FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE THE QUALITY OF THE STUDY PROCESS: THE ATTITUDE OF KLAIPĖDA UNIVERSITY AND 1 DECEMBER 1918 UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OF PEDAGOGICAL STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the factors that influence the quality of the study. Quality of study and its assurance are priority tasks in the European higher education area. The key provisions of the *Bologna Process* focus on the paradigm shift in higher education. The *Berlin Communique* (2003) identifies the need for quality assurance at institutional, national and European level as well as for the development of common quality assurance criteria and methodologies. The *Bergen Communiqué* (2005) emphasized the importance of research for the improvement of studies, and endorsed the European qualifications framework for higher education based on learning outcomes. They are defined by the *Dublin Descriptors* (2005), which describe knowledge and understanding specific to

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each cycle, the application of knowledge and understanding, as well as decision-making, communication and learning to learn skills (*2014-2020 Case Study of the Suitability and Compatibility of European Union Funds Investment in Training Programs*, 2018). The *Leuven Communique* (2009) emphasizes student-centered studies, which remain a priority in the *European Higher Education Area Quality Assurance Regulations and Guidelines* (2015). The article analyzes the attitude of students of pedagogical studies towards the factors that influence the quality of studies. Students from Lithuanian and Romanian regional universities (Klaipėda University and 1 Decembrie 1918 University) participated in the study, 553 persons studying in various forms, undergraduate and postgraduate studies. The study was conducted with the aim of increasing internationalization and developing partnerships with European Union universities. Close collaboration in research helps to disseminate best practice in improving the quality of studies. This international study is theoretically and empirically based on the research methodology and statistical methods have identified the most important factors that determine the quality of the study process. It is researched how students' attitudes towards individual study process quality factors depend on their study evaluation, learning motivation, age and other parameters. The dissemination of the research results will help the academic community of the universities to carry out similar research and to improve the quality of studies on this basis.
KEY WORDS: quality of the study; factors of study quality, students' approach.

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Introduction

The *Europe 2030 Strategy* and other EU initiatives call for more excellence in Europe's higher education institutions in order to improve their performance, international attractiveness and competitiveness. In this context the relevance of quality in higher education gained momentum. The *Bologna Process* has put increasing emphasis on the importance of the involvement of students in the quality assurance of higher education. The ministers of education of the Bologna signatory states have underlined the importance of partnership between higher education institutions, their staff and students in order to achieve the goals set for the European Higher Education Area (Alaniska, et al., 2016). The main provisions of the *Bologna Process* are focused on the paradigm shift in higher education. The *Berlin Communiqué* (2003) notes the need for quality assurance at institutional, national and European levels, as well as for the improvement of common quality assurance criteria and methodologies. The *Bergen Communiqué* (2005) emphasizes the importance of scientific research for the improvement of studies, as well as endorses the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area based on the learning achievements. The following are defined by the *Dublin Descriptors* (2005), which indicate the knowledge and comprehension, application of knowledge and comprehension, as well as conclusion and decision making, communicating and learning skills that are specific to each cycle of studies (Case Study on the Appropriateness and Compatibility of EU Funds' Investments in Study Programmes for 2014-2020; 2018). The *Leuven Communiqué* (2009) focuses on students' needs-oriented studies.

The goals, principles and objectives of the European Education are sought to be implemented in the policy and practice of Lithuanian education. *Law on Science and Studies* (2009) and *The National Education Strategy for 2013-2022* (2013) place the quality assurance in higher education as the most important aim of the Lithuanian education system. One of the strategic goals of the *Lithuania's Progress Strategy 2030* (2012) is learning society; thus, it is provided to continue to create an effective system of lifelong learning, effectively adapting information communication technologies and ensuring acquisition and development of knowledge and skills required for an active society.

The objectives of the education policy are also implemented in the main educational documents of Romania that deal with the quality of studies. *The Law of the National Education* (2011, 2019) provides the framework for the use of the fundamental right to lifelong learning under the authority of the Romanian state. The law regulates the structure, functions, organization and functioning of the national system of state, private and confessional education. The law aims to promote education focused on values, creativity, cognitive abilities, volitional and action capacities, fundamental knowledge, as well as knowledge, skills and abilities of direct utility, in the profession and in society. The mission assumed by the law is to form, through education, the mental infrastructure of the Romanian society, in accordance with the new requirements, derived from Romania's status as a member country of the European Union and from functioning in the context of globalization, as well as of sustainable generation of a national human resource. Human resource that is

highly competitive and capable of operating efficiently in the current and future society. Another document is the *Decision No. 915* (2017) regarding the modification of the Annex to the Government Decision No. 1418/2006 for approving the *External evaluation methodology, standards, reference standards and list of performance indicators of the Romanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education.*

The subjective attitude of students to various study quality factors and their significance is relevant to the assessment of the quality of studies in both, Lithuania and Romania. Students, who are active participants of the study process and contribute to the improvement of the quality of studies, are an important part of the university community. It should be noted that students have higher expectations and their opinions draw attention to the problematic areas that require change (Galkutė, 2008). A number of studies have been conducted in Lithuania and Romania on the assessment of students' achievements, attitudes towards learning, issues of learning to learn, yet there is a lack of research works that directly address factors that ensure and influence the quality of the study process. Accordingly, the **problematic question** raised in the following article is: what factors influence the quality of the study process from the point of view of Klaipėda University and *1 Decembrie 1918* University students of pedagogical studies?

Research object: students' attitudes towards the most important factors that influence the quality of the study process.

