



Raising professional qualification of academic staff: the key issue nowadays in Latvia

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The purpose of the contribution

- The purpose of the contribution is to analyse the Latvian context of challenges for raising professional qualification of educators and trainers and describe the current opportunities and new challenges of raising professional qualification of academic staff in Latvia.

Some major issues requiring solution

The analysis of the current situation identifies the following problems in the qualification of academic staff in higher education:

- Ageing of academic staff and its unsatisfactory activity in the improvement of qualification;
- Lack of highly qualified new generation of educators especially Doctor's degree holders and correspondence to qualification demands in the country;
- Need for unified system of higher education teachers and trainers' continuing education;
- Need for training opportunities for assessors of qualification in the higher education area;
- Need for unified validation system of professional qualification in lifelong learning context on national level.

Age structure of educators in Latvia's higher (tertiary) education institutions (2006-2010)

Age	in 2006-2007	in 2007-2008	in 2008-2009	in 2009-2010
< 30 years	8 % (n=341)	11 % (n=545)	11 % (n=595)	11 % (n=429)
30-39 years	20 % (n=899)	20 % (n=973)	20 % (n=1035)	20 % (n=780)
40-49 years	21 % (n=938)	20 % (n=953)	19 % (n=999)	20 % (n=772)
50-59 years	25 % (n=1134)	23 % (n=1124)	23 % (n=1171)	23 % (n=899)
≥ 60 years	26 % (n=1176)	26 % (n=1281)	27 % (n=1417)	26 % (n=977)
Total:	100% (n=4488)	100% (n=4876)	100% (n=5217)	100% (n=3857)

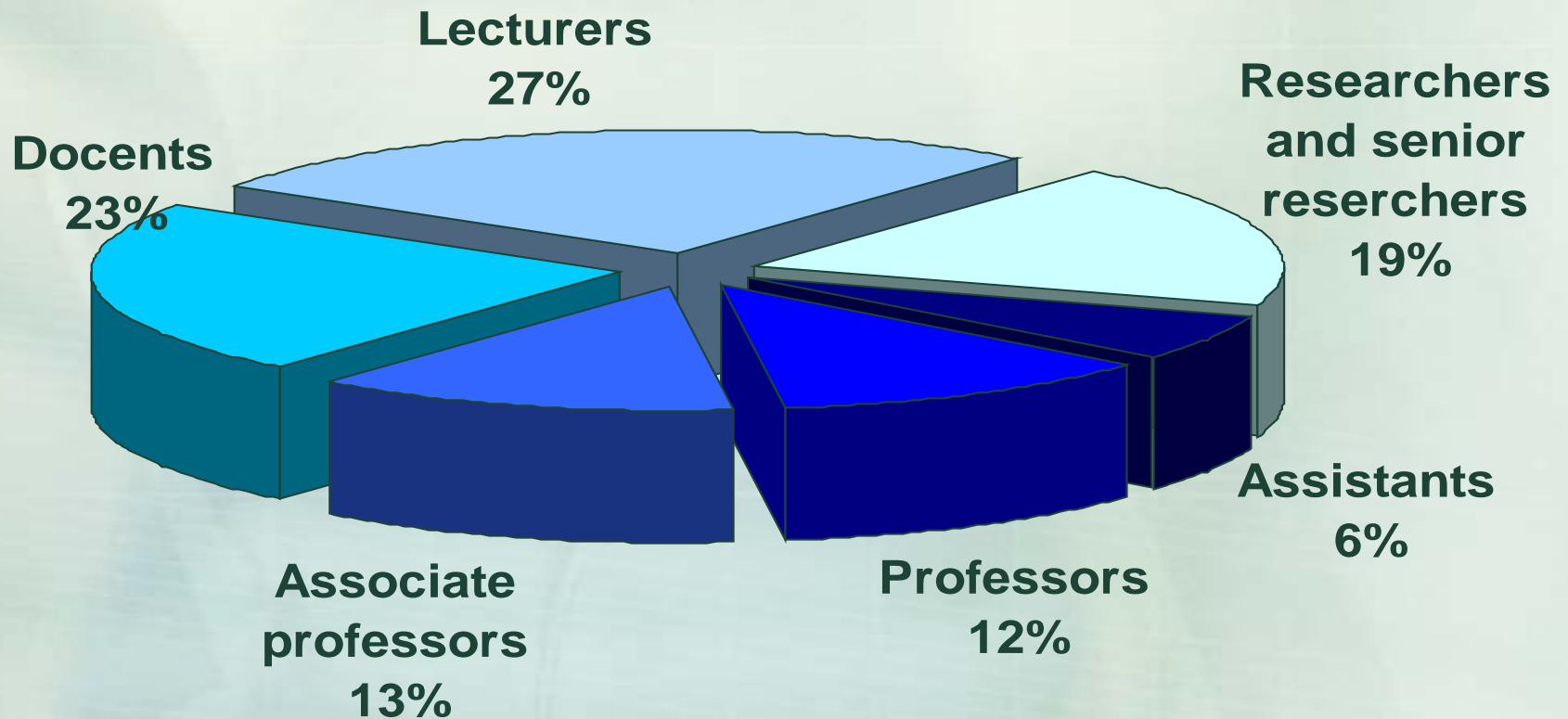
Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2006-2010

