

1. General introduction

1.1. Estonia has only one official language, viz. Estonian. However, Russian is spoken as the native language by roughly one third of the population. State-funded secondary education is available in both languages. The date for ending government funding for secondary education via the medium of Russian has been postponed several times for practical reasons, notably lack of teachers. The latest deadline, set for 2007, was indefinitely suspended in 2001.

In recent years, considerable effort has been spent on teaching Estonian to native speakers of Russian both inside the education system and language courses. The necessary financing is coming from the state as well as numerous EU programmes, particularly PHARE programmes, and other foreign agencies, including the British Council. To improve the quality of teaching Estonian, a Chair of Estonian as a Foreign/Second Language has been set up at the University of Tartu, responsible for the Bachelor's and Master's programmes for teachers of Estonian.

Apart from a few private universities, tertiary level education not available in Russian – nor was it, for most areas, in Soviet times, whence the absence of teaching staff with adequate qualifications. In recent years, the state finances an additional year at the university for speakers of Russian to be spent on intensive study of Estonian. However, only around 10% of students take the opportunity: the rest have acquired sufficient Estonian in their pre-tertiary period to proceed to the main programmes immediately.

1.2 Pre-primary, primary, and secondary education comes in the purview of the Ministry of Education, as does higher and vocational education. In Russian schools, the first foreign language is Estonian, while the choice of other foreign languages is up to the school. Under overwhelming parent pressure, the choice of the first foreign language is usually made for English. Estonian schools can choose freely among all foreign languages.

In Soviet times, Russian, obviously, was the first foreign language in Estonian schools, followed in the 4th or 5th form by English in approximately 75% of the cases and German in the rest. The role of French was negligible – a Baltic peculiarity rather than an overall Soviet policy.

Except for the positions lost by Russian, the present pattern follows the tradition. However, the share of English as the first foreign language is increasing fast, again owing to strong parent pressure. Apart from Russian, the language that is losing ground most rapidly relative to Soviet times is German – the overall percentage of students taking German has remained the same during the past ten years but German has increasingly become the second rather than the first foreign language. A telling figure in this respect is the number of students taking the national examination in German has fallen by 40% since 1996. Russian, whose share fell drastically in the first years of independence, is making a comeback as the second foreign language.

Overall, the situation is far less susceptible to adequate comprehensive description than in Soviet times due to the considerable latitude given to schools in their choice of electives. According to the national curriculum the first foreign language starts in the 3rd form and the second in the 6th form, yet many schools start earlier and add more languages as electives. The most common pattern is: 1st language – English, 2nd language German/Russian (3rd language – French), and there is no school that does not offer English at least as the 2nd foreign language. Additionally, there are a number of what are officially termed "schools without a fixed district" with admission through competitive

examinations where the first foreign language normally starts in the first form, the second in the third form, a third is added in the sixth form and one more at the secondary level.

French has enhanced its role somewhat as compared to Soviet times and is now the first foreign language in four secondary schools. However, nationwide the knowledge of French is still relatively poor and certainly lower than that of German.

1.3. In Soviet times, there were six higher educational establishments in Estonia. All six continue as public universities, with the University of Tartu the largest. It should be pointed out that the status of a public university is not equal to that of a state university proper: while it receives funding from the state budget and is obligated to fulfil its functions, it also enjoys considerable autonomy. To cite but one example: the Rector (Chancellor) of a public university is not appointed by the Minister of Education but elected by its internal electoral body and only approved by the Minister.

At the beginning of independence, newly cropped-up private universities were granted licence relatively freely, as a result of which there are now more than 40 higher educational establishments that call themselves universities. Public universities still enjoy the highest reputation both among students and employers – e.g. many employers turning to personnel-search companies include "Public university graduates only" among their terms – though some of the private universities are also clearly viable, and in some areas more open to innovations than the large public universities. However, the greater prestige of public universities as well as financial considerations have led to a tendency where high-quality private universities join major public universities (e.g. the private Institute of Law has recently become the Institute of Law of the University of Tartu, the private Institute of Humanities has acceded to begin a process aimed at joining Tallinn Pedagogical University to form a University of Tallinn, etc.).

In addition to universities proper, there are a number of colleges affiliated with major universities, in particular the University of Tartu and Tallinn Pedagogical University. The colleges provide their students with a diploma of applied higher education.

1.4. Up until the academic year 2001/2002, Estonia had a two-cycle system of 4 years of Bachelor's studies followed by 2 years of Master's studies (followed by 4 years of doctoral studies). The system was introduced shortly after the country regained its independence. The credit-point system was also adopted at that time, with 1 CP equalling 40 hours of work, 20 of those normally classroom hours and 20 those devoted to independent work. 160 CP-s were required for the Bachelor's degree, a further 80 for the Master's degree (half of these normally in the form of a substantial Master's thesis), and a further 160 for a PhD (normally 120 covered by the thesis).