Research aim: to reveal the most important factors for the quality of the study process from the point of view of the Klaipėda University and *1 Decembrie 1918* University students of pedagogical studies.

Research methods: analysis of scientific literature, analysis of documents, method of written survey, method of statistical analysis (using the IBM SPSS Statistics 22.0 software).

Theoretical definition of the study quality factors

A great number of studies have been conducted in Lithuania and foreign countries that reveal factors on which the quality of the study process depends. One of such factors is the curriculum of the study subject. According to S. Garmise, A. Rodriguez, et al. (2019), the acquisition of study quality and 21st century skills require broader didactic accents of the study process adapted for a more diverse group of learners that show the successful achievement of study objectives and expected learning outcomes. The following requires a more interdisciplinary approach to education, which includes cross-training across disciplines and the creation of practical learning and real-world problem-solving opportunities, as well as opportunities to improve the integrative thinking of the learners (Garmise, Rodriguez, 2019). Therefore, during the following process it is important to choose such a teaching/learning strategy, curriculum of the study subject, and methodology that would ensure that students acquire the subject-specific and general competences provided in the study programme (Lepaitė, 2011).

Another factor that is important for the assurance of the study quality is teaching methods. Due to the rapid changes in the modern world, the higher education system has faced many different challenges. University is a place, where the quality of studies and scientific research is developed and based on the culture of trust, excellence, courtesy, and positive changes in an organization. It is an organization where more willing, thoughtful and creative individuals need to be trained in interdisciplinary areas. Accordingly, the application of teaching methods will be successful if a university teacher clearly understands the goals, objectives of modern education, knows the specifics of each method, its positive and negative features; will have mastered various methods, will link the curriculum and aims of education, and will flexibly and creatively model one's activities. A good teaching method helps the learner to question one's preconceptions, and motivates to learn by putting one in a situation, in which the learner comes to see oneself as the author of answers, as the agent of responsibility for change (Bidabadi, et al., 2016).

Factor of methods of reporting for individual work tasks by students also influences the quality of studies. Representatives of education science (Jovaiša, 2007; Bartusevičienė, 2010, Lepaitė, 2018, et al.) unanimously emphasize that feedback to students is a prerequisite of successful learning, and to university teachers – a mean to improve one's activities and communication with students. A university teacher should be actively involved in this process of providing feedback by encouraging students to express their opinion on the curriculum and teaching of the study subject. It is crucial to ensure that comments from students are welcome

and would not have negative consequences for their evaluations. Feedback enables adequate assessment of learning outcomes and provides a basis for improvement (Šiaučiukėnienė, et al., 2011). The following play a unique role in the development of components of organizing individual work tasks for students: nature of individual work tasks; links between individual work tasks and other personal activities; teacher motivation (coach); organization of feedback; organization of self-assessment; reflection on activity, etc. (Braslauskiene, Šmitiene, 2019). Therefore, in order to improve learning, students need to have information about the level of their knowledge that must be received from the university teacher by means of feedback.

Teacher competences are distinguished as one of the important factors that ensure the quality of studies. A. Stanescu (2016) claims that the relationship between teacher development and performance appraisal in higher education is an issue worth addressing. The culture of academic institutions was determined by changes of the external environment, thus teacher competences should be constantly improved. Many higher education teachers have a better understanding of the need to engage in critical self-reflection, ensure quality and improve educational training programmes. Professional development includes progress, and individuals must be involved in continuous professional development and training. In the view of L. Galkutė (2016), it is necessary to develop teacher competences by linking various learning contexts and disciplines that are important for professional and social activities and personal self-expression; anticipate perspectives for critical reflection and learning from the past, anticipation and realization of various present and future alternatives; implementation of changes (change in the concept of the university teacher's role, change in the organization and methods of teaching/learning, change in the education system) in the rapidly changing and multifaceted world. According to D. Razmaitė and D. Dagys (2014), "special requirements are set for the competence of a higher education teacher: one must become the professional, who not only provides one's students with specialty knowledge and skills, but also develops their competence to manage their process of learning and learn from experience, to be able to understand one's own and other people's values, as well as act effectively in the changing and unknown situations of future activities" (p. 43).

Student motivation is another factor that influences the quality of studies. As the student is the main recipient of services in the process of studies, one needs to be satisfied with the service provided and its quality. Therefore, it is very important that one's motivation is high, which also determines the right attitude. According to D. Leščinskienė, R. Balinienė, L. Kankevičienė (2016), "motivation while learning is one of the most important factors that determine success or failure, as study programmes are generally designed to be dealt with by anyone, who puts enough work and effort into it. Motivation is an important factor that enables students to continue learning, stay in learning and improve in it. The variety of theories on motivation reveal what a complex and changing phenomenon learning motivation is, which depends on many different factors. Without knowing them, it is impossible to understand why a student is pursuing or not pursuing a goal, it is impossible to guess the meanings of one's actions. The philosophy of pragmatism states that "the needs of each individual are different, therefore the basis of education curriculum must not be the teaching to solve specific problems (cognitive, social, ethical, etc.), but the process of solving these or similar issues" (Bitinas, 2000, p. 153). Learning motivation helps to achieve goals, desires and needs. The following enable to seek self-realization, progress, responsibility, evaluation, and success. The idea of education being centred on the student – as a person with individual characteristics that need to be valued and capitalized within the educational act – is highlighted by the postmodern educational paradigm and by the constructivist approach to knowledge and education (Tăușan, 2012). The adaptation of the higher education institution, of the educational strategies, and of the entire instructive-educational process to the individual needs of the students, to their learning abilities and particularities, is one of the dimensions of the postmodern paradigm in education.

