

# Substantiation of Need for Educational Competences of Higher Education Lecturers: Document Analysis

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**Abstract.** The article justifies the need for educational competences of higher education lecturers conducting analysis of the main documents that regulate education in Europe and the Republic of Lithuania. Two problem questions are formulated: firstly, what need for educational competences of higher education lecturers is presupposed in the key documents regulating education in Europe; secondly, what need for educational competences of higher education lecturers is presupposed in the key documents regulating education in the Republic of Lithuania.

**Keywords:** *higher education, teacher, educational competence.*

## Introduction

The educational policy of the Republic of Lithuania is formed in line with the main and timely provisions of European educational policy. The latest documents of Bologna process (Yerevan, 2015) emphasise one of the most relevant challenges to participants in higher education: to implement timely and high quality process of studies employing innovative teaching/learning methods and addressing the changing needs of society. The National Progress Strategy of the Republic of Lithuania “*Lithuania 2030*” states that “the

quality of our life and success of works will be predetermined by creative, responsible and open people as well as by values prevailing in society <...> to create and implement the system of competence assessment and self-assessment, which is open to creativity, pursuance and improvement, in all educational institutions”. The National Educational Strategy for 2013–2022 emphasises the necessity “to reach a critical mass of pedagogic communities consisting of professional *teachers* and *lecturers*”. The abovementioned documents commit higher education lecturers to function according to the prevailing paradigm of lifelong learning focusing on improvement of educational competences. It should be pointed out that mobility of creative society, demographic, political and economic changes impede practical realisation of the education function. In the creative society knowledge has given its priority place to communication, which is based on personal value-based orientations. Such a change shows that educational competence of higher education lecturers is as important as subject-specific competence.

The aim of the article is to analyse the main documents that regulate education in Europe and the Republic of Lithuania focusing on the need for educational competences of higher education lecturers.

The following problem-based questions are raised: firstly, what need for educational competences of higher education lecturers is presupposed in the key documents regulating education in Europe; secondly, what need for educational competences of higher education lecturers is presupposed in the key documents regulating education in the Republic of Lithuania.

## Methodology

The methods: qualitative analysis of documents that regulate education.

Following the typology of research methods by T. Wilson (2001), the indirect method of analysis of documents of emerging structure observation was used. This research aims to reveal the links between the documents of the Bologna process and the documents of the Republic of Lithuania. The participants in the educational system of each country have to act in accordance with the national legislation. Individuals’ inactivity is preconditioned not only by personal qualities or possessed competences but also by the national laws even more frequently. The article aims to answer the questions: to what extent and how the Bologna process documents can be reflected? The obtained data provide scientific grounds for further research.

## Results

### **Educational competences of higher education teachers in the main documents that regulate education in Europe**

The analysis of the documents of the Bologna process of the period from 1999 to 2015 revealed three main stages: *the first stage* that lasted from the first meetings of the ministers of education in 1999 to the meeting in Berlin in 2003 (Bologna, 1999; Prague, 2001; Berlin, 2003). At this stage, discussions were limited to the structural priorities of the reconstruction of European higher education system (e. g. creation of clear and comparable system of degrees, development of a two-cycle system (of pre-diploma and post-diploma studies), construction of the credit system, international mobility, etc.). *The second stage* embraced the period from 2005 to 2007 (Bergen, 2005; London, 2007). The internal changes of higher education were foregrounded in the meetings of this period. The changes in the social dimensions were discussed focusing on the improvement of access to higher education for all social groups, promoting social cohesion, reducing inequalities and increasing the level of knowledge, skills and abilities within a society, as well as promoting the application of flexible learning methods. *The third stage* covers the period from 2009 to 2015 (Leuven & Louvain-la-Neuve, 2009; Bucharest, 2012; Yerevan, 2015). The Leuven and Louvain-la-Neuve Communiqués of 2009 focused on the quality of higher education. They stated that the reconstruction of study programmes should aim at student-centred teaching and curriculum reform directed at a student and their learning achievements. The Bucharest Communiqué (2012) repeatedly highlighted the necessity for the development of student-centred studies based on innovative teaching methods and perceiving the student as an active participant of the study process. Thus, the change of paradigms directed towards providing quality education was promoted in the European Higher Education Area that could be ensured by a reconceptualised teaching/learning system in higher education and creation of the environment inspiring a person to work and learn. It is noteworthy that during the last meeting in Yerevan in 2015, the Ministers again stressed and clearly defined what internal changes should be implemented and maintained in higher education. The most important ones were related to educational innovations, including the employment of digital technologies, flexible learning as well as appropriate teaching and assessment methods. It should be emphasised that the Communiqué (Yerevan, 2015) highlighted the necessity for developing educational competences of teachers. Hence, the analysis of the Bologna process documents revealed that higher education teachers face considerable challenges in pursuing to implement educational novelties into the study process.