However, with the system Estonian students found themselves at a disadvantage on the labour market of many other European countries since they had worked more, e.g., for their Master's than their British or Danish counterparts and had difficulty explaining the difference. This, of course, was only one of the many reasons why Estonia decided to reform its higher education system along the lines of the Bologna process. The new, 3+2+4 system will take effect as of the beginning of the academic year 2002/2003. Earlier intakes of students will follow old curricula, though transition variants will be created for those wishing to take a shortcut after their third year. The initiative for introducing the new system came from the universities, the University of Tartu in

particular. The system was adopted countrywide on July 12, 2002 when the Estonian Parliament passed the amended version of the Law of Universities.

1.5. Particularly because schooling licences were distributed freely at the beginning of independence and some of the new universities offered dubious education for fairly high fees, though not only for this reason, a need was soon felt for finding ways of quality assurance in higher education. The Higher Education Quality Assessment Council was established. The Council, an institution independent of the Ministry of Education, arranges evaluations of university programmes (where "programme" means the teaching arranged according to a particular curriculum, e.g. the Master's programme in Translation) and makes decisions about granting them accreditation.

Accreditation is conducted according to rigorous procedures. In the institution concerned, a self-evaluation team is set up for the programme concerned, made up of representatives of teaching staff and students, and an evaluation team composed of foreign experts is invited for an on-site visit. Prior to the visit, the team has read the self-assessment report compiled by the self-evaluation team. The report is compiled in accordance with a uniform grid supplied by the Council, and experts have a dovetailing grid for writing up their final report. During the on-site visit the experts are free to pose questions both to the staff and, independently, to the students, get acquainted with the pertinent facilities, read graduation theses, etc.

Criteria for accreditation include staff qualifications (notably, according to the Higher Education Standard, 50% and 75% of credit points have to be covered by teaching staff with PhD-s in the case of Bachelor- and Master-level programmes, respectively), staff publications, favourable student feedback, preferably in the form of anonymous feedback questionnaires, use of up-to-date teaching/learning and assessment methods, existence of adequate facilities for classroom and independent work (IT-facilities, libraries, etc.), a sufficient number of graduates employed in the speciality, etc.

The report of the evaluation team concludes with a recommendation, which can be "full accreditation", "conditional accreditation", or "no accreditation". The recommendation is usually followed, though occasionally also either upgraded or downgraded by the Council, who makes the final decision. The decision "conditional accreditation" means that a fresh accreditation procedure has to be set in motion in two years' time. "No accreditation" means that degrees awarded by the programme are not granted official recognition. Full accreditation is valid for seven years.

This system of accreditation has over the years come to be taken seriously by all universities and has acquired a powerful role in quality enhancement for all university programmes, including those involving foreign languages. The system has also revealed that the watershed between low-quality and high-quality programmes does not always go between public and private universities though the proportion of programmes with full accreditation is still significantly higher in public universities.

1.6. Teaching quality is assessed externally via accreditation procedures (see 1.5.). Prior to accreditation, however, the curricula are adopted via internal university procedures. These typically comprise the following stages:

- the curriculum is drawn up by the team responsible, who formulates and proceeds from the goals of the curriculum,

- the curriculum is scrutinised by the Academic Committee of the Council of the respective faculty and returned with suggestions for amendments,
- the revised curriculum is discussed and finally approved by the council of the faculty,
- the curriculum then goes to the Academic Council of the University Senate which assigns an independent reviewer to it,
- the curriculum together with the review are discussed at the Academic Council and sent back for further modifications,
- the revised curriculum is discussed and finally approved by the University Senate.

Routine procedures have also been established for changes in curricula. For major changes the whole above procedure is used while minor changes are introduced on the faculty level.

Once programmes have been accredited, monitoring teaching quality is up to the universities. However, since universities are vitally interested in attracting students, internal assessment is becoming increasingly more widespread. Many universities have established routine feedback procedures. To cite but one example, the University of Tartu has the following procedure, set up by its Students' Representation: for each teacher, one course per term is evaluated. At the end of the term, students receive a standardised questionnaire with a Lickert-type scale (one form for lectures, another for seminars) (Part A) and also a sheet with blank space where they can write comments addressed directly to the teacher (Part B). After the examination, the teacher receives a sealed envelope containing the sheets of Part B. These sheets are seen by no-one but the teacher. Processed results of Part A are made available to the teacher, the respective Chair, Head of the respective department, and the Dean of the respective faculty. Average results for the department are made generally available. No direct consequences ensue from feedback results though the pertinent statute provides for the possibility of curriculum changes on the basis of long-term cumulative results. However, the psychological effect of the results is already making itself felt.