Students and university teachers are important people in a higher education institution, who are connected by processes of constant communication and cooperation in order to achieve common study goals, assurance of study quality. The teacher-student relationship is based on collaboration, where collaboration begins with communication. Collaborative learning enables everyone to succeed, helps to improve the emotional climate, tolerate others and positively value oneself. A. Rutkienė and I. Tandzegolskienė (2014) claim that "in recent years in the context of higher education, it has been quite strongly emphasized that learning is directed to the

student and holistic development of personality, i.e. refers to the independent, responsible, able to solve difficult problems and constantly learning student/graduate" (p. 48). Therefore, according to the "new learning paradigm in studies developed at higher education institution, an open dialogue between the teacher and the student must take place in the educational intensive-learning environment: consultations on time-consuming, curriculum of studies, methods of teaching and learning, reporting, etc., learning contracts are signed, levels of knowledge and skills of students are evaluated, etc. Learner-centred education is when a student is seen as a person with individual, differentiating characteristics that should be valued and capitalized to the maximum (an idea situated at the centre of the existential-humanistic paradigm, subsumed under the postmodern perspective). Educational relationship should be considered as an interaction where the teacher and student are engaged in a process of cognitive and emotional investment, and in which the teacher works alongside the students with the purpose of their development and the building of their status as students (Tăușan, 2016).

Material base is also an important factor for the study quality. The study of the Research and Higher Education Monitoring and Analysis centre (Galkutė, 2008) discusses the criteria for choosing a higher education institution, including the prestige of the higher education institution, the need for the study programme, prestige in society, possibilities to continue studies abroad, clear professional career opportunities, possibilities for self-expression, link between the study programme and personal interests, link between the study programme and favourite subjects. Nevertheless, the choice of a study programme in a higher education institution is influenced by good material conditions and the need in the labour market. According to M. Andrašūnienė, et al. (2005), one of the indicators of satisfaction with studies is the number of computerized workplaces, conditions for studies in libraries and reading rooms. The legislation in place that concerns the quality of education in Romania is aimed at optimizing the school environment in accordance with the current educational policies and with the necessity of bringing the Romanian educational system to the European standard, in order to be able to offer students an environment that is conducive to a holistic development and to the achievement of the highest results. The educational approach is now seen through a new perspective, influenced by the latest educational paradigms and the modern theories of pedagogy. The pedagogical potential of these tools can be seen in the effect that they have concerning the students' implication, mobilization and in the way that they facilitate the construction of the students' individual knowledge (Tudor, 2015).

Research methodology

Close collaboration while conducting scientific research helps to disseminate good practice, increase internationalization, and develop partnership with EU universities to improve the quality of studies. Research was carried out in collaboration with the academic community of Klaipėda University (hereinafter: KU) and *1 Decembrie 1918* University (hereinafter: 1DU) and only with these students who conduct pedagogical studies. The research sought to determine the attitude of students of pedagogical studies towards factors that influence the quality of studies.

Participants of the research. 553 students participated in the research: 23.7 % (131) from KU and 76.3 % (422) from 1DU. Of these, 71.8 % of bachelor's degree recipients and 28.2 % of master's degree recipients, 62.3 % of full-time students, 37.7% of part-time students. Subjects' age ranged from 18 to 58 years. They have been divided into 3 approximately equal groups, where 32.5 % of the subjects were 18 – 23 years old, 33.8 % – 24 – 34 years old, and 33.8 % – 35 – 58 years old. The absolute majority are women – 98.4 %, only 1.6 % (9 persons) – are men. Half of the students – 50.6 % work as teachers. 60.9 % pay for their studies from their earnings, 23.7 % study in state-funded student places, 13.2 % of respondents have their parents pay for their studies, and only 1.3 % took targeted loans, about 1% have their studies paid by a spouse or others.

Lithuania and Romania are in the same EU Higher Education Area for several years and implement common strategies. The aim of the development of internationality and partnership is to examine similarities and differences between the countries of the EU. The KU and 1DU research results show that the demographic data of students are very similar in some parameters: the ratio of bachelors and masters, average numbers of male-female, full-time and part-time students. The biggest difference is the number of students and participants of the research, there were 3 times less students from KU than 1DU (cf. 422 and 131). Differences can

be observed by comparing the number of those, who carry and do not carry out pedagogical work: 64 % of KU students carry out pedagogical work, and 46.2 % of 1DU; differences can be also seen in the distribution of study funding: 69.2 % of 1DU students pay for their studies from their earnings, while at the KU there are 34.4 % of them and 53.4% of studies are state funded, while at the 1DU there is only 14.5 %, almost the same number (14.9 % of students have their studies paid by their parents, while there are 7.6 % of Lithuanian parents who pay for their children's studies. Targeted loans account for only a small share of study funding, 2.3 % at KU and 0.9 % at 1DU.

It is possible to state that in the average demographic parameters no significant differences were found between the students of KU and 1DU; it is likely that the main differences are due to differences in indicators of population (*Population by Country*, 2020) and quality of life in Romania and Lithuania (cf. 65 and 81) (*Quality of life*, 2020).

