachers must have profound knowledge of disciplines which they teach and which shape their field in higher education.
- *Scientific and research* – they distinguish teachers in higher education from other teachers. They must be erudite in their research field and in the field of own research work methodology.
- *Pedagogic* – teachers should meet all expectations necessary for effective performance of teaching activities, be successful in them while maintaining necessary level of authenticity. They must have certain knowledge of psychology, sociology, social communication, rhetoric and management. They should also have knowledge needed for problem solving and for guiding students during their studies. Being qualified in pedagogy and having personal teaching experience is the basis. Being competent in enhancing own teaching assumes capability to activate students to learning, to motivate them and develop their abilities, to diagnose work of others as well as own work (self-reflection).
- *Didactic* - teachers must be able to communicate the content taught in a clear, intelligible and logical way, to adapt it to individuals, to make difficult concepts

easier and less clear concepts more comprehensible. They must be capable of using appropriate methods, forms and instruments in teaching, to be able to adapt teaching styles, time and pace to abilities and opportunities of students.

- *Communication* - teachers in higher education need to know how to deal with students, need to be able to find the right approach, to establish ethical relationships, to have pedagogic tact, to be able to sense the level of pedagogic action (reward, praise, admonition). They must be able to communicate with their colleagues, supervisors and research partners.
- *Diagnostic* – to be able to ascertain approach of students to learning, school and life; to know how to evaluate their learning performance and results in an objective and fair way.
- *Planning* – teachers must be capable of planning own teaching and research work as well as planning work of others. They must be especially able to plan for teaching and learning activities of students, to be orderly and systematic in own activities.
- *Management and organizational* – teachers must be capable of giving advice and of leading team of colleagues and students, they need to know how to perform control, administrative, conceptual and evaluation activities, to organise learning, pedagogic and research activities.
- *Advisory and counselling* – teachers must be good advisors to their colleagues and students in their educational activities, in problem solving, in recognising and searching for many answers related to their future profession.
- *Self-reflective* – they must be capable of diagnosing or evaluating own pedagogic and research activities and pursue their enhancement based on this evaluation.

Requirements for specialised, pedagogic, research and management activities call for high level of professionalism. However, these activities are not the only ones included in professional competences. According to Kosov (2011), the volume of activities of teachers in higher education has recently *increased sevenfold*. Therefore, I believe that the requirement of competence must also go hand in hand with these activities and each teacher must be able to adapt and change own activities in line with requirements, time in which they are applied and thus show own creativity, flexibility and effort for self-enhancement.

Based on the above, I add that it is necessary to support development of such set of activities which enable use of the latest digital technologies and which mediate learning and perfecting of at least two foreign languages as these are needed for quality international pedagogic and research cooperation. I include these activities among other complementing competences:

- *Technological* – teachers must be qualified in basic information technologies, must be able to create platforms for electronic learning and communication in order to approach new forms and possibilities of self-learning and educating others, be interested in managing the latest multimedia.
- *Language – foreign language* – teachers in higher education must know at least two foreign languages and should be capable of and interested in learning more foreign languages at communication level.

Today there is demand for education which integrates content and language and emphasises mobility of teachers in higher education and of researchers. For this reason it is important to improve training for language teachers as well as training of all teachers in higher education. With regards to continuous learning wider range of languages including those less used and languages spoken in neighbouring countries should be offered. Mobility should be enhanced and facilitated for the purpose of language learning. It should aim at helping learners overcome initial language barriers and motivate them to gain competences in several foreign languages. It is obligatory to support efforts in foreign language teaching and

learning. Acquisition of language competences enhances and supports mutual mobility which contributes not only to understanding of various cultures but also to developing high quality international cooperation between teachers and researchers.

Unfortunately, the Committee for Education at the Council of the European Union has not discussed these issues yet. However, representatives from the Netherlands and Belgium proposed at the meeting in Brussels in September 2011 that it would be desirable to discuss *teacher mobility* focusing on *language training* and improvement in at least two foreign languages in the future. They believe that each higher education institution should support mobility of those teachers for whom it is an inevitable part of their professional training (Council of EU, 2011).

For the sake of self-improvement and improvement in own professional field teachers should keep pursuing the highest possible degree of professionalism. Through developing the above-mentioned competences each teacher should aim to make his or her competences:

- motivational - leading to enhancing own professional career in line with expectations of their employer which should be attainable and clear;
- tools for improving activities in the field of teaching and research work and for improving self-improvement;
- tools for self-reflection of teaching and research activities.

Self-evaluation, creating a portfolio, self-reflection based on assessment received from students are an integral part of my own effort to improve higher education teaching. For this reason I would like to briefly point out outcomes from a questionnaire which was part of my own self-reflection. The survey was carried out with the aim to establish opinions and insights of students focusing on some aspects related to quality of teaching in higher education. The purpose of this activity was to get information which would form the basis for increasing effectiveness in own teaching in higher education and own research work.