Another important document that emphasises the significance of initial and continuing development of the qualifications of teachers in higher education is the European Commission Communiqué No. 567 *Supporting Economic Growth and Jobs – an Agenda for the Modernisation of Europe’s Higher Education System* of 20 September 2011, ad-

addressing the European Parliament, European Council, European Economic and Social Committee, as well as Committee of the Regions. It is noteworthy that the objectives of the European Commission to improve the quality of higher education comply with the third stage of the Bologna process. Hence, having analysed the aforesaid document, it is possible to distinguish three main objectives. First, the application of flexible and innovative teaching and learning methods aiming to improve the quality of education and learning process necessitates for the employment of latest technologies, distance learning and virtual mobility possibilities. Second, politicians in higher education understand that “the reform and modernisation of Europe’s higher education depends on the competence and motivation of teachers and researchers <...> Better working conditions including transparent and fair recruitment procedures, **better initial and continuing professional development**, and better recognition and reward of teaching and research excellence are essential to ensure that Europe produces, attracts and retains the high quality academic staff it needs”. Third, it is highlighted that state and higher education institutions should invest into continuous development of staff qualifications. It is noteworthy that on 15–16 February 2012, the Committee of the Regions provided opinion project EDUC-V-017 “The Modernisation of Higher Education”, which positively assessed the main political aims and objectives set in the Communication “An Agenda for the Modernisation of Europe’s Higher Education Systems. Supporting Growth and Jobs”. Communication COM (2013) 499 “European Higher Education in the World” of the European Commission of 11 July 2013 repeatedly emphasises the enhancement of higher education attractiveness, promotion of active international student and staff mobility, provision of world-class innovative curricular, excellence in teaching opportunities and others.

Despite the demand for the educational competences of higher education staff, considerable differences have been highlighted among European countries, when a group of researchers from 8 European countries (Germany, Spain, France, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, the United Kingdom) conducted a survey, analysing state strategies, action and measures, assessing the existing barriers for the implementation of new teaching and learning methods and other aspects. Referring on the exhaustive research data, the European Commission (2015) stated in its publication “Diversity of Changing Teaching Methods: the new teaching and learning methods and their importance in higher education policy” that there is an evident transition to learner-oriented teaching and learning in higher education; however, the shift from traditional (teacher-oriented model) to more flexible (student-oriented teaching) is slower than most politicians have expected.

Having analysed the documents that highlight political objectives for higher education, it is possible to claim that the creation of quality and innovative higher education largely depends on country and higher education establishments that should constantly

promote and ensure initial and continuing development of teacher qualifications, plan and organise these processes, as well as allocate correspondent investment.

### **Educational competences of higher education teachers in the main documents that regulate education in Lithuania**

Referring to the experience of Lithuanian communities, non-governmental organizations and active citizens, their dialogue and ideas about the prospective future of Lithuania, the *National Progress Strategy "Lithuania 2030"* was developed and approved by the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania on 15 May 2012. The Strategy is guided by progress-relevant values:

- *Openness* to a different view, to positive initiatives, to a dialogue, cooperation, and innovations.
- *Creativity* in generation and implementation of new ideas, treating challenges as new possibilities of building success.
- *Responsibility* for actions taken, morality, active concern not only about themselves, but also the environment, community and the country at large.

One of the initiatives of key changes in smart society is the implementation of the assessment and self-assessment system of the competence promoting creativity, quest and development: "<...> to develop programmes focused on creativity, quest and personal development, as well as competence assessment and self-assessment framework, putting them in place across all the educational establishments".

The National Education Strategy for 2013–2022 states that it is essential "to achieve the level of pedagogical communities consisting of reflective, continuously developing and effectively working professional *school teachers and teachers in higher education*". It is of primary importance to "enhance motivation by providing school teachers and teachers in higher education with *qualification development opportunities* by expanding their cultural world outlook, promoting awareness of modern technologies, focusing on the development of creativity, citizenship, leadership and entrepreneurship as well as establishing a wider spectrum of educational functions". Second, it is important "to promote *continuous sharing of good experience among teachers in higher education* as well as among teachers of formal and non-formal education".