Research organization and instrument. The research data were collected using the written survey method. The original questionnaire compiled by the authors was used for the survey. The language of the questionnaire is English. To confirm translations to the national languages, a back translation has been made: from English into Lithuanian and Romanian, and vice versa – from Romanian and Lithuanian into English. There were no distortions in the translation, it can be claimed that question wording is clear, unambiguous, and understandable. Accordingly, the verified questionnaire was developed in the google.forms environment and the link was sent to the personal e-mails of all KU and 1DU students of pedagogical studies. In the structure of the questionnaire, two block of questions can be distinguished: demographic data of subjects and factors that influence the quality of the study process. The demographic block is intended to collect the following data: *Country; Mode of studies; Cycle of studies; Study funding; Do you carry out pedagogical work; Your age; Gender.*

During the data processing stage, some of the initial selection data were transformed by combining them into groups with similar meaning. Due to different modes of studies at the universities of Romania and Klaipėda, during the research KU full-time session-based mode of studies was assigned to the part-time mode of studies. The nature of study funding was divided into 2 main groups: self-funded studies and state-funded studies.

Questions of the second block sought to reveal students' attitude towards factors that influence the quality of the study process. Factors consist of 11 statements that are presented on the *Likert* scale: *Structure of the study programme; Curriculum of the study subject; Teaching methods; Individual work tasks; Methods of reporting for individual work tasks; University teacher competences; Student motivation; Interpersonal relationships with university teachers; Interpersonal relationships with classmates; Material base (library, data bases, hardware, etc.); Provision of information about the organization of the study process.* Respondents were asked to rate each statement by selecting the answer option (*definitely yes, yes, I don't know, no, definitely not*).

The research sought to empirically and theoretically justify research methodology with separate aspects. L. Rupšienė, A. Rutkienė (2016) indicate that the quality of research is basically related to two parameters: reliability and validity. During the research, method of ensuring internal consistency has been applied by using the *Cronbach's Alpha* criterion. Since the value of the *factors that influence the quality of studies* scale's *Cronbach's Alpha* is 0.825, it can be assumed that the whole scale is a homogeneous and reliable tool for measurement. After checking whether reliability would increase by removing any of the variables, it was determined that the scale would change only by 0.005, thus, it can be claimed that the scale is a reliable tool for measurement.

Data analysis. The data obtained during the research were processed using the SPSS software (version 22). The following methods of statistical analysis were used to analyse data: descriptive statistics (frequencies, averages), *Mann-Whitney* and *Cronbach's Alpha* criteria.

Results of empirical research

The attitude of subjects towards factors that influence the quality of studies. It has been sought to determine how subjects assess factors that influence study quality. Mathematical means of the degree of agreement with statements are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. 1DU (n=422) and KU (n=131) subjects' attitude towards factors that influence study quality

No.	Factors that influence study quality	Degree of agreement of the 1DU subjects (%)									
		Definitely yes		Yes		I don't know		No		Definitely no	
		1DU	KU	1DU	KU	1DU	KU	1DU	KU	1DU	KU
1.	Structure of the study programme	38.9	37.4	52.6	54.2	4.0	6.1	3.3	2.3	1.2	0.0
2.	Curriculum of the study subject	36.0	42.7	59.2	52.7	2.4	2.3	1.9	2.3	0.5	0.0
3.	Teaching methods	44.3	45.0	49.5	43.5	2.1	6.1	3.8	5.3	0.0	0.0
4.	Individual work tasks	35.5	23.7	57.1	57.3	2.6	8.4	4.5	9.2	0.2	1.5
5.	Methods of reporting for individual work tasks	32.9	32.1	53.8	52.7	7.3	9.2	5.7	6.0	0.2	0.0
6.	University teacher competences	57.3	64.9	37.8	29.0	2.1	3.8	1.2	0.8	1.4	1.5
7.	Student motivation	42.2	55.7	45.0	35.1	7.8	5.3	4.3	3.8	0.7	
8.	Interpersonal relationships with university teachers	27.7	54.2	48.1	33.6	14.0	6.9	7.3	4.6	2.8	0.8
9.	Interpersonal relationships with classmates	24.9	36.6	55.9	44.3	9.5	12.2	7.8	3.8	1.9	3.1
10.	Material base (library, data bases, hardware, etc.)	42.2	35.9	47.6	46.6	7.6	10.7	2.1	4.6	0.5	2.3
11.	Provision of information about the organization of the study process	39.6	34.4	50.9	51.1	6.9	9.2	2.1	4.6	0.5	0.8

It can be seen in the table that KU subjects are more likely to agree and believe that the university teacher competences (64.9%) and their interpersonal relationship with one (54.2%) are of great importance; subjects agree and believe that individual work tasks (57.3%) and the structure of the study programme (54.2%) are important. Disagreement was expressed by the subjects mainly concerning the factors of individual work tasks (9.2%) and teaching methods (5.3%). Complete disagreement was related to the factors of material base (2.3%) and interpersonal relationships with classmates (3.1%). Some of the subjects indicated that they do not know the answer: most of respondents do not know whether the factors of the interpersonal relationships with classmates (12.2%) and material base (10.7%) influences the quality of studies.

1DU subjects fully agree with the factors of the university teacher competences (57.3%) and teaching methods (44.3%). Agree with the factors of the curriculum of the study subject (59.2%) and individual work tasks (57.1%). Do not agree and completely disagree with factors of the interpersonal relationships with university teachers (7.3% and 2.8%) and classmates (7.8% and 1.9%); the subjects indicated that they are also unaware of the influence of the mentioned factors (14.0 % and 9.5%) (Table 2).