External evaluation of research is conducted, also by teams of foreign experts, separately from external evaluation of teaching, though quality of research constitutes one of the criteria in the evaluation of teaching. Inside universities, both research and teaching form part of requirements for staff positions, though their relative weight varies with the university. All public universities have elaborated minimum requirements for the positions of Lecturer, Associate Professor, Professor, etc., which cover both research (degree, number and type of publications, etc.) and teaching (new courses developed, minimum teaching load, etc.). Since Estonia has no tenure for any positions, and there is increasing competition for positions available, most of the staff usually work harder than prescribed by the minimum requirements. After colleges were joined to universities, the same requirements became applicable – with an understandable transition period – also to their staff, which has had a considerable beneficial effect on the staff's motivation to raise their qualifications.

In some private universities minimum formal requirements are not formulated and staff qualifications vary: alongside scholars of international renown there are cases where associate professors or even professors do not have PhDs or do not publish much – though they then have other assets such as being prominent politicians, active translators, etc. In many private universities, however, especially those with high tuition fees, quality of teaching and especially student satisfaction are, for obvious reasons, monitored even more closely than in public universities. Also, private universities are increasingly interested in receiving accreditation for their programmes, and therefore, meeting the respective criteria as regards staff qualifications.

So far, there is no official ranking of departments apart from the ternary ranking of programmes described above, i.e., "fully accredited", "conditionally accredited" and "not accredited".

1.7. State funding of public universities comes in various forms. The part earmarked for Maintenance of buildings etc. is independent of accreditation results. Accreditation, however, does affect the funding that takes the form of the so-called "state order", i.e. money allocated to a university according to the number of state-funded places. The bulk of this money goes to public universities though private universities are actively lobbying against the policy and there is a growing tendency to redirect part of the sum to accredited programmes in private universities. The principle was laid down in 2001 that the state does not commission places for programmes that lack full accreditation, irrespective of the type of university, the only exception being programmes with conditional accreditation unique in the country (such as, e.g., French Language and Literature and Spanish Language and Literature as Majors at the University of Tartu).

The state order is placed by the Ministry of Education and is subject to yearly revisions. Places are specified according to speciality, though universities have some leeway in redistributing them. The basic cost of a student place is multiplied by different coefficients for different specialities. The basic cost has so far been several times lower than tuition in many private universities and sometimes even lower than the tuition for the same speciality in the same public university. However, together with the introduction of the 3+2 system, the basic cost has been raised to a considerable extent for all levels, with a staggering five-fold rise for the PhD level.

Unfortunately, the coefficient for foreign languages and even for translation and conference interpretation is the same as that for all Humanities (1.1) which means that departments that strive to keep group sizes small face constant struggle for survival. The situation is somewhat alleviated, though, by the universities' right to redistribute funding among departments – an important element of their autonomy. By exercising the right, universities, as a rule, in fact establish a higher "real" coefficient for languages, which, other things being equal, is clearly conducive to better quality of teaching/learning.

Up to the present time, the state order was geared to student intake rather than graduation. Together with the 3+2 system also a new system of commissioning has been introduced which is explicitly results-based, i.e. the Ministry places orders for graduates and reduces funding when targets are not met. The system of results-based financing has been pre-emptively introduced in some faculties of public universities and its double-edged nature has already revealed itself: while departments are more interested in attracting promising candidates, there is also a very real danger of lowering standards, particularly as the use of external examiners is sporadic.

The setting up of priorities in the state order is not based on any well-articulated criteria or needs analysis. In particular, the Estonian Employers' Association has become vocal in recent years in its complaints that the Ministry does not take into account the real needs of Estonian economy, with the resultant labour shortage in areas such as engineering, IT, etc., as well as incipient (though not yet serious) unemployment among university graduates in other areas, e.g. law. However, the Ministry has, in fact, attempted to meet at least some of society's urgent needs, with increasing orders for, e.g. translators and interpreters (needed in connection with the imminent accession of Estonia to the EU), working teachers of English who, as a legacy from the Soviet times, do not have higher education in the area, etc.