One of the priority areas of education policy outlined in the Strategy is ***the promotion of teacher professionalism***. The main factors ensuring successful education in Lithuania are "competence, personal qualities, motivation, creativity and inclination of school and higher education teachers to develop, as well as their ability to share good practice". Therefore, "<...> it is essential to search for incentives and conditions to create communities of *reflective, creative and professional school and higher education teachers*". Moreover, "the support for young novice school and higher education teachers by creating favourable career prospects" should be emphasised and the national and international mobility of school and higher education teachers should be promoted.

The conducted analysis of the regulatory documents on Lithuanian education revealed that most documents (National Description of Teacher Competences, 2007; Description of Requirements for Teacher Qualifications, 2014) and drafts (The Draft of the Description of Professional Competences of Teachers (since 25 November 2013), Criteria for the Development of Professional Competences of Teachers (since 25 November 2013), Evidence for the Development of Teacher Competences (since 25 November 2013), Draft on Study of Demand for the Development of Teacher Qualifications (since 13 May 2014)) focus on the acquisition and development of teacher competences. Despite the fact that The National Progress Strategy “Lithuania 2030” and The National Education Strategy for 2013–2022 provide for professional *school and higher education teachers*, few documents define teachers’ professionalism. Only a few descriptions of study fields (a part of them are approved, others include only drafts of documents) mention educational competences of teachers in higher education. Therefore, there is a lack of documents defining teachers’ professionalism: what teacher is considered to be a professional and what are the competences of a professional teacher? Where and how should educational teacher competences be developed? What are the guidelines for teacher competence development?

The main document regulating Lithuanian education is the Law of the Republic of Lithuania on Education (2011) that overviews the whole system of Lithuanian education: formal and non-formal, informal education and educational support (RL Law on Education, 2011). Nevertheless, the content of the analysed document is basically focused on primary, basic and secondary stages of education. This provides for a demand for laws regulating the system of higher education. Therefore, the process of organizing RL higher education is largely regulated by Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania (2009).

RL Law on Education (2011) provides a definition of the concepts relevant for the current article: competence, qualification, teacher, pedagogue, teacher qualification, etc. A *teacher* is defined as “a person who educates learners according to formal and non-formal education programmes” (RL Law on Education, 2011, Article 2, line 16), whereas a *pedagogue* is “a person who has acquired the higher education (the post-secondary education acquired before 2009 or the specialized-secondary education acquired before 1995) as well as the qualification of a pedagogue” (RL Law on Education, 2011, Article 2, line 19). The definitions of the concepts *teacher* and *pedagogue* emphasise the relevance of a person’s education and their work with the younger generation following the legal acts currently in force in the Republic of Lithuania. The document under discussion does not clearly state at which stage of education an educator should be referred to as a teacher or a pedagogue. This presupposes the universality of both concepts.

Certain contradictions regarding the use of the aforesaid concepts appear in research works. Lithuanian scholar L. Jovaiša (2007) in his Dictionary of Educational Terms distinguishes the concepts according to the stage of education: *mokytojas* (a school teacher) means “a person teaching at school” (p. 167), whereas *dėstytojas* (a teacher, a lecturer)



is defined as “a person teaching in an upper-secondary or higher educational establishment or university” (p. 55). Hence, it is assumed that the term *teacher* is a universal one; however, describing the development of Lithuanian educational science, the scholar emphasises only the training of primary, basic and secondary teachers and their qualification development. The description of the demand for teachers in higher education, their training and qualification are not to be found in the historical development provided by L. Jovaiša (2007). Other Lithuanian andragogues (Teresevičienė, Oldroyd, Gedvilienė, 2004; Teresevičienė, Gedvilienė, Zuzevičiūtė, 2006; Juozaitis, 2008; Juozaitienė, Juozaitis, Lukošūnienė, 2008) maintain that the discrepancy between pedagogy and andragogy has diminished in the 21st century. Both sciences are based on the same principles; therefore, all educators can be referred to as teachers (Teresevičienė, Oldroyd, Gedvilienė, 2004; Teresevičienė, Gedvilienė, & Zuzevičiūtė, 2006; Juozaitis, 2008; Juozaitienė, Juozaitis, & Lukošūnienė, 2008). Nevertheless, the definition of the concept *pedagogue* eliminates all the aforesaid discrepancies: “teachers of all ranks and specialities are referred to as pedagogues” (Jovaiša, 2007, p. 208). It is stated that the use of the concepts *teacher* and *pedagogue* is relatively free and universal at the beginning of the new millennium; however, the content analysis of the legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania reveals lack of attention regarding the qualification of teachers in higher education.

The Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania (2009) outlines that “a person who educates and teaches students in higher education” should be referred to as *lecturer* (Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, 2009, Article 4, line 7). The concept of the lecturer is close to the concept of the teacher that defines the implementation of educational activity with the younger generation of learners, i.e., pedagogical work. The document under discussion states that a teacher should have a degree not lower than that of Master. A scientific degree allows to refer to a researcher as a *scientist* (Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, 2009, Article 4, line 12). The differences lie in the fact that teachers of higher institutions have teaching positions (professor, associate professor, lecturer and assistant lecturer) (Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, 2009, Article 58). However, according to the laws on education of RL (Law on Education of RL, 2007; National Description of Teacher Competences, 2007; Description of Requirements for Teacher Qualification, 2014, and others), teaching qualification is obligatory to work at lower stages of the system of Lithuanian education, whereas the necessity of having a teacher’s qualification in upper stages is not mentioned. However, it is stated in Law on Higher Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, Article 64, line 2, that “every five years teachers may be released for a period not longer than one year from their pedagogical work to conduct research and to improve their scientific and pedagogical qualification.” Hence, it is presupposed that a teacher should meet the requirement to have a teacher’s qualification to do pedagogical work. *The qualification of a pedagogue* is perceived as “the totality, recognised in accordance with the procedure laid down by

legal acts of the Republic of Lithuania, of person's possessed competences or professional experience and possessed competences necessary for training learners" (RL Law on Education, 2011, Article 2, line 20). The qualification of a pedagogue extends into pedagogical competence during the work. The analysis of RL laws on education allows defining the competence of a teacher in higher education that consists of subject-specific, research and educational competences (Fig. 1). Competence of a teacher: research competence, subject-specific competence, educational competence.

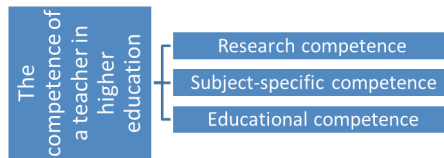


Fig. 1. Competence of a teacher in higher education  
(following RL Law on Education, 2011; RL Law on Higher Education and Research, 2009)

The gaps in RL documents on education create preconditions for formulation of the following questions: when and how do teachers in higher education acquire teaching qualification permitting to do educational work?

The aforesaid issue becomes even more relevant having determined the fact that the issue of the qualification of a teacher in higher education is not included into the relevant public network of legal information provided by the Ministry coordinating education in the Republic of Lithuania. On the official website of the Ministry of Education and Science of RL (<http://www.smm.lt/>) the provided information is grouped according to interest groups. The section "Qualifications" contains information on the requirements for teacher qualifications, the Order of the Minister of Education and Science regarding the changes of qualification requirements; as well as the programmes of training courses for teachers, head teachers, their deputies and heads of departments. However, the said information focuses on early childhood, pre-primary, primary, basic and secondary school teachers. Hence, the question arises: what are educational qualification requirements for pedagogues in higher education? Considering the fact that every higher education establishment is autonomous, it is assumed that the educational competence of teachers in higher education is one of autonomy areas as an integral part of teaching/learning quality control.

However, certain gaps can be observed in higher education quality assurance implemented by RL laws and special institutions. The process of the assessment of study programmes conducted by Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education, includes communication with representatives of administrative staff, teachers and students, graduates and social stakeholders pursuing to clear out the quality of educational work of teachers in higher education. Consequently, another question arises: if teacher qualification



is an autonomous issue of teaching/learning quality assurance in individual institutions of higher education, on what basis is the centralised assessment of the qualification and competence of teachers in higher education organised as it is done in lower stages of the educational system? Moreover, the publication of Education Supply Centre “Lithuania. Education in Regions. Teachers” (2013) states that teacher qualification development is one of most topical issues of educational policy in the country. Favourable conditions are provided for targeted teacher professional development that is funded from the state budget and/or other sources. 172 Litās (50 Eur) were allocated to teachers’ professional development from the so-called “student’s basket” in 2012. Adding the finance obtained from the EU, the sum is doubled or tripled. However, no finance is allotted to qualification improvement for teachers in higher education.

The analysis of RL documents on education suggests that there is a demand for qualified teachers in higher education; however, there is a lack of a legal mechanism of the acquisition and development of the educational competence of a teacher. This fact points to the violation of the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, which states that “Every person <...> shall have the right to adequate, safe and healthy working conditions” (Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, 1992, Article 48). According to Article 191 of Labour Code of the Republic of Lithuania (2002), one of the factors to “ensure normal working conditions” is the provision of “adequate conditions, following the procedure prescribed by regulatory acts, for the improvement of qualifications and work skills”. In Article 31 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (2007) “fair and just working conditions” are related to a person’s social well-being in the society: “Every worker has the right to working conditions which respect his or her health, safety and dignity”. Dignity is the intrinsic perception of the value of oneself and own quality among members of the society. Human mental and physical health, quality of labour and dignity are closely related (Dictionary of Modern Lithuanian, 2000; Šlapkauskas, 2009). It is maintained that the current situation of legal acts regulating RL education cannot ensure appropriate working conditions for an educator in higher education; neither can it ensure positive well-being of a teacher. The conditions of the Bologna process (Yerevan, 2015) maintaining that teachers’ positive social state in the society is a compulsory condition of the teaching/learning process are not observed.