Number of doctoral students and awarded Doctor's degrees in Latvia (2006-2010)

Analysis categories	in 2006-2007	in 2007-2008	in 2008-2009	in 2009-2010
Number of doctoral students	1 797	1 982	2 025	2 152
Percentage from the total number of students	1.4 %	1.6 %	1.6 %	1.9 %
Number of awarded Doctor's degrees	106	146	139	174
Percentage from the total number of awarded degrees	0.4 %	0.5 %	0.6 %	0.7 %

Source: Ministry of Education and Science, 2006-2010

The structure of the full-time academic staff in Latvia (2009-2010)





Prior learning assessment for the qualification of academic staff of higher education

Assessing the qualification of academic staff and its correspondence to the academic position in Latvia's higher education institutions usually take into account the following criteria:

- initial education and the qualification obtained, its correspondence to the academic position;
- awarded Master's and Doctor's degrees (Master's and doctoral studies);
- improved qualification and competences during further education (continuing education programmes, courses, etc.);
- academic and practical work experience, its correspondence to the academic position and field of science, results obtained at workplace;
- recommendations from the previous place of employment or educational institution in which the applicant has raised the qualification (if applies for a definite position after the acquisition of education or is from other education institution);
- scientific research results (publications) as well as methodological materials (textbooks, teaching aids, programmes, curricula, syllabi, etc.).

Current opportunities of raising professional qualifications of educators of higher education

The opportunities of raising professional qualification of academic staff in Latvia has been analysed in the following aspects:

- opportunities of formal continuing education programmes for the professional development of Latvia's academic staff;
- opportunities of academic staff participating as teacher trainers and multipliers in the ESF projects;
- opportunities of informal workplace learning during the implementation of the interuniversity Master's programme "Educational Treatment of Diversity" .



Opportunities of formal continuing education programmes for the professional development of academic staff in Latvia

- The development of pedagogical research skills (32 hours);
- The development and enhancement of thinking skills during the study process (32 hours);
- Didactics of higher education institutions: contemporary theory and practice (160 hours);
- Professional competence of academic staff for innovations in the European higher education space (160 hours);
- The basis of pedagogical education of university academic staff: Didactics of higher education institutions (160 hours);
- Pedagogical improvement of university academic staff: Innovations in the system of higher education: Education management (160 hours).



Opportunities of academic staff participating as teacher trainers and multipliers in the ESF supported projects

In 2010 educators of higher education institutions of Latvia have actively participated in designing of professional development programmes and implementation by participating in several ESF projects:

- Competence promotion of the mainstream subject teachers involved in vocational education (2010-2012);
- Innovative and practice-based teachers' education and professional development of mentors (2010-2013);
- Promotion of professional competence of the Latvian language, literature and bilingual education teachers (2010-2011).