1.8., 1.9. The lion's share of the student places funded by the state is allocated to public universities though there is also a recent tendency to include a few private universities. For state-funded places there is a *numerus clausus* system, which for most specialities means stiff competition. Meanwhile, public universities are also allowed by law to admit tuition-paying students. In recent years, in connection with soaring unemployment in the 15 – 25 age group and the continuing low prestige of vocational schools, demand for higher education has soared, while the number of state-funded places is shrinking. In consequence, competition has become even more vigorous – for the academic year 2002/2003 the average ratio of applicants to a state-funded place for the two largest universities, i.e. the University of Tartu and Tallinn Technical University, was 10 to 1 and 8 to 1, respectively, and the number of students willing to pay tuition, particularly in public universities, has also gone up to a considerable degree. The net result is that Estonian higher education is increasingly becoming paid education. Student loans are available though not everybody is eligible. In fact, loans are more readily available for the wealthy since real estate mortgage is required. A system of general student support is not yet in place. The process of its elaboration has been fraught with a great deal of political controversy. At the moment, quality-related scholarships are available but few in number and inadequate as regards the amount involved.

1.10. Owing to huge pressure on the part of students, foreign languages as general subjects and electives are taught at virtually all universities. In larger universities such teaching is the responsibility of language centres. At the tertiary level, English keeps its position as the language of choice, taught chiefly as LSP, yet students are also evincing a heightened interest in other languages, in particular French. Especially in public universities demand for foreign language tuition far exceeds the funding available. Self-access facilities are increasingly resorted to as a partial solution.

Full Bachelor's programmes in a number of major European languages and literatures are offered by several by two public universities (the University of Tartu and Tallinn Pedagogical University) and one private university (the Estonian Institute of Humanities, where the programmes, however, have not received full accreditation), Master's programmes by the same two public universities, and doctoral programmes by the University of Tartu. According to the old system, graduates of the Bachelor's programmes need to add a teacher-training year (40 credit points) to their degree to become fully qualified secondary (potentially tertiary) level teachers of the respective language. In the 3+2 system a Master's level with specialisation in teaching will be required for the same qualification.

Foreign language teachers for lower (basic and primary) levels are prepared in two colleges affiliated with the University of Tartu: Narva College and Tartu Teacher Training College.

Translation and conference interpretation are taught in two universities on the Master's level through programmes that, as an exception from the general rule, last for one year only, i.e. involve 40 credit points. The respective programmes at the University of Tartu have already received full accreditation while those at Tallinn Pedagogical University have just opened. Most, though not all, students in the programmes have Bachelor's degrees in English, German or French languages and literatures. In the 3+2 system, specialisation in translation or conference interpretation will start on the Master's level. Again, a prior Bachelor's degree in a foreign language will not be required though there will be entrance examinations.

An innovative Bachelor's programme "Business Management and Foreign Languages" was introduced in one of the best private universities – Estonian Business School – in the academic year 2001/2002. At the two public universities students majoring in a foreign language and literature have for the past ten years had the possibility, fairly widely used, of minoring in most of the main specialities offered by the university, which in the case of the University of Tartu includes Economics and Law, and in both universities programmes such as Sociology, Politology, Public Relations, etc. At the same time, foreign languages as minors have themselves been in great demand which has been met but partly owing to limited resources. In the new system, all students are entitled to take whichever minor they choose, which is likely to lead to a need for the respective departments to take on extra staff.

Finally, Intercultural Communication is only taught as part of certain programmes, notably as electives in foreign language Bachelor's programmes and as one of the subjects in programmes such as Master of European Studies.

2. Description and analysis of quality measures related to defining and designing courses and programmes in the area of languages

2.1. For the process of approving a new curriculum, see 1.6. In each of the curricula, the aim, formulated in terms of learning outcomes, forms an obligatory part of the introduction. This applies also to all curricula related to foreign languages.

As regards separate subjects inside curricula, requirements vary with the university. However, many universities have made providing students with syllabi at the beginning of each course obligatory. The syllabus has to outline the aims of the course as well as topics dealt with, literature and other facilities used, requirements presented to the students, means of assessment, a detailed schedule, etc. All these items taken together yield a fairly detailed delimitation of the learning outcomes. Supervision of the syllabi is the responsibility of the respective Chair.

2.2. So far, learning outcomes of curricula have been discussed inside universities (see process of approving a curriculum, 1.6.). In compiling curricula, tradition as well as examples from other countries, e.g., Scandinavian countries, Finland, etc., are usually relied upon.

Learning outcomes of courses are more susceptible to direct influence from at least one group of stakeholders, i.e., the students. In particular, electives – or, in the new system, modules – are chosen on the basis of a week's "shopping around" which includes both the first lecture/seminar and scrutinising the syllabus. Since students are free to choose electives from almost all faculties, they possess a considerable power of voting with their feet.

The process of including employers in the circle of stakeholders is just beginning. There is an element of caution involved, since particularly in transition economies many market phenomena are ephemeral and may not last the four, or, in the future, five, years that it takes a student to complete his or her degree. The Rector (Chancellor) of the University of Tartu has publicly voiced the opinion that there is a need for a balanced approach to market-orientation, making a strong case for the transferability of skills acquired in broad-based academic education.

