

# SOME EDUCATION QUALITY MANAGEMENT SKETCHES

**Vincentas Lamanuskas**  
University of Šiauliai, Lithuania  
E-mail: v.lamanuskas@ef.su.lt

It wouldn't be right to say that quality management questions in Lithuania are perfectly known, analysed and there's nothing to do in this sphere. On the contrary, this sphere remains very urgent, on the other hand, rather complicated. Comparing with the other countries, having a big and long-term experience in the quality management sphere, Lithuania is an undoubted novice. This was conditioned by historical, political and other circumstances. As it is known, in 1967 Soviet Union introduced State quality mark. It is natural, that it was a must to use it in occupied Lithuania as well. The Soviet government tried to raise social production effectiveness, so this sign was used to mark a wide range of high quality consumer goods. It is worth noticing, that this mark was often used as a simple fiction, i.e., poor quality goods were marked by this sign too. This practice was very distinct in 1970-1990. After re-establishing independence in Lithuania, quality management questions are solved referring to international practice, orienting to international quality standards. However, this is not an easy task. Fictitious quality conception, having formed in society's consciousness, remains one of the main obstacles in this sphere. The mentioned soviet quality mark does not enter the list of banned soviet symbols (such a list is confirmed and valid in Lithuania), therefore, one can still find such mark on some goods imported from Russia. This context is important in this sense, that in certain society layers a cautious and ambiguous attitude still remains to any of the quality questions.

Speaking about education system, quality problematic is especially important. Here, the purpose is not raised to exhaustively discuss education quality management, but it is sought to make some of the most urgent quality management questions in the higher education sphere more distinct. In the environment of changeable higher education, labour market changes, increasing organisation and society requirements in higher education institutions, quality management questions are becoming more relevant and this is the world tendency. Growing competition, learners' demands and their expectations encourage quality seeking. Both the decreasing number of students, and government critics concerning higher education and study quality, determine this in Lithuania. Higher education and study quality is not an abstract thing and depends on very concrete things – higher school activity management level, modern study programmes, the latest news professionally conveying lecturers, academic society clear motivation system and other. On the other hand, binary higher education system functions in Lithuania and this means, that such system contains colleges (non university higher schools) and universities. It is natural that a rather sharp competition takes place among them. It is necessary to draw one's attention to the fact, that quality management questions are complicated and complex. Analysing various information, and also evaluating public discourse it is seen, that over the last 10-15 years, in Lithuanian higher education sector attention has been focused on study quality. It is obvious, that studies is one of the main university and college activity processes. Study quality improvement, in principle, is not possible without making scientific activity more effective. Studies inevitably have to be grounded on science, the newest science

achievements. However, some main contradictions lie here and it is difficult to solve them. It does not mean that a perfect and perspective scientist is a good lecturer as well, and vice versa. In this respect, scientific activity influence on study quality is conditional. On the other hand, the requirements for the learners are apparently too low. Studies and work activity have become a norm in recent years not only in the first, but also in the second stage studies. Students do not want to devote too much attention to studies, often studies become only some kind of attachment to the main activity. This cannot be justified only by an economic situation. Higher schools, not wanting to lose students, have put up with such a phenomenon. Also, it has to be mentioned, that still low university teachers' salary has an influence on education and study quality. Various created staff motivation systems are usually of a declarative character and do not initiate any necessary changes. No doubt, that a number of other factors exist, however, already the mentioned ones show, that quality management questions cannot be solved isolated. Quality management complexity requires systemic attitude.

Practically up to 2009, quality management questions in Lithuanian higher schools were solved rather fragmentally. In 1995 Study quality evaluation centre was established in Lithuania, the purpose of which is to encourage higher schools to make the study quality better, to help improve the studies, inviting foreign and Lithuanian experts for the evaluation and other. Though the international study programme expert evaluations have been running for a long time already, however, only in 2009, after having changed LR Education and study law, the requirement appeared for the higher schools to implement quality management systems. It was a strong encouraging factor. Lithuanian colleges were especially concerned with the implementation of QMS. As it is known, in 2000 in the higher school basis, the first non university schools – colleges, have been started to be established in Lithuania. It is noticed, that up to now, higher non university schools still feel a lower status, comparing them with universities, and in order to strengthen their position in the market, they search for mechanisms, how to improve their activity, how to make the study quality and image better in general. It has to be noted, that quality management systems (QMS) in Lithuanian colleges have been started to implement without having a clear conception and basically keeping up with the political requirements. On the other hand, QMS are tried to be shown as an advantage over the colleges competing both with universities and among each other. So far, this process has been running inconsistently, the goals of implementing such systems and the targets are not clear.

In Lithuania, according to the data of 2013, totally have been registered 1800 study programmes ([https://www.smm.lt/uploads/lawacts/docs/669\\_0ecba67bf799b7290bac196e531ae615.pdf](https://www.smm.lt/uploads/lawacts/docs/669_0ecba67bf799b7290bac196e531ae615.pdf)).

Today, a young man can choose from plenty of various study programmes; however, unfortunately, there are a lot of misguided students who are willing to study only in a higher school. Various researches show, that the students often realise the goals and the main differences of university and non university studies too little. A part of them, having chosen colleges, very often regard them as courses for preparation to study at universities. Lithuania has to make a decision, what study programmes have to be realised at universities and what - at colleges. It is obvious, that a big part of study programmes are very similar, though implemented in different type of higher schools. The main idea is forgotten, that college study programmes are mostly oriented to practical and university ones - to academic activity.

Also, it would be good to emphasise, that economic higher school activity context is important too. It is obvious, that the investments to education and study quality in universities and colleges require a lot of expenses. Quality does not appear in itself, declarative quality does not mean anything. It is paradoxical, that the results of such investments become distinct only after a certain time, in other words, they reach the market rather late. Being the competition strong and financial recourses limited, such situation requires not only nonstandard higher school decisions, but a much more rational state attitude. It is also understandable, that only financial leverages do not change the situation. Strong institutional inertia still remains in

6

Lithuania, which, as it is mentioned at the beginning of the article, occurs from historical experience. Unwillingness to change, an intention to solve problems temporarily, declaratively, still remains rather strong. Corporate conflicts are not useful for school administration either. Very often, the matters requiring hasty decisions remain isolated inside the institutions, believing only in self-changes.

Thus, it is hopeful, that regardless of all the existing obstacles and contradictions, quality management questions will be solved more effectively in Lithuania. From the formal point of view, quality management system implementation shows, that all organisation - every member of it - contributes to constant changes and activity improvement. On the other hand, quality management is not only internal higher school competence thing. A responsible higher school has also to align to national and international quality management standards, to seek its carried out activity to satisfy the universal quality management standards. Both universities and colleges, as service providers, should orientate to international quality standards in their activity and to really take a responsibility to satisfy their consumers' demands and to constantly improve service supply. There can be a lot of discussions about various present and future challenges, market demands and so on. However, no instruments will be effective, no procedures will work, if the thinking is not changed. This is a vitally important question for Lithuanian university and college societies.

Received: *December 08, 2014*

Accepted: *December 22, 2014*

---

**Vincentas Lamanauskas**

PhD., (HP), Professor, Siauliai University, Natural Science Education Research Centre, 25-119 P. Višinskio Street, LT- 76351, Siauliai, Lithuania.

E-mail: [lamanauskas@lamanauskas.puslapiai.lt](mailto:lamanauskas@lamanauskas.puslapiai.lt)

Website: <http://www.lamanauskas.puslapiai.lt>

<http://projektas.academia.edu/VincentasLamanauskas>

---