Only a teacher with exceptionally high competence can meet educational expectations provided for in the Law on Education (2011). It is stated that education “is a priority area of societal development that receives State support” (RL Law on Education, 2011, Art. 1). It cannot be denied that in the process of education and development of a personality, every teacher performs a wide variety of roles: from a scientist to an educator. Hence, the educational competence of teachers at all stages of RL system of education should be a priority area. A teacher in higher education / pedagogue / school teacher / educator has the right to appropriate working conditions; however, the implementation of these rights necessitates for regulatory legal acts of RL.

## Conclusions

Having analysed documents regulating higher education policy in Europe, it is assumed that the policy of the country and quality assurance of the studies in its higher educational establishments, as well as clearly defined aims are one of the key factors stimulating the development of innovative higher education, and assuring primary and continuous development of teacher qualification. Teachers' excellence is the basis of flexible transition to student-oriented studies; however, human and financial resources are demanded to plan and organize this process.

The conducted research revealed that the educational documents of the Republic of Lithuania focus on acquisition of the teacher's educational competence and its improvement but the educational competence of higher education teachers is given insufficient attention. However, acquisition and improvement of the competence is relevant carrying out external assessment of study quality. Consequently, the need for theoretical and empiric substantiation of teacher educational competences arises, which results in devising of the descriptor of teachers' educational competences. Such descriptor would contribute to development of efficient higher education strategies and would enable teachers to seek mastery in the process of education.

Having analysed the documents on education in the Republic of Lithuania, it can be stated that the competence of a teacher in higher education consists of subject-specific, research and educational competences. Ambitious educational expectations are one of the key factors promoting continuous development of a teacher in higher education highlighting the development of educational competences. The teacher of a higher educational establishment of the beginning of the 21st century has a right to proper working conditions assuring personal dignity; however, the implementation of these rights necessitates for additional legal acts in the Republic of Lithuania: starting from the acquisition and development of the educational competence of a teacher in higher education to responsibility guidelines and procedures.

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## Aukštųjų mokyklų dėstytojų edukologinių kompetencijų poreikio pagrindimas: dokumentų analizė

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### Santrauka

Straipsnyje, remiantis pagrindinių Europos ir Lietuvos Respublikos švietimo sritį reglamentuojančių dokumentų analize, nagrinėjamas aukštųjų mokyklų dėstytojų edukologinių kompetencijų poreikis. Keliama du probleminiai klausimai: pirma, koks aukštųjų mokyklų dėstytojų edukologinių kompetencijų poreikis suponuojamas pagrindiniuose Europos švietimą reglamentuojančiuose dokumentuose; antra, koks aukštųjų mokyklų dėstytojų

edukologinių kompetencijų poreikis numatomas pagrindiniuose Lietuvos Respublikos švietimą reglamentuojančiuose dokumentuose. Išanalizavus Europos aukštojo mokslo politiką reglamentuojančius dokumentus, galima būtų teigti, kad šalies ir jos aukštųjų mokyklų studijų kokybės užtikrinimo politika bei aiškiai suformuluoti tikslai yra vieni iš pagrindinių veiksnių, skatinančių inovatyvaus aukštojo mokslo kūrimą, užtikrinančių pirminį ir tęstinį dėstytojų kvalifikacijos tobulinimą. Dėstytojų meistriškumas yra pagrindas lanksčiai pereiti prie į studentą orientuotų studijų. Išanalizavus Lietuvos Respublikos švietimą reglamentuojančius dokumentus, išryškėjo aukštojo mokslo institucijos ugdytojo kompetencija, sudaryta iš dalykinės, mokslinės ir pedagoginės kompetencijų. Siekiant dermės tarp Lietuvos ir tarptautinių dokumentų kyla dėstytojo edukacinių kompetencijų teorinio ir empirinio pagrindimo poreikis sukuriant dėstytojų edukacinių kompetencijų aprašą, kuris padėtų parengti veiksmingas aukštojo mokslo strategijas ir dėstytojams siekti meistriškumo studijų procese.

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**Esminiai žodžiai:** *aukštasis mokslas, dėstytojas, edukologinė kompetencija.*

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