However, the need to consult potential employers in the process of compiling and implementing programmes and courses is increasingly recognised. An example in the area of languages is the

setting up by the Ministry of the working group set up by the Minister of Education of a working group with the task of identifying the training needs of interpreters/translators required for the European Union with the task of mapping the current situation on Estonia's translation and interpreting market as well as the needs after Estonia's expected accession to the EU and elaborating a coordinated strategy for the preparation of translators and interpreters. The working group comprises, alongside representatives of major universities involved in the training of translators and interpreters, representatives of the Estonian Association of Interpreters and Translators and of the Estonian Legal Translation Centre. Also, the programmes of Conference Interpretation in the two public universities, coordinated in both by Centres of Translation and Interpreting, work in very close cooperation with the interpreting services of the European Commission and the European Parliament as potential employers of their graduates.

2.3. Estonian universities have only just started to conduct surveys of careers of their graduates. At the moment, data on employer satisfaction are not available, and the first sets of responses from graduates do not yet permit generalisations. However, graduate questionnaires dispensed by the University of Tartu enable to break down results according to the major of the graduate – lumping together the programme of his or her major and those of the minor(s) and electives – and it is planned to fine-hone them further with a view to tuning them to specific programmes. The questions in the survey include rating on the Lickert scale of the theoretical level of training offered by the university, of the practical skills offered by the university, the methods of teaching, etc. Findings from the first questionnaire were partly taken into account in drawing up new programmes for the 3+2 system.

At the tertiary level, languages as electives and general subjects are generally taught as LSPs linked to the students' major. Members of language centres, as a rule, specialise in one area (e.g., language for Law, language for Economics) and work in close cooperation with the respective faculties that often results in joint production of dictionaries and textbooks.

2.4. In Estonia, foreign languages as majors have not traditionally been geared to specific professions, though those of a language teacher and translator/interpreter have been the official qualifications given. Graduates actually work in a wide spectrum of areas that currently include, e.g., the Minister of Defence of Estonia and the head of the Estonian team at European accession negotiations (neither of whom have any other degrees than that of a Bachelor in English Language and Literature). However, the one-year postgraduate training programme has always been based on the framework of teacher education requirements set by the Ministry of Education as the potential employer. Close correspondence to the professional profile is also characteristic of the Master's programmes in Translation and Conference Interpreting.

In the new, 3+2 system, the Bachelor's degree is even more non-specific, containing whole modules obligatory to all students of the Humanities (this applies both to the University of Tartu and Tallinn Pedagogical University). Meanwhile, under the new system the Ministry of Education will commission from the universities graduates on the Master's rather than the Bachelor's level, which effectively means that the Master's level is regarded as higher education proper. However, all curricula do contain descriptions of possible areas of employment for which the graduates are qualified. In foreign languages as majors, the areas are described as those requiring general language skills and basic knowledge of the Humanities (e.g., assistants at libraries, executive assistants, etc.).

On the Master's level, foreign language departments are going to offer three different options: Master's in Translation/Interpretation, Master's in Foreign Language Teaching (obligatory for all teachers of foreign languages at the secondary level), and Master's in the respective language and literature. There is some overlap between the programmes yet the bulk of subjects have been chosen with a view to the specific profession involved. The new programmes have evolved from the previous system's Master in Translation/Interpretation, the previous system one-year postgraduate teacher-training course, and the previous system's two-year Master's course proper (i.e. research Master's in the respective language and/or literature). Thus, on the Master's level, the new system will be clearly tailored to specific professions, which are also explicitly stated in the respective curricula.

2.5. An example of a module directly oriented to personal development and citizenship is the general Humanities module in the new (3+2) curricula of the University of Tartu which comprises the following subjects:

- History of Philosophy (2 CP)
- Basics of Ethics (2 CP)
- General History of Culture (4 CP)
- Introduction into World Religions (4 CP)
- Oral and Written Estonian (4 CP)
- Foreign Language (4 CP)

Another example is the set of electives shared by all programmes in Tallinn Pedagogical University (again in the new curricula):

- Written and Oral Communication (3 CP)
- Intercultural Communication (3 CP)
- Computerised Information Processing (3 CP)
- Environment Protection and Sustainable Growth (3 CP)
- Introduction to Public Administration (3 CP)
- Sources of and Search for Information (3 CP)
- Coping Strategies in Present-Day Society (3 CP)
- Psychology of Communication (3 CP)
- Organisation Psychology (3 CP)

Here the students has to choose two subjects from among those offered.

