Actualization of the PhD Students' Intercultural Research Competencies in a Global Society

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GLOBALIZATION IS CHANGING the qualitative characteristics of society, affecting both the life and mentality of people. In relevance to globalization, higher education is gaining new dimensions as well. Bologna and Lisbon documents guide and obligate each country to create integrated and harmonious international space of higher education in Europe. PhD studies are considered as integral in the higher education structure; therefore, internationalization is a significant imperative for PhD studies development. In the process of internationalization, the need for students' intercultural competencies is widely recognized. Firstly, we suppose that the impact of globalization on internationalization still remains underestimated. Globalization makes internationalization not only more intense, but also qualitatively different. Secondly, there is a lack of systemic analysis on the development of intercultural research competencies in PhD studies. We relate the need for intercultural research competencies to the following critical and rhetorical question: 'Are today's PhD students ready to solve tomorrow's global problems?'

Key Words: globalization; interculturalism; internationality; intercultural competence

INTRODUCTION

The preconditions for the focus of the research objective on intercultural research competencies of PhD students rise from important political documents. On 21 October 2010, the European University

Association (EUA) Council, which is made up of the representatives of the European rectors' conferences, approved the Salzburg II document with its recommendations for the reform of doctoral education. There are two main issues as follows: quality assurance and internationalization of PhD studies. The universities should attempt to stimulate PhD students to obtain international research experience and to attract students from abroad ('Implementing the Salzburg Principles' 2010). EUA includes the Council for Doctoral Education (CDE), which contains 210 members in 33 countries. CDE is a membership service focused on doctoral education. CDE provides the guidelines for countries and institutions on the development and implementation of international political declarations. In relevance with the aforementioned Salzburg II document, the Lithuanian strategy for PhD studies development is highly oriented toward internationalization of PhD studies with a focus on the following issues: to encourage the students' international mobility in order to gain experience in abroad advanced research institutions; also, higher qualification requirements related to international recognition for supervisors and Defence Board members.

Furthermore, other important documents emphasize the orientation toward internationalization in PhD studies. The Bologna and Lisbon documents are the guidelines in the creation of an integrated and harmonious international space of higher education in Europe, including PhD studies. However, the aforementioned documents pay more attention to the Bachelor and Master level studies, while the Salzburg II document points out that PhD studies are a unique process. '[…] doctoral candidates are behaving more and more like students. […] the bigger the temptation for the doctoral candidates simply to follow the structure without developing the independence the doctorate aims for. […] adopting detailed credit systems could change candidates' chief motivation away from research towards the 'hunt for credits.' […] But it was clear that […] *the core of the doctorate process: original research*' ('Implementing the Salzburg Principles' 2010). Therefore, we focus on the *Intercultural Research Competencies* instead of the general intercultural competencies.

The intercultural research competencies should be analyzed in the context of significant societal changes. The power of globalization provides unique and qualitatively new dimensions to international-

ization. Globalization exists at the local, national, and international levels and includes changes in economy (such as trade liberalization), technology (such as the internet), and in society (the capacity to work collectively across borders) (Stienstra 2003). Many researchers agree on the point that 'globalization refers to fundamental changes in the spatial and temporal contours of social existence' (see http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/globalization). Today's society faces global problems instead of international ones. Furthermore, social problems are constantly globalized (Boli, Elliot, and Bieri 2004). The challenge for researchers lies in the fact that there is not precise and widely agreed definition on the concept of the global problem. When exploring the global problems, it is not sufficient to merely collect and compare different countries' experiences; moreover, researchers are expected to recognize the unique phenomena that cross the borders of nations, states, and other entities. Are today's PHD students ready to solve tomorrow's global problems? Moreover, how could Intercultural Research Competencies serve for exploring and solving global problems?
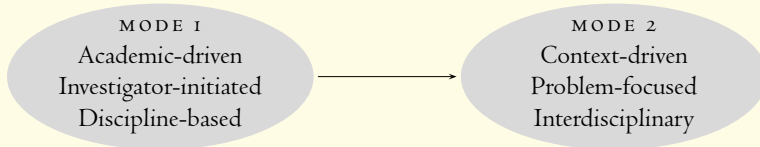
D. Savicevic (2008) points out that modern education is influenced by the *global learning paradigm* that indicates the development perspectives – learning has to be a tool that helps the mankind to learn how to understand other cultures, other civilizations, perceive global systems, their problems and options for solutions. We are all permanently included in the intercultural space; thus, the intercultural competencies are more and more important to each of us. According to M. Milana (2012), globalization inter-relates all processes in such extent context; therefore, there is a reason to talk about authentic concepts such as *common world education culture* (Meyer, Ramirez, and Soysal 1992).

