

Meeting employer's
expectations on
employability
competencies of higher
education graduates

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Takeaways

1

Perspective of an external stakeholder

2

Emotional intelligence – highly important for employability, but poorly developed by HE

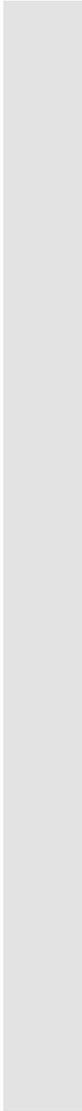
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Methodology for measuring importance of competencies and performance of HE

Research questions & methodology

- What expectations do employers have of higher education in Latvia regarding **employability competencies**? (based on CareerEDGE model by Pool et al., 2014)
- What are the **activities employers are willing to be involved** to enhance employability of graduates?
- What **support is needed from HEIs** for employers to get involved?
- How to improve higher education **quality assurance system** to better achieve employers' expectations?

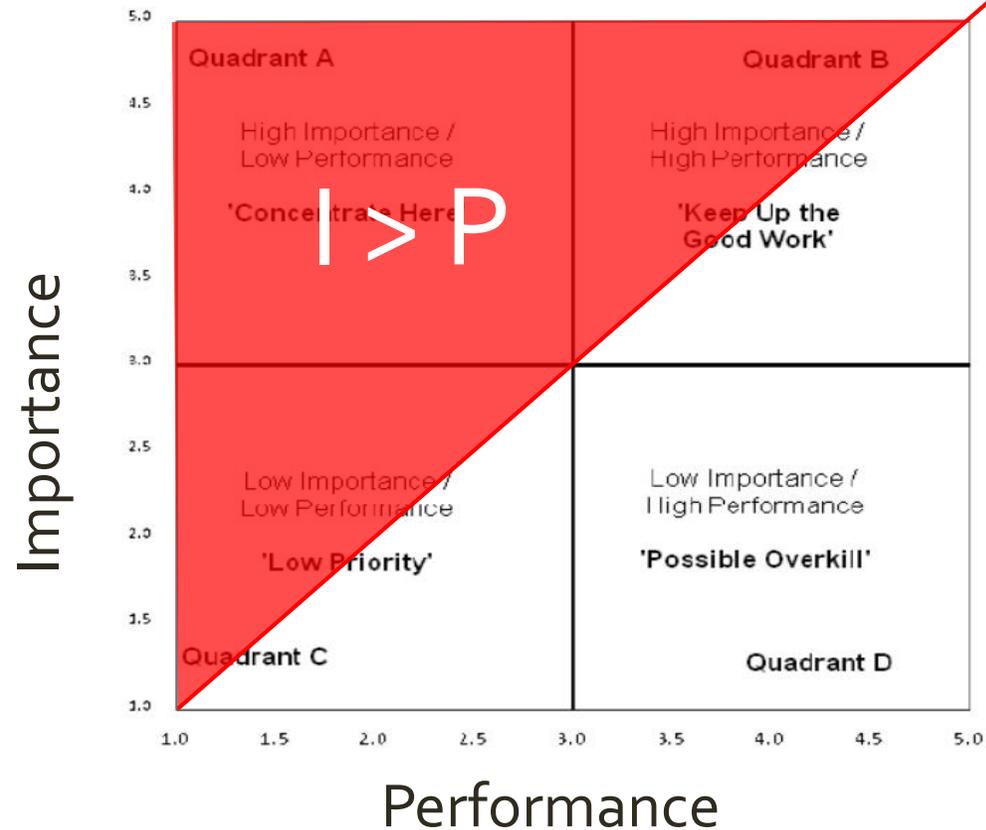
Electronic questionnaire to 87 employer representatives which were in the QA experts database of the Employers' Confederation of Latvia (LDDK), 40% response rate.