The comparison of attitudes of the KU and 1DU subjects reveal that the factor of teacher competences is strongly supported and supported by the absolute majority of respondents in two groups (KU – 93.9%; 1DU – 95.1%). Almost a fifth of 1DU students (19.2%) and KU students (19.1%) strongly disagree, disagree, and do not know whether the factor of the interpersonal relationships with classmates influences the quality of studies. The results of the research showed that all the mentioned factors are generally supported by the absolute majority of respondents.

It can be stated that all factors distinguished during theoretical analysis were confirmed during empirical research as influencing the quality of studies. It was also identified which of the factors according to students are most important. However, in order for the research results to provide specific knowledge for the academic communities of universities, statistically significant differences between factor selection and demographic

data of students were examined. In order to achieve study quality in universities, it was determined which factors are important for students, according to their demographic parameters.

The distribution of subjects of both universities in relation to the cycles of study was fairly even (Figure 1).

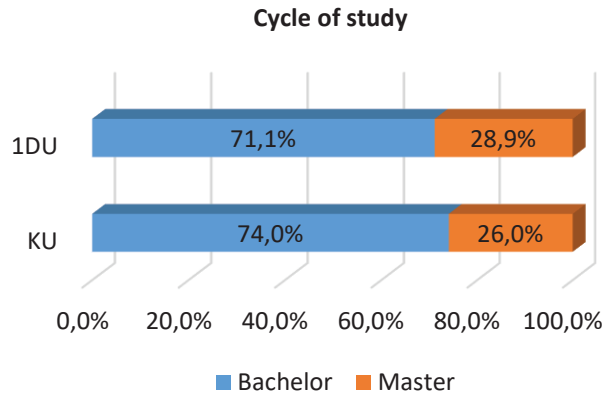

Figure 1. Distribution of KU and 1DU students in relation to the cycles of study

74.0% of KU and 71.1% of 1DU Bachelor students and 26.0% of KU and 28.9% of 1DU Master students participated in the research.

Using the *Mann-Whitney* criterion, statistically significant differences were found between the cycle of study and the five factors. Bachelor studies: individual work tasks, student motivation, interpersonal relationships with university teachers, interpersonal relationships with classmates, provision of information about the organization of the study process. Only interpersonal relationships with university teachers are relevant in Master studies (Table 3).

Table 2. Statistically significant relationships between the cycle of study and factors (*Mann-Whitney* criterion)

Factors	Cycle of study	Mean Rank (Mdn)	Mann-Whitney U	Z-Score definition	P-value definition
Individual work tasks	Bachelor	KU 167.23 1DU 209.27	11468.00	-3.530	0.000
Student motivation		KU 221.48 1DU 191.73	12369.50	-2.430	0.015
Interpersonal relationships with university teachers		KU 244.58 1DU 184.26	10128.50	-4.816	0.000
Interpersonal relationships with classmates		KU 218.28 1DU 192.77	12680.00	-2.096	0.036
Provision of information about the organization of the study process		KU 180.81 1DU 204.88	12786.00	-2.001	0.045
Interpersonal relationships with university teachers	Master	KU 95.50 1DU 73.76	1496.00	-2.701	0.007

The data presented in Table 3 show that Bachelor students at 1DU more than those at KU agree that the following factors are important for the quality of studies: individual work tasks (Mdn 209.27) and provision of information about the organization of the study process (Mdn 204.88). KU subjects agree more that student motivation (Mdn 221.48), interpersonal relationships with university teachers (Mdn 244.58) and interpersonal relationships with classmates (Mdn 218.28) are significant for the quality of studies. Master

students at KU support the factor of interpersonal relationships with university teachers (Mdn 244.58) more than those at 1DU.

The distribution of subjects in relation to the mode of studies was as follows: 1DU full-time students – 59% and KU – 21.4%; part-time students at KU – 78.6% and 41.0% – at 1DU (Figure 2).

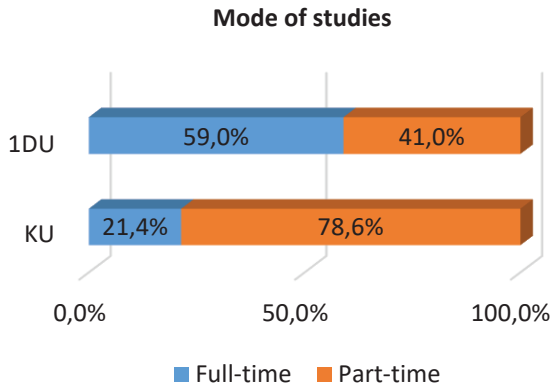

Figure 2. Distribution of KU and 1DU students in relation to the mode of studies

Statistically significant differences were found between the mode of studies and four factors. The following factors are important for full-time students: methods of reporting for individual work tasks and interpersonal relationships with university teachers. For part-time students: individual work tasks, student motivation, and interpersonal relationships with university teachers.

Table 3. Statistically significant relationships between the mode of studies and factors (*Mann-Whitney* criterion)

Factors	Mode of studies	Mean Rank (Mdn)	Mann-Whitney U	Z-Score definition	P-value definition
Methods of reporting for individual work tasks	Full-time	KU 112.79 1DU 141.95	2752.00	-2.022	0.043
Interpersonal relationships with university teachers		KU 178.41 1DU 134.57	2382.50	-2.961	0.003
Individual work tasks	Part-time	KU 121.03 1DU 148.90	7110.50	-3.190	0.001
Student motivation		KU 149.94 1DU 131.69	7731.50	-2.023	0.043
Interpersonal relationships with university teachers		KU 162.37 1DU 124.29	6451.0	-4.107	0.000

Table 4 shows that factor of methods of reporting for individual work tasks is more important for 1DU full-time students (Mdn 141.95), while for KU students (Mdn 178.41) – interpersonal relationships with university teachers. Individual work tasks are important for 1DU part-time students (Mdn 148.90), while student motivation (Mdn 149.94) and interpersonal relationships with university teachers (Mdn 162.37) for KU students.