The aim of the article is to reveal the importance of the PHD students' intercultural research competencies in the perspective of the global society. The chosen method – systematic analysis of the scientific literature and overview of political documents.

ARE TODAY'S PHD STUDENTS READY TO SOLVE TOMORROW'S GLOBAL PROBLEMS?

Peterson, Wunder, and Mueller (1999) point out that *global problems* are qualitatively different from traditional social problems. 'It is possible

MODE 1	MODE 2
Academic-driven	Context-driven
Investigator-initiated	Problem-focused
Discipline-based	Interdisciplinary

FIGURE 1   Illustrating paradigmatic changes (adapted from Paleari 2013)

to view global problems as social problems that are bigger than na-
tional problems. As such, global problems affect not only social sys-
tems, but also massive numbers of people' (Peterson, Wunder, and
Mueller 1999, 9). Some social problems, alongside with global com-
munication technologies, gain new power and pose higher threat in
today's society. For instance, a very old social disease, such as pornog-
raphy, is 'powered by the Internet' (Boli, Elliot, and Bieri 2004, 403).
The poverty is recognized as a global issue even though it is geograph-
ically mostly concentrated in the sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia
(Babones and Turner 2004, 102). The research challenge in this do-
main is that different countries cannot agree about the measurement
of poverty level.

Global social problems are those which cannot be confined within
the national boundaries and which need both national and interna-
tional attention, if they are to be ameliorated. Babones and Turner
(2004) note that issues, such as diseases or pollution do not respect
the national boundaries. The research challenge is to help recognize
a problem as a global issue for different countries, because 'what is
conceived as a social problem in an affluent society would not be so
considered in a less developed one' (Ritzer 2004, 4).

What does it mean to conduct a research in the global society? The
need for original and problem oriented research is related with the
paradigmatic epistemological changes, which orient from traditional
research ('Mode 1') to knowledge production ('Mode 2') (Gibbons et
al. 1994; Gray 2008).

Globalization is mostly associated with the economic, political, and
financial power. Little attention is paid to the cultural dimension in
the context of globalization. According to J. Tomlinson (2002), cul-
ture is one of the most important dimensions of globalization, as it

gives a possibility to see the phenomena from more diverse and subtle perspective than merely economic or market aspects; globalization creates a new globalized culture, which does not merely constitute the integrity of certain existing cultural elements, but also the appearance of new elements that are incorporated by the existing cultures. Peterson, Wunder, and Mueller (1999) propose to differentiate the objective globalization from the subjective globalization. The objective globalization is expressed as a growing integrity, a connection that influences values, ideas, expectations, and identity – humans' attitude. The subjective globalization embraces constant redefinition of identities and attitudes that comes from the peoples' dialogue and confrontation caused by globalization. In this perspective, culture has to be perceived as collected from various discourses that could be defined as constant communication, while the culture elements – values, attitudes – become not constant, but permanently discussed in relation to other cultures. For the exploration of the globalized communication as a cultural phenomenon, a highly interdisciplinary research is needed. Interdisciplinarity in PHD studies was the focus of the European University Association Council for Doctoral Education 6th Thematic Workshop in 17 January 2013, Turin (Italy).

THE NEED FOR INTERNATIONALIZATION
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Rapidly increasing worldwide processes of integration and globalization raise the demand for internationalization of science and studies; thus changing the parameters of higher education activity. International competitiveness of the European higher education space, international mobility, high level of employability of university and college graduates, and their successful integration in the international labor market are the main goals of the Bologna process (Lourtie 2001). The latter raises new international cooperation demands for higher education institutions: to increase teacher and student mobility, social and academic openness, to implement European dimensions in the study process and consequently internationalize studies more rapidly. The analysis of international dimensions of higher education in various international agreements and scientific literature displayed the fact that

the conception of study and science internationalization is gaining recognition, whereas the process of internationalization is becoming more mature. Thus, schools in higher education cannot delay the integration of the international phenomena dimensions into their activity and their quality *assessment* and *development.* Specific study internationalization processes, procedures, and programmes (student and teacher exchanges, *Joint degree* and *Double degree* study programmes, international research, language teaching, etc.) have become a usual part of the activities of today's higher education institutions.