2.6. Efforts to introduce the Common European Framework of Reference are under way in Estonia. However, they are officially formulated only for the national curriculum of the secondary schools which envisages achieving the B2 level by the end of the studies in one foreign language.

The levels of the Framework are also included in the curricula in the Estonian Institute of Humanities.

In the University of Tartu, the programme of English Language and Literature has for years had the unofficial aim of achieving, by the end of the studies, the C2 level (i.e. using the respective Cambridge textbooks and tailoring the examinations to them), an aim that is also stated on its Web-page. Obviously, the aim should also be officially formulated.

Narva College of the University of Tartu has recently set themselves the goal of achieving, by the end of the studies, the C1 level. Again, this is in the process of being officially formulated.

A pan-Baltic LINGUA project with the aim of setting up standardised exit examinations linked to the Common European Framework in foreign languages as general subjects is in the incipient stage. The first meetings have been attended by representatives of the University of Tartu (including its Institute of Law) and the Estonian Police Academy.

Thus, the general trend in Estonia is to increasingly take account of the Framework, though there is still a lot of progress to be made.

2.7. Estonia has a system of national examinations that serves as a basis for admission for most specialities in most universities. However, Chairs responsible for specific programmes have considerable latitude in choosing both the national examinations to be taken into account and in adding their own entrance examinations with equal or even greater weight. The language programmes of Tallinn Pedagogical University rely solely on the results of the national examinations (essay in Estonian and the respective foreign language) while at the University of Tartu most language programmes also conduct their own tests, the scores of which are added, often with double weight, to those of national examinations.

Admission criteria are particularly relevant to the selection of students for state-funded places. For applicants who fall below the line, ability to pay tuition plays a greater role, though in specialities that are especially popular, such as English Language and Literature, the criteria also make it possible to exclude the tail end of the applicants who are prepared to pay.

Master's programmes in Translation and Interpreting conduct entrance examinations of their own. In the case of Interpreting, representatives of the interpreting services of the EU participate as observers at the examinations and their advice is taken seriously.

3. Description and analysis of quality measures related to the process of teaching and learning

3.1. Ever since the first university reform at the beginning of the 90s, Estonia has the ECTS system in place. One credit point in an Estonian university equals roughly 20 classroom hours and 20 hours of independent work. In some faculties, such as the Faculty of Philosophy (Humanities) of the University of Tartu, an hour of independent work has a detailed description in terms of the number of pages of text to be read according to text type, the number of essay pages to be written, etc. The descriptions were introduced on the initiative of the student members of the Faculty Council. Also, the all-university feedback questionnaire (see 1.6.) contains the question about whether the requirements of the course being evaluated are consistent with the credit points given.

All universities are increasingly moving toward methods promoting active learning: essays, seminar discussions based on materials in course packets, group-work, student presentations based on independent work, etc. Group sizes for seminars vary to a considerable extent with the

university (from very small groups in some private universities to 30 and more). With the larger basic student cost in the new system smaller group sizes will probably become possible.

Internet-based learning is encouraged by most universities. However, most of the staff still feel that the work involved in creating Internet-based courses or communicating with the students via e-mail is not adequately appreciated in proportion to other activities that are part of their job description (e.g., e-mail hours are not included when the amount of contact hours is calculated) and copyright issues have not been satisfactorily solve, etc. The extent to which these issues have been settled varies with the university, but generally, in the field of languages, the process is still at the initial stage.

3.2. In a number of universities, language centres have established self-access centres. The Chair of Estonian as a Foreign Language at the University of Tartu has created a communicative language learning classroom. A comprehensive survey of the status of the introduction of new learning environments has been presented in the respective subsection of this TNP.

Virtually all programmes that involve the teaching of foreign languages cooperate at least to some degree with the respective cultural institutes, i.e., the Goethe Institute, the British Council, the Institute of the Estonian Language (for Estonian as a foreign language), etc. Very often the intensity of the cooperation fluctuates with respect to one or another area depending on the priorities of the respective institute. For instance, the current priorities of the British Council are the development of Conference Interpreting, teaching English to young learners, and teaching Estonian to native speakers of Russian. Correspondingly, the Council has cooperated intensively with the Conference Interpreting Programme at the University of Tartu, cooperation that is likely to be extended to the newly-opened Conference Interpreting programme in Tallinn Pedagogical University. In the framework of the cooperation, numerous activities are carried out, including the financing by the British Council of short-term studies of top students in Britain. In the framework of the young learners programme, the Council cooperates with the Teacher Training College of the University of Tartu where primary school teachers are trained. Earlier priorities of the British Council have included establishing the Centre for British Studies at the University of Tartu, which still cooperates with the Council though to a lesser degree, educating young tertiary level teacher, where the Estonian partner was the Estonian Institute of the Humanities (see below), etc.