Methods, Subjects, Outcomes and Discussion

In 2009/2010/2011 a survey was carried out by means of questionnaires, interviews and reflection of students. 144 students, future teachers of pre-primary and primary school participated in the survey. A lot of information had been collected from students in both study programmes by means of interviews and reflections and these were later included in the questionnaire. Questions in the questionnaire for students focused on general opinions and insights regarding higher education and included questions about acquisition of didactic, language (foreign language) and informational competences during the learning process as well as questions regarding composition of subjects in their study programme and many others.

Based on my own empirical knowledge compared with many aspects of current reforms and results of the questionnaire survey among students of pre-primary and primary education, we observe a need of changes and a need of innovation which will be discussed during the interpretation of findings.

When we add values 4 and 5 we see that 84.71% of respondents pointed out the need of innovation and change in the composition of subjects in pre-primary education study programme. As for the primary education study programme, 93.04% of respondents expressed an opinion that it is necessary to innovate or change their study programme. The results confirm “uncritical adoption of reform measures” discussed earlier which, in this case, led to the division of undergraduate training for future teachers in pre-primary and primary education to a two-level educational model. The first level (bachelor) offers general basis and the second level (masters) specialises in pre-primary and primary education. As we can see

from the outcomes, the good idea has not proved effective because students lack long-term didactic and practical training in chosen specialisation.

This is confirmed by the following data closely related to the above. Individual questions focused on suitability of teaching approaches and methods. The general need of innovation in approaches, methods and strategies used in higher education.

The necessity of ongoing changes in approach and the need of introducing innovative methods in higher education is seen in the sum of values 4 and 5. Almost 65.27% of students in pre-primary education study programme and more than half, i.e. 61.01% of students in primary education study programme call for changes and innovation.

Unless students are satisfied with the composition of study disciplines in levels of study because these are not proportionally (theoretically and didactically) divided between five years of studies, they will obviously, as shown in the outcomes, request changes in educational process.

Selection and application of educational approaches, methods and strategies affect the ways and possibilities of students in acquisition and development of competences during their studies. If students lack long-term didactic and practical training in their specialisation, then acquisition of competences used by a future teacher in didactic development and mediation of educational content is insufficient.

The need of changes and innovation in procedures used in acquisition and development of competences during studies with special emphasis on communication and didactic competences has been pointed out by 76.38% of pre-primary education students and 69.44% of primary education respondents who rated their answers 4 and 5.

Deeper analysis of outcomes and their comparison with other data shows certain congruence. Findings from interviews and reflections show that up to 50% of students are apprehensive of expressing themselves and therefore keep their thoughts to themselves, 41% of students are concerned about using wrong wording, 31.81% fear that they will not be able to articulate necessary ideas, 13% are nervous or fearful about their ideas not being fitting for the course of discussion and up to 45.23% are afraid of being mocked by their colleagues. This suggest an obvious need of changing not only approaches, of innovating methods but also of developing new perhaps common and tried and tested international study programmes. We need to know that there is no universal method or approach, therefore it is necessary to keep seeking new possibilities or ways how to meet educational objectives set in a way that would be interesting to students and would motivate them to obtain not only basic knowledge but to pursue ongoing self-improvement.

Other related issues include modernisation and equipment of higher education institutions with the latest multimedia technologies which help enhance the work of teachers in higher education and achieve quality in higher education. Current dynamising trends in the society cannot do without reformative measures the aim of which is to enhance educational level of population because, in the period to come, we will be ruled by modern technologies and will need educated population. This must be recognised at each level of social life and especially in training of future teachers who prepare new generation for practical life.

The need to add, improve and extend the equipment used in higher education institutions preparing future teachers for work by means of the latest multimedia technologies was expressed by 61.10% of pre-primary education respondents and by 63.88% of primary education respondents.

However, the problem lies in insufficient support and funding for higher education institutions from public resources and in continually decreasing participation of GDP in education. Universities oriented on humanities do not have a possibility to gain financial support from other resources as is the case with technical universities.

When asked whether current level of IT technologies use in the educational process is sufficient, 69.43% of pre-primary education respondents rated their answers 4 and 5 and as many as 72.21% of primary education respondents would welcome the opportunity to work with the latest multimedia technology directly in the educational process.

For the sake of modernisation and improvement of higher education it is necessary to create specialised classrooms, research laboratories equipped with the latest multimedia technologies which offer several options for increasing quality of education and preparation of future teachers for practical work.

To conclude the interpretation of outcomes related to selected surveyed areas, it is appropriate not to forget a possibly very substantial issue of the most topical and burning problem of this time related to internationalisation, development and direction of higher education. The issue is acquisition and development of language competences of students and teachers in higher education.