Higher education internationalization in social sciences is not a new topic on the global scale. Yet, theoretical literature source analysis showed that this topic has been researched in Lithuania to a small extent, both theoretically and practically, which is contrary to the term of quality in higher education.

The concept of *internationalization* has been appearing increasingly more often in the discussions regarding international relations of higher education, as well as analyses of higher education international dimensions in various international agreements and theoretical literature resources of various countries. Internationalization process content and goals have changed considerably during the past 25 years when higher education internationalization phenomenon was strengthened all over the world (Knight 2004). Still, higher education internationalization is at its outset in a number of higher education institutions in different countries. Lithuania is no exception.

Internationalization concept has undergone several developmental stages during the last two decades. First, it was perceived as an institutional level activity. This concept is reflected in the definition presented by Arum and Water (1992), which states that internationalization is related to a 'variety of activities, programmes and services which is an international constituent of studies, international study exchanges and technical cooperation' (p. 202). Knight (1994) suggests viewing internationalization as a complex, consistent, and continuous phenomenon at an institutional level. Internationalization is considered to be 'a process of integrating international and intercultural dimensions into studies, research and functions of institutional services' (p. 7). Both definitions of internationalization are limited by

institutional level, as both emphasize the institutional activities and processes. Wende (1997) presents a broader concept of internationalization, which raises an assumption that internationalization is 'any systemic efforts aiming at making higher education to meet the requirements and challenges related to the globalisation demands and challenges of societies, economics and labour markets' (p. 18). In this definition, the international dimension is emphasized in relation to the external environment as opposed to the higher education institution itself. Therefore, the institutional level is later again referred to by offering a concept of internationalization where attention is focused on the change processes in studies and in a holistic approach to institutional management. Soderqvist (2002) defines higher education institution internationalization as 'a process of transition from national higher education institution to international higher education institution, where the involvement of international dimension into all aspects of institutional management is most important seeking to strengthen the quality of teaching and studying and to achieve the necessary competencies' (p. 29). This definition indicates the reasons of institution internationalization; therefore, it cannot be applied in all cases in the countries or institutions, which perceive internationalization in a broader sense, and not only as the improvement of the study quality or the development of competencies. Though Knight (2003) does not propose a universal definition of internationalization, she still claims that internationalization concept should be comparatively common if it is to be applied in a number of different countries, cultures, and educational systems. Therefore, internationalization is defined as 'integration of international, intercultural and global dimensions into higher education goals, functions and its provision process' (Knight 2003, 2). It is important, according to J. Knight, that this definition is appropriate for different levels, i.e. separate national, sectoral or institutional level. When comparing the former definition of the concept of internationalization presented by J. Knight (1994) (Internationalization of Higher Education is a process of integrating international and intercultural dimensions into studies, research, and functions of institutional services) with the latter, it is obvious that more indefinite concepts of 'goals, functions, and higher education provision' are proposed instead

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of the concepts of 'studies, research, and services of institution,' specific to higher education. The author claims that a definition should, first of all, conform to the modern reality; additionally, such a definition is more suitable for comparative studies. All the discussed definitions do not contradict but supplement each other. An internationalization concept, presented by Wende (1997), is particularly important for every higher education institution in the present Bologna process stage, as it indicates one of the motives of institution internationalization – the capability to react to the changes in the environment, which can be called the capacity to be a competitive institution in the context of contemporary higher education development tendencies.