Opportunities of informal workplace learning of academic staff

Opportunities of learning at workplace, learning by teaching and collaboration with students and colleagues have been analysed as a case study during the implementation of the interuniversity Master's programme "Educational Treatment of Diversity" (2008-2010).

The main focus of the interuniversity Master's programme "Educational Treatment of Diversity" as an informal education for the professional development of university staff at workplace is to help experienced academic staff to understand and implement the shift of paradigms in higher education, to join European common education space and implement the Bologna process in the classroom (Gento, 2007).



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Real learning and teaching environment

lectures seminars



workshops

individual and group's consultations

discussions



conferences

presentations



formal and informal communication

verbal and non-verbal communication, etc.

Virtual learning and teaching environment

E-materials

Forums

Chat rooms

Teleconferences



Chat room about organizational questions

E-mail

Phone

E-phone (Skype)

News forum

Social forum

Forum about study process

Forum about each module

Chat room about each module

Forum about Educational Treatment of Diversity

Forum about problems in use of computers, e-platform and other IT

Usage of current opportunities of raising professional qualification of academic staff in Latvia

Forms of continuing education	In 2006 (n=94)	In 2009 (n=36)	In 2010 (n=46)
Formal continuing education programme for the professional development of academic staff	20% (n=19)	25% (n=9)	11% (n=5)
Participating in international projects, conferences, academic staff mobility programmes, etc.	14% (n=13)	44% (n=16)	35% (n=16)
Learning at workplace, learning by teaching and collaboration with students and colleagues	4% (n=4)	19% (n=7)	17% (n=8)
No answer	66% (n=62)	31% (n=11)	50% (n=23)



New challenge 1

Continuing education of academic staff for their professional development can be improved, systematised and made available in the following way:

- Applying the approach of conceptual change to staff development (Ho, Watkins, Kelly, 2001), viewing communication from the transformative perspective, so not only students but also teachers are transformed as learners by means of their communicative activities (Pea, 1994); providing the experience of being a transnational teacher and working in a culture very different to one's own forces reflection which can lead to 'perspective transformation' (Smith, 2009);
- Creating an accessible high quality learning environment which is innovative, challenging and enterprising (Fleming et al., 2004); using the reflective processes, allowing to shape practice in an informed fashion within the workplace settings of the staff (Kahn et al., 2008); reflecting on tasks, analysing activities and promoting the establishment of respective competences in a systematic manner (Lattke, Nuissl, 2008).

New challenge 2

Academic staff participating as teacher trainers and multipliers in the ESF supported projects widen opportunities of non-formal and informal learning for the professional development of academic staff such as learning for teaching, learning by teaching, learning from experience. Jody Daniel Skinner emphasizes that learning by teaching is not an exclusively modern didactic concept because Seneca wrote more than 2 000 years ago that we are learning if we teach (in Latin *docendo discimus*: "by teaching we are learning" or "we learn by teaching"), at the end of the 20th century Jean-Pol Martin did considerable research on a teaching technique he had developed and named *Lernen durch Lehren* ("learning through teaching"). (Skinner, 1994) Originally it was students' learning by teaching based on the assumption that students are particularly well motivated, if they are regularly allowed to take on teaching assignments thus complementing their traditional student's role. Then Martin's work has been well received in teacher training as teachers' learning by teaching. In our case student teachers, experienced teachers and academic staff as teacher trainers find themselves in changed roles.



New challenge 3

The interuniversity Master's programme „Educational Treatment of Diversity” could be used as an example of effective informal workplace learning for the professional development of academic staff because it provides:

- modern information and communication technologies-mediated and enriched learning environment where students and academic staff interact with each other, learn through dialogue based upon collaborative opportunities, authentic experiences, interpretation, and reflection of them;
- communication from the transformative perspective, therefore both students and teachers are transformed as learners;
- academic staff mobility into different countries, which helps in understanding the paradigms of higher education in the multicultural and transcultural context of the common European education space.



Thank you!