By one of the many questions included in the questionnaire for students we wanted to find out whether students of teaching will be sufficiently prepared to apply foreign language competences. As many as 77.77% out of all students of pre-primary education and 87.49% of primary education students replied that they have not acquired these competences and have not had an opportunity to develop them. In time of globalisation and internationalisation process only very little attention is paid to this issue at highest levels where measures are being adopted in a non-systematic way and without reflecting practice.

We believe that unless teachers in higher education are supported financially, materially and technically in long-term mobilities which would give them an opportunity to acquire and develop own foreign language competences, they will not be capable of creating opportunities for acquisition and development of student competences at the necessary and sufficient level. Graduates of teaching who have not been equipped by necessary competences will not be able to develop these in their pupils and students either. This creates a vicious circle of problems which are not being solved systematically.

Conclusion

The aim of this part of paper presenting findings from a survey was to point out the necessity of evaluating activities of all teachers in higher education interested in enhancing quality of university education.

Systematic self-evaluation of pedagogic and research activity, survey of student opinions and needs, development of evaluation portfolios, very critical and sensitive adoption of reformative measures, systematic development of professional competences, continuous evaluation of teachers in higher education – all of these participate in creation of a complex system of quality assessment of pedagogic and research activity.

Quality assessment of pedagogic and research activity in higher education also includes quality assessment of new teachers in higher education. Their work in the academic field with respect to pedagogic and research activities often goes without any guidance, direction, supervision or tutoring by a senior lecturer, docent or professor. They become teachers, researchers without experience in pedagogic and research work. As this is often the reason for reducing rating of higher education institutions, management of faculties and universities should discuss these issues intensively.

All teachers in higher education must be capable of changing their teaching styles, of applying modern and effective strategies. They will be able to search for new approaches, methods, forms and arguments only if they are continuously educated and make full use of knowledge of higher education pedagogy. The main reason for this is that students are very sensitive to teaching styles and have strong tendency to carry them along with knowledge over to their own work. For this reason teachers in higher education should know how to

innovate teaching strategies, how to offer high quality study programmes and curricula to students and how to apply such methods and forms which take international dimension into consideration.

Application of suitable teaching methods depends on methodical and didactic capabilities and creative abilities of a teacher, on his or her teaching mastery. According to Turek (2008) *“knowledge and skills of students should result from their own thinking, their pro-activity directed by a teacher”* (Turek, 2008, p. 23). According to this, teaching students must focus on partnership interaction, on activating teaching which ensures progressive activity, initiative and creativity of students in learning process.

We need to know that there is no universal method, therefore it is necessary to keep seeking new possibilities for meeting educational objectives in a way which would be interesting to students and would motivate them to obtain not only basic knowledge but to pursue ongoing self-improvement. It is necessary to innovate methods and forms ensuring that the educational objectives are met when teaching particular subjects. Each subject has a characteristic format – lecture, seminar, exercises. It is therefore necessary to apply activating educational strategies in teaching of subjects, pursue team work and adapt teaching to individual needs so that students feel confident when completing the study of the subject, so that they gain as much knowledge, practice, skills and experience as possible and carry as much as they can over to their practice.

Continuous increase in professionalism of teachers in higher education is central to the quality of higher education. Teachers in higher education have always been dominant elements of the system of higher education. To maintain this dominant position and their inherent mission in university educational process it will be necessary that they remain ready – from the professional, pedagogic and research point of view – to perform activities at a representative university level.

Quality selection of new, beginner teachers in higher education and their pedagogic training will require long-term supervision or tutoring by a competent docent or a professor who is competent to advise, consult and evaluate their pedagogic and research activity and decide on whether they are capable of and suitable for working in this career for a longer period of time.

When searching for procedures, various models, seeking ways to solve issues of quality enhancement in higher education it is necessary to discuss a lot, to seek constructive solutions which will meet not only regional and national quality criteria but also international criteria.

In this context I would like to make several suggestions which, I believe, deserve due attention:

- to ensure that share of GDP in the field of education is increased,
- to ensure that higher education pedagogy will become a part of an accredited doctoral programme,
- to make quality selection of new teachers in higher education,
- to provide four-year-long tutoring by a docent or a professor to new teachers in higher education,
- to evaluate quality of teacher results by submitting portfolios of own activity,
- to ensure continuous innovative teaching of accredited higher education pedagogy not only for new teachers but also for senior teachers in higher education,
- submit evaluation of own activity and a project of further personal development during recruitment process,
- to publish results of assessment of faculties and teachers in a transparent way at home pages under “RATING”,

- results of questionnaires, student reflections and surveys should be included in a self-evaluation portfolio of teachers in higher education.

Dynamics of the life style today requires an ongoing improvement and enhancement of not only higher education institutions but also improvement of work performed by teachers in higher education. However, this requires quality and consistency in political decisions, support by governmental department in allocation of funding and resolution of complex problems which more and more often occur in higher education.

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