Another aim of higher education internationalization is its *quality.* Researcher studies (Wende 1997; Knight 1999; 2003; 2004) and international treaties (Sorbonne declaration, Bologna declaration, Prague Communiqué, Berlin Communiqué, and Bergen Communiqué, see http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no) indicate that higher education internationalization is related to the quality of higher education. All this is implied in the belief that international cooperation and student, as well as teacher and researcher, exchanges will become the norm of the majority and will create a possibility to learn from each other, compare, and generalize the best conceptions and practical expertise, perceive a multicultural medium, learn foreign languages, etc. It is believed that international cooperation and exchanges will have a considerable impact not only on the learner, but also on the quality of processes and outcomes of the institution and higher education system. Study internationalization is directly related to the student's activity and his Professional career. Thus, more and more attention should be devoted to the students' intercultural competencies as an aid to achieve quality in internationalization and successful integration in the global market.

INTERCULTURAL RESEARCH COMPETENCIES OF PHD STUDENTS

The proponents of constructivism define competency as the process of development (developmental approach). The model of intercultural competencies' development (Fennes and Hapgood 1997) indicates competencies as certain forms of relations with culture: *ethnocen-*

trism — natural situation of a person who has not been in a relation with other cultures and evaluates the world according to the standards of his own cultural group, ready to protect the standards from other groups, *awareness* — the phase allowing the perception of the fact that there are cultural differences, *understanding* — the phase of understanding the roots of intercultural differences and their influence, *acceptance and respect* — this phase represents the beginning of understanding of cultural variety as a source of development and value, *appreciation and valuing* — finding valuable opportunities that are missed in own culture, *exchange* — appearance of new attitudes and skills that are unusual both for own and foreign culture, *intercultural competence* — a phase when an individual learns how to act effectively and not only protect own identity, but also accept peculiarities of other cultures.

In the intercultural competencies model, Byram (1997) defined the following dimensions:

- *Attitude* — this is curiosity and — at the same time — openness, readiness to stop distrust toward other cultures and the exaggerated confidence in own culture, readiness to communicate with people with other cultural experiences, a wish to interpret differently, etc.);
- *Knowledge* — different knowledge about social groups of own and other culture, created products, knowledge about common interrelation processes of individual and society, knowledge about historical and modern relations between own and other culture, knowledge about national explanation of geographic space, knowledge about the reasons and roots of misunderstandings;
- *Skills of interpretation and linking* — the ability to interpret events and documents of other culture, explain and link those with events of own culture; being able to recognize the manifestations of ethnocentrism and interpret its reasons; being able to recognize and explain domains of misunderstanding, etc.
- *Skills of discovery and interaction* — this is the ability to acquire new knowledge about culture and cultural practices, the ability to apply such knowledge, attitudes, and skills; the ability to recognize significant cultural links and clarify their connotations;

the ability to identify and apply the similarities and differences of verbal and nonverbal processes; the ability to find and apply for help of public and private institutions that could assist in connecting the representatives of other culture, etc.

- *Cultural awareness (critical cultural awareness / political self-education)* — ability — based on several criteria — critically evaluate perspectives, practices, and products in own and other cultures and countries.

According to various authors (Williams 2005; 2009; Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, and Wiseman 1991; Grunzweig and Rinehart 1998; Deardorf 2004), we may focus on the intercultural model that is based on the following three dimensions: cognitive (knowledge about cultural differences), emotional (motivation and wish to act within intercultural situations) and behavioral (skills and abilities related to intercultural situations).

Referring to the PhD students' intercultural competencies — we should recognize the necessity of cultivating and developing such competencies, especially when considering the quality of the internationalization of studies: each year there are more and more young people coming for studies from the South and West of Europe. The representatives of Turkey, Spain, and Portugal bring a colorful variety of different cultures that should be maintained in everyday work in auditoriums, research, and projects activities.

Planning the research within the field of intercultural competencies, we suggest, based on the concept of R. Laužackas (2005), that the structure of intercultural competencies is uneven and the formal competencies are the least expressed (figure 2).

As displayed in figure 2, the smallest part is allocated to the formalized competencies, while the dimensions mentioned above, such as attitude, skills for interpretation and linking, cultural awareness, etc. are hardly to be formalized by diplomas or certificates. The part defining 'recognized, but not formalized' part of competencies is supposed to be much larger. The largest part is designed for those parts of intercultural competencies, which are available for us, but are not recognized until faces with a certain problem. The absence of for-

