

LEGAL AND FINANCIAL WORK ASPECTS OF ACADEMIC STAFF IN LITHUANIA, SLOVAKIA AND LATVIA

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Abstract. *The legal and financial work aspects of academic staff have been insufficiently studied. Basically, it is the existing autonomy of each university personnel policy. The variety of diverse approaches exists not only in different countries, but also within the borders of one particular country. The research aims to provide an evaluation of the legal and financial work aspects of the academic staff in Lithuania, Slovakia and Latvia. In the framework of this research a comparative analysis of all three countries' legislation has been performed, reflecting common and distinctive features of the academic staff requirements, as well as general principles of salary formation have been evaluated.*

Keywords: *academic load, academic staff, higher education, salary.*

Introduction

Work of the academic staff at higher education institutions is linked to three main areas of activity: provision of the quality study process, methodological work and scientific activity. Nowadays representatives of the academic staff work in a dynamic, complex and unpredictable work environment. They are exposed to increasingly higher quality requirements, for instance, demand for continuous professional development, excellent knowledge of foreign languages, publication in a peer-reviewed databases, etc. Very often the academic staff are challenged by a situation when they have to deal with a great amount of work, they have to meet high quality requirements, although remuneration, especially in the lower categories of positions, such as assistants or lecturer, is not competitive enough.

So far, studies into the legal work aspects and requirements of the academic staff, as well as remuneration mechanisms have been investigated in some other respects. For instance, there have been studies into the role of performance

appraisal in motivating and compensating the academic staff (Tuerk, 2008), a comparative analysis on the appraisal and compensation in public and private higher education institutions (Tuerk & Roolaht, 2007). Separate articles are devoted to the exploration of legal aspects of the academic staff workload (Valčiukienė & Skėruvienė, 2012).

The aim of the research is to provide an evaluation of the legal and financial work aspects of the academic staff in Lithuania, Slovakia and Latvia.

Research methods – monographic, analysis and synthesis, graphic, document analysis and content analysis methods have been employed.

The research is based on current scientific studies and exploration of legislative acts of Latvia, Slovakia and Lithuania.

Interpretation of academic staff qualifications and responsibilities in the legislation

The concept of „academic staff” on a daily basis is understood as a category of people who fulfil their professional duties in higher education institutions. The content-related extent of the concept varies significantly across the legislation of different countries. According to the Latvian legislation, the staff of an institution of higher education shall consist of:

- professors, associate professors;
- docents, senior researchers;
- lecturers, researchers; and
- assistants (Law on Institutions of Higher Education, 1995).

According to the Lithuanian legislation, the positions of teaching staff of higher education institutions are as follows:

- professor,
- docent,
- lecturer,
- assistant (Law on Higher Education and Research, 2009).

It should be noted that the Lithuanian legislation provides individually defined scientific staff positions: „The research staff of higher education and research institutions shall be researchers holding the position of a chief research staff member, a senior research staff member, a research staff member, a junior research staff member, as well as postdoctoral grant holders”

Table 1 The main activities and responsibilities of a professor and a lecturer in Latvia, Lithuania and Slovakia in accordance with the national legislation

Position	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovakia
Position of a professor	<p>The delivery of highly skilled lectures, the supervision of studies, lectures and examinations in his or her study course; the supervision of research works in the sub-field of science or the supervision of artistic creation in a field, which conforms to the title of the position of professor; the supervision of doctoral studies and research works in the sub-field of science or the supervision of artistic creation in a field, which conforms to the title of the position of professor; participation in the evaluation of the work and quality of study programmes, institutions of higher education and the structural units thereof; and the training of the new generation of academics, artists and lecturers. (Law on Institutions of Higher Education, Latvia, 1995)</p>	<p>A scientist or an established artist may hold the position of a professor. A scientist who holds the position of a professor must train scientists, teach students, conduct research and experiment (social, cultural) development and direct them, announce research findings. An established artist who holds the position of a professor must train professional artists, teach students, participate in artistic activities and/or develop art research areas and direct them, announce research findings. (Law on Higher Education and Research, Lithuania, 2009)</p>	<p>Giving lectures and seminars, ensuring student assessment, including assessment of state examinations, PhD students, supervising and reviewing final theses, as well as elaboration of study materials. (Law on Higher Education 2002, 2015)</p>
Position of a lecturer	<p>The tasks of lecturers shall be determined by the constitution of an institution of higher education. (Law on Institutions of Higher Education, Latvia, 1995)</p>	<p>A scientist or a person who has at least a Master's qualification degree or its equivalent may be a candidate for the position of a lecturer. A lecturer shall be involved in teaching students, performing methodological work. (Law on Higher Education and Research, Lithuania, 2009)</p>	<p>Teaching activities that do not require active participation in research and development, especially supervision of research, assessment of students, taking part in the provision of other educational activities and taking part in the process of elaborating study materials. (Law on Higher Education 2002, 2015)</p>

The academic staff at universities in the Slovak Republic is divided as follows:

- university professor (prof.)
- associate professor (doc.)
- assistant professor (Ing., PhD.)
- assistant
- lecturer (Law on Higher Education, 2002 and 2015)

The overall range of academic staff responsibilities includes a variety of both study process-related activities, as well as scientific ones. In most cases, professor's position involves a significant part of duties focused on the implementation of scientific activities.