As mentioned in the methodology, the nature of study funding was divided into 2 main groups: self-funded studies and state-funded studies. The data were distributed as follows: self-funded studies at 1DU – 85.55%, at KU – 45.3%; state-funded studies at KU – 54.7% and at 1DU – 14.5% (Figure 3).

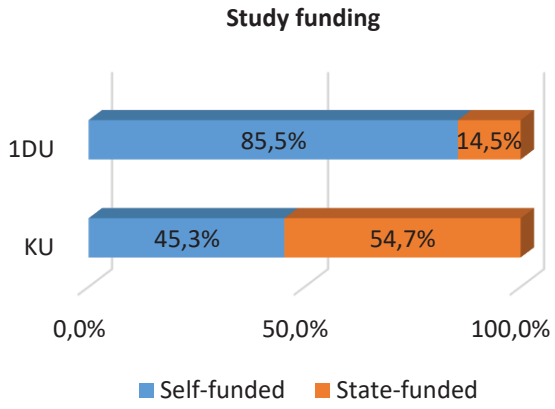

Figure 3. Distribution of KU and 1DU students in relation to study funding

Statistically significant differences were found between factors that influence the quality of studies and nature of study funding. Using the *Mann-Whitney* criterion, it was determined that 1DU students who pay for their studies agree more that the following factors are important for the quality of studies: individual work tasks (Mdn 214.61), material base (Mdn 214.31), and provision of information about the organization of the study process (Mdn 213.21). KU students agree more that interpersonal relationships with university teachers are important for the quality of studies (Mdn 243.23).

Table 4. Statistically significant relationships between study funding and factors (*Mann-Whitney* criterion)

Factors	Study funding	Mean Rank (Mdn)	Mann-Whitney U	Z-Score definition	P-value definition
Individual work tasks	Self-funded studies	KU 174.28 1DU 214.61	8397.0	-2.675	0.007
Material base		KU 176.15 1DU 214.31	8505.50	-2.458	0.014
Provision of information about the organization of the study process		KU 182.96 1DU 213.21	8900.50	-1.969	0.049
Interpersonal relationships with university teachers		KU 243.23 1DU 203.47	8425.50	-2.493	0.013
Interpersonal relationships with university teachers	State-funded studies	KU 77.55 1DU 57.36	1326.50	-4.064	0.000
Interpersonal relationships with classmates		KU 73.53 1DU 57.36	1608.00	-2.710	0.007

KU students, whose studies are state-funded agree more that interpersonal relationships with university teachers (Mdn 77.55) and interpersonal relationships with classmates (Mdn 73.53) are important for the quality of studies.

Distribution of subjects, who carry and do not carry out pedagogical work is as follows: those, who carry out pedagogical work: KU – 64.9 % and 1DU – 46.2%; those, who do not carry out pedagogical work: 1DU – 53.8% and KU – 35.1% (Figure 4).

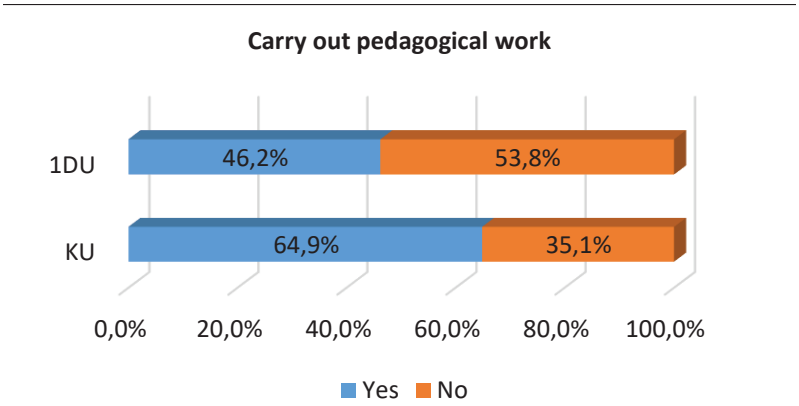

Figure 4. Distribution of KU and 1DU students according to whether they carry out pedagogical work

The following statistically significant differences were found between factors and attitudes of students who carry and do not carry out pedagogical work. Students, who carry out pedagogical work are more likely to support the following factors: 1DU students – individual work tasks (Mdn 147.30) and material base (Mdn 150.57); KU students are more supportive of student motivation (Mdn 156.42) and interpersonal relationships with university teachers (Mdn 157.27).

Table 5. Statistically significant relationships between students' carry or do not carry out pedagogical work and factors (*Mann-Whitney* criterion)

Factors	Carry or do not carry out pedagogical work	Mean Rank (Mdn)	Mann-Whitney U	Z-Score definition	P-value definition
Individual work tasks	Carry out	KU 124.89 1DU 147.30	6961.00	-2.409	0.016
Student motivation		KU 156.42 1DU 133.56	6934.00	-2.391	0.017
Interpersonal relationships with university teachers		KU 157.27 1DU 133.19	6862.00	-2.487	0.013
Material base		117.41 150.57	6324.50	-3.463	0.001
Curriculum of the study subject	Do not carry out	KU 156.21 1DU 133.11	2337.50	-2.140	0.032
Individual work tasks		110.34 142.40	3994.50	-2.853	0.004
Interpersonal relationships with university teachers		185.32 127.21	2998.50	-4.827	0.000

Students who do not carry out pedagogical work are more like to agree with the following factors: KU – interpersonal relationships with university teachers (Mdn 185.32) and curriculum of the study subject (Mdn156.21), while 1DU – factor of the individual work tasks (Mdn 142.40).