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                   ↖      ┌ Intercultural ┐    ↗  └ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ─ ┘
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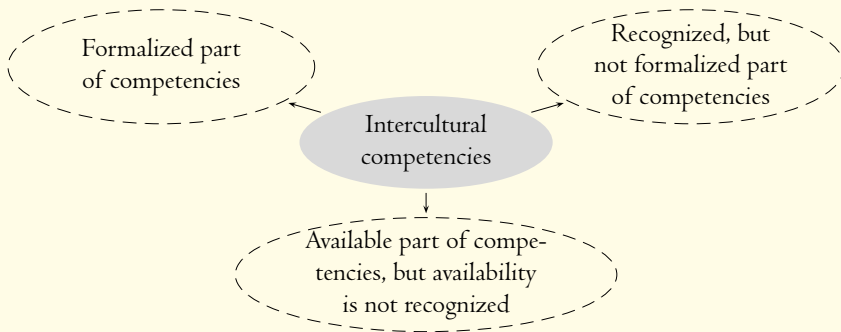
FIGURE 2   Structure of intercultural competencies

mal assessment and clear awareness that intercultural competencies are essential in PHD studies, leads us to an assumption that a set of intercultural competencies could be perceived as a *meta-competence*, with its integral components: motivation, planning, purposeful activity, and self-assessment that lead towards active individual improvement. Possessing such a meta-competence would be a strong precondition for students' participation in the intercultural environment: joint research, studies, teamwork.

DEVELOPMENT OF JOINT STUDIES' PROGRAMS IN KLAIPEDA UNIVERSITY

The quality of academic programs needs to be developed in all higher education institutions. According to the report of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, the institutions should be able to demonstrate their quality both at home as well as internationally. The technological changes and their consequences for the labor market pose new challenges for higher education institutions. In its pursuit of becoming a part of the international research and innovation field, the Klaipeda University acts in accordance with the international instruments – the documents of the Bologna Process, the Lisbon Strategy, and the documents of the European University Association. In 2000, the Lisbon Summit defined a general purpose for the European Research Area – to develop appropriate measures for the voluntary merging of national and general research programs into networks based on voluntary choice of objectives in order to make better

use of the benefits of the common resources allocated to science and research in the Member States. Klaipeda University is a member of the European University Association.

In 2011, KU has been granted permission by the Ministry of Education and Science of Lithuania to implement doctoral studies in 10 scientific fields as follows: education, political science, management and administration, economics, philology, art, history, ethnology, transport engineering, ecology and environmental science (http://www.ku.lt/en/research/doctoral-phd-studies/). Internationalization of doctoral studies is highly noteworthy. Doctoral students of the Klaipeda University are provided with favorable conditions for their participation in scientific research projects on an international scale, as well as internships in foreign countries. The aim of all those activities is to provide training for young researchers in order for them to obtain the necessary skills and abilities for work in both interdisciplinary and international teams of researchers. The participation of KU in an international project of doctoral studies in the field of marine sciences (www.mareseu.org) and ORPHEUS organization (www.orpheus-med.org) is important for the development of international character in doctoral studies. Furthermore, international TEMPUS study project eMaris, aiming at development of international third level studies in marine sciences, has been implemented (www.emaris.net).

It should be noted that young researchers of the University study and successfully defend their dissertations at foreign universities. Presently, the most active contacts are developed with Turku, Lapland, and Tampere universities (Finland), and Olomouc (Czech Republic), where our young researchers from the faculties of Health sciences and Pedagogy are involved in doctoral studies in the fields of education, social care, and social work. Six dissertations were defended in 2010–2012, another five in the above-mentioned fields are planned to be prepared and defended by 2014. Furthermore, the relations with Estonian, Finnish, and Italian universities and their researchers as also important in relation to the assistance in training of high quality researchers in physical, ecological, and environmental sciences. More contacts and joint degrees in South and Central Europe would be

appreciated, since this would contribute to widening the spectrum of research problems and fostering high quality.

CONCLUSIONS

All strategic and implementation tools should be used in order to foster intercultural activities, as this is the only way to reach globalized research and knowledge transfer. It is much easier to achieve this purpose for large and highly ranked universities. The smaller and regional universities should employ great efforts in order to be accepted in the global streams of science. Thus, all the means should be considered: internationalization of studies and research, strengthening students' intercultural competencies, encouragement of cooperation within a certain field or within interdisciplinary subjects, etc. Globalization makes internationalization not only more intense but qualitatively different.

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