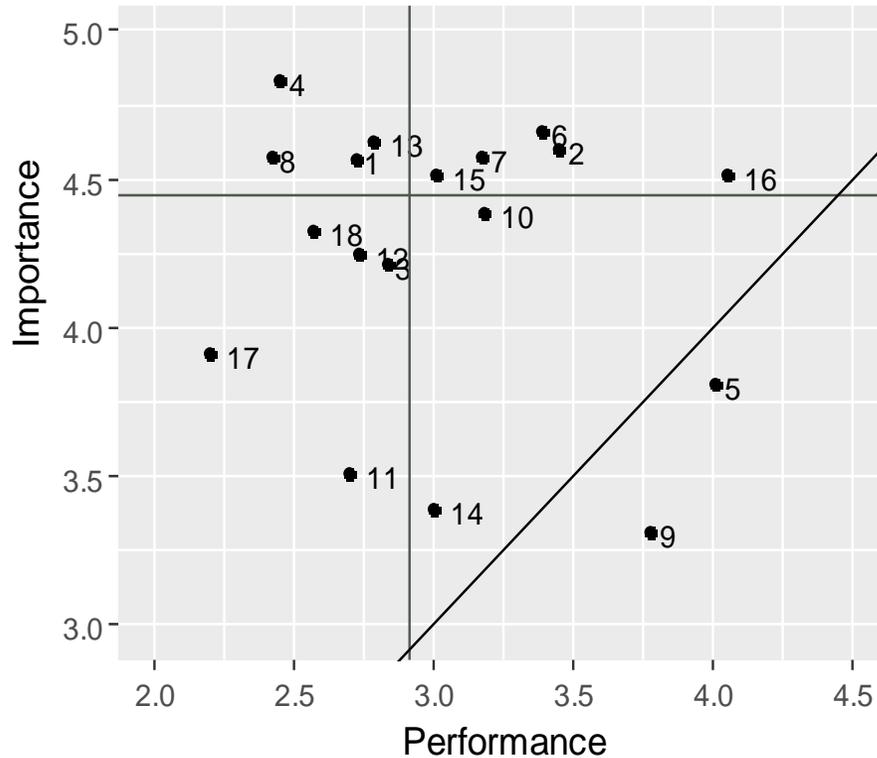


Results

How to interpret IPA Matrix (Martilla & James, 1977)

I = P (Bacon, 2003)





Largest mean gaps:

- Ability to adapt
- Responsibility for own decisions
- Attitude towards work and colleagues
- Work motivation

All included in the Emotional Competence Framework by Goleman, 1998.

- | | | |
|---|---|---------------------------------|
| • 1 - <u>Adaptability</u> | • 2 - Communication skills | • 3 - Generate new ideas |
| • 4 - <u>Responsibility for own decisions</u> | • 5 - Presentation skills | • 6 - Independent work |
| • 7 - Team work | • 8 - <u>Attitude towards work and colleagues</u> | • 9 - Achievements in education |
| • 10 - Good planning and organizing skills | • 11 - Clarity about career objectives | • 12 - Goal orientation |
| • 13 - <u>Work motivation</u> | • 14 - Mathematical skills | • 15 - Problem solving skills |
| • 16 - Computer skills | • 17 - Relevant work and life experience | • 18 - Emotional intelligence |

Future competencies

Ability to adapt/ flexibility and
ability to learn continuously
(10)

Digital competence (8)

Work in a team/ cooperation
skills, including with people of
all ages (7)

Emotional intelligence (6)

Problem solving skills (5)