It has been mentioned in the research methodology that in order to conduct statistical calculations, subjects were divided into 3 approximately equal groups in relation to age indicators, where 32.5 % of subjects were 18 – 23 years old, 33.8 % – 24 – 34 years old, and 33.8 % – 35 – 58 years old. Statistically significant differences between students' age and selected factors are presented in Table 7.

Table 6. Statistically significant relationships between students' age and factors (*Mann-Whitney* criterion)

Factors	Age groups	Mean Rank (Mdn)	Mann-Whitney U	Z-Score definition	P-value definition
University teacher competences	18-23	KU 109.23 1DU 90.35	1915.0	-2.006	0.045
Interpersonal relationships with university teachers		KU 127.97 1DU 86.61	13424.50	-4.134	0.000
Interpersonal relationships with classmates		KU 117.15 1DU 88.77	1669.50	-2.910	0.004
Individual work tasks	24-34	KU 70.09 1DU 100.07	2266.50	-3.891	0.000
Interpersonal relationships with university teachers		KU 110.13 1DU 84.05	2411.00	-3.218	0.001
Material base		KU 78.20 1DU 96.82	2688.50	-2.369	0.018
Structure of the study programme	35-58	KU 80.50 1DU 97.38	2688.00	-2.108	0.035

The table shows that the youngest group of respondents are more likely to agree with the following factors: university teacher competences (Mdn 109.23), interpersonal relationships with university teachers (Mdn 127.97), interpersonal relationships with classmates (Mdn 117.15), and all of these factors are more strongly supported by the KU subjects. Middle-aged respondents of the 1DU, compared to those of the KU, are more supportive of factors of individual work tasks (Mdn 100.07) and material base (Mdn96.82), while KU students are more supportive of interpersonal relationships with university teachers (Mdn 110.13). The statistically significant difference in the oldest group was found with only one factor – structure of the study programme, which is more supported by 1DU subjects (Mdn 97.38).

Conclusions

1. Theoretical analysis of factors that influence the quality of the study process revealed that the main factors are: *curriculum of the study subject*, which should concern the material needed to acquire 21st century skills, and ensure that students acquire the subject-specific and general competences provided in the study programme; *teaching methods* that should link the curriculum and goals of education, as well as flexibly, creatively model the process of studies, motivate to learn, initiate changes; *methods of reporting for individual work tasks*, where the unique role is played by: nature of these tasks; connections with other personal activities; university teacher motivation; organization of feedback; organization of self-assessment; reflection on activity, etc.; *university teacher competences*, which include aspects, such as the ability to link various learning contexts and disciplines, anticipate perspectives for critical reflection and learning from the past, anticipation and realization of various present and future alternatives; implementation of changes in the rapidly changing and multifaceted world; *student motivation*, which is a very important factor for the quality of studies and a factor that enables students to continue learning, stay in learning and improve in it, seek self-realization, progress, responsibility, evaluation, and success; *teacher-student relationships* that are important in enabling everyone to succeed, help to improve the emotional climate, tolerate others and positively assess oneself; *material base*, which determines not only the quality of studies, but also the choice of a particular higher education institution, because material base is related to the prestige of the higher education institution, to the need for the study programme, prestige in society, an opportunity to continue studies abroad, clear professional career opportunities, possibilities for self-expression, connection between the study programme and personal interests, etc.

2. It is possible to claim that all factors distinguished during theoretical analysis were confirmed during empirical research as influencing the quality of studies. The absolute majority of students in the examined universities completely agree and agree with the following factors. Students of pedagogical studies at both universities mainly support the factors of *University teacher competences* and *Curriculum of the study subject*. Factor that was agreed to be the least influential for the quality of studies was *Interpersonal relationships with classmates*. The results of the research revealed that all distinguished factors are generally supported by the absolute majority of the respondents.

KU subjects agree and believe that *university teacher competences* and *interpersonal relationships with one* are most important; agree and believe that *individual work tasks* and the *structure of the study programme* are important. Disagreement was expressed by respondents mainly about the factors of *individual work tasks* and *teaching methods*. Factors of *material base* and *interpersonal relationships with classmates* were not agreed with at all.

1DU subjects fully agree mainly with the factors of *university teacher competences* and *teaching methods*. Factors of *curriculum of the study subject* and *individual work tasks* were supported. Factors of *interpersonal relationships with university teacher* and *interpersonal relationships with classmates* were disagreed and strongly disagreed with; exactly these factors that the subjects indicated were unaware of.