Evaluating and compiling the type of the academic staff work and the extent of legal regulations, it can be concluded that, in general, in all countries it is still the competence of higher education institutions:

- 1) In Latvia the amount of tasks in each of the types of basic activities shall be determined by the institution of higher education;
- 2) In Lithuania a higher education institution shall lay down qualification requirements of positions of teaching staff, which must not be lower than those established in paragraphs 2-5 of this Article (Law on Higher Education and Research, 2009), as well as shall define the procedure for organising competitions to fill the said positions and structure the performance evaluation regarding the teaching staff;
- 3) In Slovakia all activities of university academic staff are defined by the higher education establishment, based on the principles of institutions of higher education (universities, academies, etc.) as well as the accreditation committee.

Essential conditions in each country's legislation are envisaged exactly for the contractual period, which is the topic for discussion. In this regard, the emphasis should be placed on diametrically opposing views or objectives that are achieved by fixed-term, partially fixed-term or indefinite duration contracts.

In Latvia an employment contract with a person elected to an academic position (professor, associate professor, docent, lecturer or assistant) shall be entered into force by the rector for the period of election – six years.

In Lithuania the legal framework provides the academic staff with far more favourable conditions in case of re-election. Persons shall be appointed to the positions of teachers and research workers of higher education and research institutions through an open competition for a five-year term of tenure.

In Lithuania a person who has won the competition to hold the same position of a teacher or a research worker for the second time in succession shall conclude an employment contract of unlimited duration for holding this

position. Performance evaluation of this person shall be carried out every five years in accordance with the procedure laid down by higher education and research institutions. A period during which a higher education and research institution which carries out performance evaluation of a person granted that person a maternity leave, paternity leave or childcare leave shall not be included in the said five-year period (Law on Higher Education and Research, 2009).

In Slovakia the time of contract has an analogous nature in comparison with Latvia and Lithuania. The procedure of filling positions of university teachers as well as filling positions of professors and associate professors is carried out by the help of a competition in accordance with the established legal framework (Law on Higher Education 422/2015, § 75, point. 2). The selection procedure for filling the vacant positions of a professor or an associate professor is also a function of the defined recruitment process for a job of a university lecturer. The call for the competition in relation to a certain position is published on a university website, the site of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic and is placed on the official notice board or an official faculty board when it comes to jobs or functions currently required by the faculty.

The employment of a university lecturer, who has a scientific-pedagogical title of a professor or an associate professor, employed in medical, pharmaceutical or veterinary faculties and holding a position in a public university, where the employee is required to fulfil one's duties, may be conditioned on the basis of one competition but for a relatively long period of time. This period is determined by the dean or the rector with a maximum period of ten years. An academic teacher may occupy positions such as an associate professor or a professor on the basis of one competition for a maximum of five years. If a university teacher acquired the position of an associate professor or a professor for the third time, and the total time of his tenure in these positions amounted to at least nine years, and has, if it is a position of an associate professor, a scientific-pedagogical degree or an artistic-pedagogical degree of „docent” and „professor” and if it is the positions of a professor, a scientific-pedagogical degree or an artistic-educational title „professor”, the right to an employment contract with the university is acquired, placing a university lecturer for inclusion in this position for a fixed period of time until the age of 70. A university teacher can be assigned by the rector or the dean for the purpose of carrying out only scientific or artistic work activities. This does not affect the provisions of special regulations on the remuneration of employees based on the Law on Higher Education, 2015.

The employment of university teachers shall expire at the end of an academic year in which they reach the age of 70 if their employment terminated earlier under special regulations (Law of Higher Education, 2002 and 2015).

Academic staff workload and remuneration

The most important concepts that characterise the workload are as follows: an academic hour, working time, which form the academic load and types of work that are included in the academic load. Table 2 summarises Latvian, Lithuanian and Slovak approaches to forming the academic staff workload.