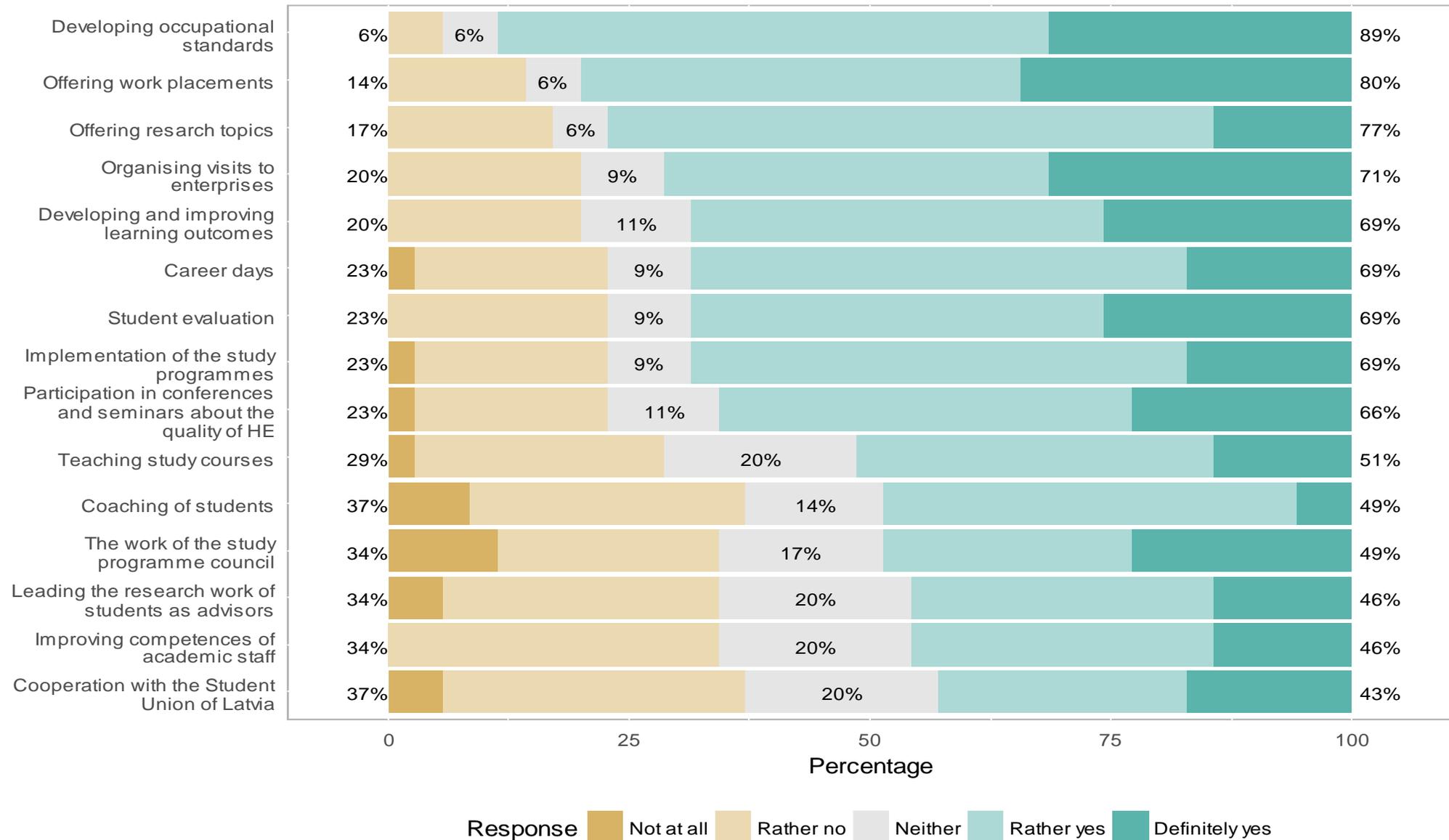
Ability to take responsibility
(4)

Foreign languages (4)

Creativity/ ability to work
interdisciplinary (4)

Ability to distinguish true
information and to use it
creatively (4)

HE activities employers would be ready to get involved in



What employers expect from HEIs

- Openness and willingness to cooperate
- Clear and concise communication
- HEIs should participate as a coordinator and facilitator for cooperation between students and employers
- HEIs should provide a compilation of all activities employers could participate in
- Very precise information regarding what HEI wants from employers
- Clear division of responsibilities
- To consider employer feedback
- Procedures for involving employers in internal QA

Suggestions for improvement of HE QA system

ESG Part 1

- Pay more attention to internal QA system
- "Evaluate the quality, not just compliance with formal criteria"
- Ensure stronger demand for quality from all stakeholders (students, employers, state)
- to ensure the evaluation of academic staff based on student and alumni assessments and to ensure regular programme evaluations by HEIs

ESG Part 3

- to implement properly all existing procedures for QA and to promote partnerships with stakeholders on a daily basis

Suggestions for improvement of HE QA system

ESG Part 2

Processes & Methodology

- Peer-review experts: careful selection, professional attitude, proper training, high quality work, international experts, avoid conflict of interest.
- Stronger requirements and control to ensure that “striving to attract more students and funding doesn’t override the quality of education”
- International experience
- Decrease bureaucracy
- Regular monitoring of HE quality and consistent follow-up process ensuring implementation of recommendations

Criteria:

- To evaluate quality of work-placements – whether they are linked to the study programme and learning outcomes

Conclusions

- HEIs should consider concentrating more on developing the competencies related to emotional intelligence.
- In the future, the importance of flexibility and ability to learn continuously, digital competence and cooperation skills will increase.
- Employers are willing to participate the most in development of occupational standards, providing work placements, offering research topics and organising visits to enterprises.
- To enhance employer participation in higher education, HEIs should be more open and willing to cooperate, as well as ensure clear and concise communication.
- QA system of HEIs should ensure better work of peer-review experts, pay more attention to the development of internal quality assurance system and consider application of best international practice.

Thank you for your attention!

References

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