In pursuit of the quality of studies in universities, it has been determined which factors are more important to students according to their demographic parameters. Statistically significant differences between the selection of factors and demographic data of students were examined. In general, it can be claimed that in relation to the cycle of studies, relationships with university teachers and classmates, organization of studies, and individual work tasks are important for Bachelor students, while for Master students only interpersonal relationships with university teachers are important. In relation to the mode of studies, the relationships with university teachers are important for all students, the methods of reporting for individual work tasks are also important for full-time students, and motivation and individual work tasks – for part-time students. According to the funding of studies, individual work tasks, material base, and information about the study process are important for those, who pay for their studies; interpersonal relationships with classmates – for students, whose studies are state-funded; and relationships with university teachers – for both groups. Students who carry out pedagogical work emphasize the material base, student motivation; those, who do not carry out pedagogical work – curriculum of the study subject; both groups place emphasis on the individual work tasks and relationships with university teachers. In regards of the age groups of students, the most important for the youngest students are university teacher competences and relationships with university teachers and classmates; for the middle-aged group – individual work tasks, material base, and also relationships with university teachers; for the oldest respondents the structure of the study programme is important. Summarizing the research results, it should be noted that the study of the attitude of Klaipėda University and *1 Decembrie 1918* University pedagogical students to the most important factors that affect the quality of the study process revealed that the quality of the study process was assessed according to researches selected criteria or created instruments. Therefore, the conclusions of this research allow to state that the attitude of pedagogical students to the most important factors that affect the quality of the study process is relevant and requires continuity of these studies, involving students of other fields of study as participants in the study process.

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STUDIJŲ PROCESO KOKYBĘ LEMIANTYS VEIKSNIAI: KLAIPĖDOS UNIVERSITETO IR *1 DECEMBRIE 1918* UNIVERSITETO PEDAGOGINIŲ STUDIJŲ STUDENTŲ POŽIŪRIS

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje analizuojami įtaką studijų proceso kokybei darantys veiksniai. Studijų kokybė ir jos užtikrinimas yra prioritetinis uždavinys Europos aukštojo mokslo erdvėje. Pagrindinės Bolonijos proceso nuostatos orientuotos į aukštojo mokslo paradigmos kaitą. Berlyno komunikate (2003) pažymimas poreikis užtikrinti kokybę instituciniu, nacionaliniu ir Europos lygiu, tobulinti bendrus kokybės užtikrinimo kriterijus ir metodologijas. Bergeno komunikate (2005) pabrėžta mokslinių tyrimų reikšmė, siekiant gerinti studijas, be to, pritarta Europos aukštojo mokslo erdvės kvalifikacijų sistemai, kuri pagrįsta mokymosi pasiekimais. Juos apibrėžia Dublino aprašai (2005), kur nusakytas kiekvienai studijų pakopai būtinas supratimas ir žinios, jų taikymas, aptarti būtini sprendimų priėmimo, bendravimo ir mokymosi mokytis gebėjimai (2014–2020 m. ES fondų investicijų į mokymo programas tinkamumo ir suderinamumo atvejo studija, 2018). Leuveno komunikate (2009) akcentuotos į studento poreikius orientuotos studijos, kurios prioritetas išlieka ir Europos aukštojo mokslo erdvės kokybės užtikrinimo nuostatos ir gairės (2015).

J. Huisman'as ir kt. (2015) nurodė, kad aukštojo mokslo studijų kokybės kultūrai, viena vertus, būdingas kultūrinis / psichologinis elementas, kita vertus, struktūrinis / valdymo elementas. Taigi su studijų kokybe susijusių veiksnių yra labai daug. Šiame straipsnyje analizuojamas Klaipėdos universiteto (Lietuva) ir *1 Decembrie 1918* universiteto (Alba Iulia, Rumunija) pedagoginių studijų studentų požiūris į svarbius studijų kokybės veiksnius. *Kokybės ir jos užtikrinimo* apibrėžimas įvairiose šalyse ir institucijose skiriasi. Tyrime ši sąvoka vartojama plačiąja prasme, apimant visą aukštosios mokyklos veiklą, grindžiamą pačių institucijų strateginiais tikslais, kurie atitiktų jų vidinę kokybės kultūrą, kartu ir išorinius kokybės reikalavimus. Be to, atsižvelgiama į tokius kokybei reikšmingus, pasak L. Adamson'o, M. Becerro ir kt. (2010), veiksnius, kaip vertinimo kokybė, studentų naujų žinių įsisąmoninimas, akademinės programos, mokymas ir mokymasis, studentų patirtis, programų rengimas.

Straipsnyje analizuojamas pedagoginių studijų studentų požiūris į studijų kokybę lemiančius veiksnius. Tyrime dalyvavo Lietuvos ir Rumunijos regioninių universitetų (Klaipėdos universiteto ir *1 Decembrie 1918* universiteto) studentai – 553 asmenys, studijuojantys įvairiomis formomis bakalauro ir magistrantūros studijų pakopose. Tyrimas atliktas siekiant didinti tarptautiškumą ir puoselėti partnerystę su ES universitetais. Glaudus bendradarbiavimas atliekant mokslinius tyrimus padeda skleisti gerąją patirtį, siekiant gerinti studijų kokybę. Šiuo tarptautiniu tyrimu teoriškai ir empiriškai grindžiama tyrimo metodologija, statistiniais metodais nustatyti svarbiausi veiksniai, nuo kurių priklauso studijų proceso kokybė. Ištirta, kaip nuo studijų vertinimo, mokymosi motyvacijos, amžiaus ir kitų parametrų priklauso studentų požiūris į konkrečius studijų proceso kokybės veiksnius. Tyrimo rezultatų sklaida padės universitetų akademinei bendruomenei atlikti panašaus pobūdžio tyrimus ir jų pagrindu tobulinti studijų kokybę.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *studijų procesas, kokybė, Klaipėdos universitetas, 1 Decembrie 1918 universitetas, studentų požiūris.*

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