Table 2 Working time of academic staff

	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovakia
What does it mean an “academic hour”?	A unit of working time for studies, the duration of which is 45 minutes (Law on Institutions of Higher Education, Latvia, 1995)	Duration of academic work is measured in academic hours (1 academic hour is equal to 45 astronomical minutes) (Law on Higher Education and Research, Lithuania, 2009)	One academic hour is equal to 45 astronomical minutes for lectures and seminars. Usually it means that a lecture is comprised of 2 or 3 academic hours (90 or 135 astronomical minutes) and a seminar embraces 2 or 1 academic hour (90 or 45 astronomical minutes) (Based on the defined principles by higher education institution)
Working time	600- 1000 hours are determined by an institution of higher education; usually Lecturers – 1000 Professors – 600 (Regulation of academic staff salary, 2009)	280 - 1000 hours are determined by an institution of higher education; usually Lecturers: 600 – 1000 Docents: 500 - 600 Professors – 280 - 600 (Workload structure, norms and the accounting , 2013) <i>Lithuanian University of Educational Sciences Senate in 2013. 20 March. Resolution No. 200</i>	Yearly working time of a university teacher is 1530 hours according to the following structure: - pedagogical activity – 880 hours - research activity – 600 hours - other activities 50 hours. Professors: 156 teaching hours per 1 academic year Docents: 208 hours per 1 academic year Assistant Professors: 312 hours per 1 academic year Assistants: 260 hours per 1 academic year Lecturers: 260 hours per 1 academic year. (Regulation of academic staff salary, 2013)
What do “pedagogical activities” and	Pedagogical activities and teaching hours mean the same; reflecting the following: - lectures,	Pedagogical activities and teaching hours are the same; It means - lectures, - exam (0.3 per student),	Pedagogical activities and teaching hours mean the same; - exam (0.3 per student)

	Latvia	Lithuania	Slovakia
“teaching hours” mean?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - exam (0.4 per student), - supervision of a diploma paper (14 hours per student) - supervision of a study paper (7 hours per student) - etc (Regulations on academic staff salaries, 2014, Academy of Technologies, staff.ru.lv)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supervision of a diploma paper (18 hours per student) - supervision of a study paper (7 hours per student) - etc. (Regulations on academic staff workload, 2013, Academic Board)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - supervision of a diploma paper (19 hours) - supervision of a study paper (7 hours per student) - etc. (Regulation of academic staff salary, 2013)

Academic hours are identical in all investigated countries. A unique feature that shall be noted is a Slovak approach to allocating time for lectures or classes that are comprised of three academic hours not two, emphasising its unconventional nature. It is certainly appropriate for situations when considerable time for practical classes is required.

It shall be emphasised that there is a very different approach to shaping the academic load. If Latvia and Lithuania share the maximum of 1,000 hours, in Slovakia it is 1,530 hours. However, the Slovak approach foresees these hours including both scientific work, as well as other types of activities, such as administrative activities. Slovak example and comprehensive workload complex is a good example for further research. The research findings could certainly be exploited in discovering new approaches to shaping the academic load in Latvia.

If to compare only Latvian and Lithuanian approaches, the amount of academic load estimated in hours is more favourable in Lithuania for both professors and lecturers.

Noteworthy is the study into the understanding of the concept „teaching hours” across different countries. Latvian and Lithuanian perception is almost the same. However, minor differences still occur when determining the amount of hours allocated per certain type of work (exam time allocated per student, supervision of a diploma paper, supervision of a study paper, etc.). According to the Lithuanian and Latvian approaches this concept also includes indirect contact hours (supervision of a research work, etc.). In Slovakia „teaching hours” mean only part of teaching and include only contact lectures.

The study was originally designed to conduct the compensation comparison, although it should be noted that countries have different approaches to salary formation. Higher Education Institutions in Lithuania are autonomous and have no fixed salaries for employees. This falls under the responsibility of universities themselves. In Latvia the minimum wage per one academic load is stipulated by the legislative acts.

In Slovakia, the average salary ranges from 759 to 1762 EUR (university teachers, 2013). In its turn, in Lithuania assistants' salaries in different universities vary from 502 to 732 EUR per month and professors' salaries fluctuate from 982 to 1726 EUR (Mrazauskaitė, 2015). It should be emphasised that the amount of salaries vary widely by country, as well as by academic staff positions. It is essential to note that the average salary in Latvia is not sufficiently different from the minimum wage, taking into account academic employment of staff on a part-time basis. The minimum wage is anticipated for assistants 481 EUR and professors 1175 EUR.

Conclusions

Research into the legal and financial work aspects of academic staff confirms common features and states differences across various EU countries. It shall be noted that mostly it is the existing autonomy of each university personnel policy. The main problems that emerged are different perceptions and approaches to formation of contact hours and the amount of the academic load, which makes it difficult to carry out a comparative research. In order to assess the extent of remuneration of academic staff and carry out a comparative analysis, it is necessary to study the structure of the academic load formation and perform an analysis of the hourly cost.

It can be positively evaluated that there is a flexible legislative approach to shaping hours in Latvia and Lithuania, where the amount of the academic load may vary significantly, however, it reduces the social guarantees for academic staff and can become an instrument of higher education institutions to balance the budget, which certainly cannot be accepted.

In the framework of the carried out comparative analysis on shaping the academic load, the latter appeared to be least attractive in Latvia exactly where the number of contact hours of the individual position groups is the highest. It is definitely vital to carry out further research on the remuneration systems in other countries, so that higher education institutions in Latvia can develop their own remuneration systems based on the positive experience of other EU countries.

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