Foremost among countries interested in promoting their languages have been France, Germany, and Spain, whose cultural institutions cooperate extensively with the respective programmes in Estonia. Programmes concerned with teaching Estonian have considerable European Union support through PHARE programmes, various grants, etc.

3.3. An asset of Estonian higher education in the area of languages that was preserved as an exception through Soviet times and continues up to the present is that for majors a language and literature, all seminars and lectures to do with the speciality, such as lectures/seminars in various branches of linguistics, in literature, in the history and culture of the respective countries, etc., are conducted in the respective language, and all theses are written in the language.

The share of non-language programmes taught through a medium other than Estonian is increasing slowly but steadily, the medium being, without exception, English. The programmes are targeted at foreign students and their creation is encouraged through special contests. In one private university – the Concordia University in Tallinn – the medium of teaching is English.

3.4. Universities have special administrative units dealing with student exchange. Students make active use of the opportunities of mobility offered by the ERASMUS programme: there is usually competition for the places available. The students who obtain the places are offered guidance by special counsellors. Many of the students attend language courses or courses on Intercultural Communication prior to going abroad, be it via ERASMUS or through other channels. There are no preparation courses specifically targeted at students about to study abroad. However, the credits obtained are recognised: the validation belonging to the competence of the head of the department where they are taking their major.

3.5. As mentioned above, all larger universities have language centres. In smaller universities such as the Estonian Institute of the Humanities the responsibility for teaching a foreign language as a general subject falls on the Chair that is also in charge of teaching the same language as a major. In a small university specialising essentially in one area (the Humanities) the system works very well and actually contributes to the quality of language teaching, while in larger universities specialisation is inevitable, so the case of the Institute of the Humanities is rather an exception to the rule. The centres usually have sections for separate languages with a head for each section (e.g. section of Estonian as a second/foreign language, section of English, etc.)

3.6. As mentioned above (see 3.3), the teaching of the bulk of subjects in foreign languages as majors – as well as minors – is conducted in the respective language, as is all classroom communication. In the case of communication with students outside classroom is concerned, the practice varies. The supervision of theses, commenting on essays, e-mail communication, and other study-related communication is predominantly in the foreign language concerned (especially since an increasing number of students are native speakers of Russian), yet code-switching to Estonian may also occur.

Everyday communication used to be in the foreign language in Soviet times when opportunities of language use were rare but is now in Estonian (except of course with or in the presence of native speakers of among staff or working in the framework of short-term project such as the Fulbright programme) since there is plenty of communication with native speakers of the language and the artificiality of Estonians communicating among themselves in a foreign language is increasingly felt. In departments teaching Russian Language and Literature many of the staff are native speakers of Russian which naturally also determines the language of communication.

3.7. /3.8. Programmes of Translation and Conference Interpreting are very recent and built upon the best available foreign models (the interpreting schools of Paris, Geneva and Copenhagen, the translation programmes of Aarhus Business School), so they have active learning at their very core. In language teacher education, too, active learning methods such as projects, essays, group-work and seminar discussions based on course packets are widespread. In teacher education the principle that future teachers should not only be taught new methods that facilitate language learning but also themselves be taught the language via the use of these methods is adhered to in all universities involved (the University of Tartu and its Teacher Training College and Narva College, and Tallinn Pedagogical University).

3.9. Both self-access centres and all methods of active learning described in the previous sections promote skills of lifelong learning. A specific instance perhaps worth mentioning here is the principle employed in the training of translators – on the example of Aarhus Business School –

according to which translators are taught not just knowledge in specific fields such as Law or Economics but rather strategies of fast familiarising themselves with any new field that may crop up in their translating practice. The courses listed above offered in Tallinn Pedagogical University – Sources of and Search for Information, and Coping Strategies in Present-Day Society – are another example of good practice.

4. Description and analysis of quality measures relating to the training of higher education teachers and trainers working in the area of languages

4.1. As already described above (see 1.6.), all public universities have elaborated minimum requirements for the positions of Teacher (in a language centres), Lecturer, Associate Professor, Professor, etc., which cover both research (degree, number and type of publications, etc.) and teaching (new courses developed, minimum teaching load, etc.). Since Estonia has no tenure for any positions, and there is increasing competition for positions available, most of the staff usually work harder than prescribed by the minimum requirements. After colleges were joined to universities, the same requirements became applicable – with an understandable transition period – also to their staff, which has had a considerable beneficial effect on the staff's motivation to raise their qualifications.

In some private universities minimum formal requirements are not formulated and staff qualifications vary: alongside scholars of international renown there are cases where associate professors or even professors do not have PhDs or do not publish much – though they then have other assets such as being prominent politicians, active translators, etc. Also, private universities are increasingly interested in receiving accreditation for their programmes, and therefore, meeting the respective criteria as regards staff qualifications.

The Higher Education Standard that took effect in 2002 requires that 50% of the credit points in a Bachelor's programme and 75% of the credit points in a Master's programme be awarded by teachers with PhD or its equivalent (e.g. Soviet Candidate of Sciences/Arts which has in Estonia been officially equated with a PhD). Programmes that do not correspond to the standard will henceforth not receive accreditation with all the ensuing consequences. At the moment, most programmes in the area of foreign languages, except those of Russian and Slavic languages and also Estonian as a Foreign Language, have problems with meeting the requirements of the standard, since defending a Candidate's degree in Soviet times in those areas was only possible in Russian universities – indeed the dissertation had to be written in Russian – and it was very difficult for Estonians to get access to the programmes/key professors there. Meanwhile, new staff with PhD-s in the area of foreign languages is just emerging, though at an increasing pace in recent years. A transition period will therefore probably be granted for a few years.

At present, the minimum required qualification for a Teacher in a Language Centre as well as for an Assistant Lecturer is a BA degree, for a Lecturer a MA degree, for an Associate Professor and a Professor a PhD or its equivalent. However, the prestige of a university teacher has risen steeply over the past few years. For specialists in foreign languages the change has been even more dramatic: while five years ago a university teacher's salary could not compete with remunerations received for private tuition or translations, repeated salary rises in universities have reversed the situation. Recent years have seen the emergence of competition even for positions of Assistant Lecturer and the concomitant upswing in staff motivation. Extraneous commissions, e.g. of

translations, are now increasingly being rejected and the staff is, as a rule, working far harder than prescribed by the minimum requirements.

Estonia has relatively few internally organised courses aimed at raising the teaching qualifications of tertiary-level teachers. However, the Open University (distance-learning centre) of the University of Tartu does offer short-term courses in higher education pedagogy. These took their beginning in a British Council project – initiated by the Estonian Institute of Humanities – ”Higher education pedagogy” in 1999, which embraced most major Estonian universities. The project involved a cycle of lectures and seminars on various aspects of higher education pedagogy held both in Tallinn and in Tartu and also produced a pertinent collection of articles. The idea was then taken up by the Open University of the University of Tartu which offers a different set of courses every year for relatively modest fees. The courses are fairly popular even though the certificates they award are not yet required by any universities. Another example of good practice is the inclusion of the subject ”Methodology of Teaching the Specialty” in the programme of research Master’s, taken mainly by (future) tertiary level teachers, in the University of Tartu.

Other ways for tertiary level teachers to raise their qualifications inside Estonia comprise attending MA and PhD courses available here. PhD courses in the area of Germanic and Romance Languages as well as Russian and other Slavic Languages are offered only by the University of Tartu. For Master’s programmes the choice is wider, including also Tallinn Pedagogical University (e.g. in Estonian as a Foreign Language).

Other opportunities for raising qualifications include foreign universities and various courses organised by foreign universities and other institutions (the British Council, the European Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, etc.). The opportunities, too numerous to list here, are eagerly sought after and have made a considerable contribution to the quality of teaching in the area of languages in Estonia.

4.5. Peer observation is obligatory in the Estonian Institute of Humanities, yet also used widely in other universities.

4.8. Estonian language teachers participate in a great number of European projects (formerly TEMPUS-projects, now SOCRATES-LINGUA projects, see, e.g., above, 2.6.). An example is the SOCRATES project ”Smallinc” that designs CD-s based on authentic video-materials for the three levels of language proficiency where the Estonian partner is the Chair of Estonian as a Foreign Language of the University of Tartu. Estonian tertiary-level teachers create teaching materials in the framework of PHARE. The list can be prolonged almost indefinitely.

4.9. Staff mobility is supported mainly by SOCRATES-ERASMUS projects that are abound in Estonia. There are also direct links and exchange programmes with universities in the respective countries, again too numerous to list here.

5. Description and analysis of quality measures relating to the organisation of management of the process of teaching and learning

5.1. N/a

5.2. See above.

5.3. Universities have recently set up career centre that both advise students of positions available and have started to keep track of the graduates' careers. The first centralised computerised system of monitoring all aspects of teaching – student registration for particular courses, results of examinations, general student progress, etc. – was introduced in the University of Tartu a few years ago. Other universities are following suit, with the new system of results-based financing a powerful motivator.

5.4. Separate subjects in a programme are taught by different staff-members whose work is coordinated by the staff member responsible for the programme as a whole – usually the respective professor or, alternatively, head of the language centre, head of the department, etc.

5.5. For a detailed description, see above, 1.6.