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RITA KAŠA AND ALI AIT SI MHAMED

Language Policy and the Internationalization of Higher Education in the Baltic Countries

In the framework of the internationalization and globalization of higher education and competition for international students, the paper examines how language policy in higher education shapes the provision of study programs in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. It concludes that study programs in the Baltic states mostly follow the convention of a monolingual curriculum offered in the official national language, or Russian, as the largest minority language in the Baltic states, or English. Comparative analysis of international student flows also shows that while students from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are leaving to study in predominantly English-speaking countries, which dominate in the global competition for international students, language policy laws in the Baltic states, except for Estonia, remain protective of the use of the official language in public higher education.

Since the 1990s, internationalization has become a predominant trend in European higher education, accompanied by the rapid expansion of physical mobility in Europe (Teichler, 2004, p. 14). The increased mobility of students and staff is fostered by the policies set out at the European level, such as the Bologna and Lisbon

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agendas, advancing the quality of higher education as a means of increasing the global competitiveness of Europe (van der Wende, 2000). At the same time, the quality of education is closely linked to the knowledge of the language of instruction. The mobility of students and staff requires a common language of communication for both hosts and visitors.

Language policy in higher education, more specifically the international dominance of the English language, is a much-discussed issue. A question that consistently reappears in the literature is whether English “may be threatening the life of other languages, or at least occupying the territories that traditionally have been their preserve” (Phillipson, 2006, p. 13). Brock-Utne (2002) also argues that the increasing dominance of English works “to the detriment of the academic use of so-called small languages” (p. 283).

While English as the Latin of the twenty-first century (Altbach, 2006) benefits countries in the competition for international students, the literature asserts that there are unequal positions of power in this competition. Marginson (2006) and Stromquist (2002) point out that English as a lingua franca offers a major advantage for academic institutions in Anglo-Saxon countries. Indeed, for years the majority of international students globally have been traveling to pursue their studies in English-speaking countries, and institutions of these countries have been exporting their educational services in English to students abroad (Institute of International Education, 2010). In order not to miss out on this trend, countries with native languages other than English are increasingly offering study programs in English as well. However, as Donker (1993) argues, education in the English language is both a method and a symbol of becoming and being a member of a cosmopolitan culture. According to Donker (1993), it is not the supply of internationally oriented education that promotes internationalization and the use of English, but rather the demand for more international education in English. Meanwhile, Kozma and Radacs (2000) raise the issue of higher education of minority groups in Europe and ask how internationalization and the use of minority languages in higher education programs relate to each other. They argue that “the evolution of minority higher education will assist higher education as a whole in becoming international by making the higher education systems of given countries increasingly colourful and thus accessible not only to those who speak one language but to those who speak several other languages as well” (p. 41).

The above observations apply to the case of the internationalization of higher education in the Baltic states. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania all have expressed a national policy aim to increase the international competitiveness of their national higher education systems. Increasing the number of international students is one of the tasks of this project, and thus, language of instruction is becoming an important issue: the availability of study programs in languages of incoming students is critical to a country’s capacity to attract foreign students (van der Wende, 2000). At the same time, however, all three countries embrace language policies aimed at strengthening and promoting the titular national languages.

Based on data collected in early 2009, this study examines language policy in the higher education systems of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, with particular attention to how such policies determine or delimit the actions of tertiary institutions in providing study programs in non-national, foreign languages. We explore whether the internationalization of higher education in the Baltic states resembles the “multilingual European university” envisioned by Kozma and Radacsi (2000), where education takes place in the official national language as well as in English and minority languages. The dominant minority language in Estonia and Latvia is Russian, while in Lithuania both Russian and Polish are prominent minority languages. This paper describes the availability of study programs in foreign languages of instruction as well as outbound and inbound student mobility in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, thus illuminating how the higher education systems of the three countries are positioned in the global mobility of students.

Our purpose is to explore how language policies and tendencies in the Baltics, and specifically the use of foreign languages such as English and Russian in national higher education systems, influence and are influenced by the pattern of international student mobility within the framework of competition for foreign students. We should clarify that the terms “international” and “foreign” students are used interchangeably in this paper to refer to students who leave their country of origin to pursue degrees in a different country. Thus, we do not account for such European-level student exchange programs as ERASMUS, which promotes internationalization of higher education via short-term nondegree student exchange.

Literature on language policy and the competition for international students in the framework of internationalization, Europeanization, and globalization of higher education guides our analysis in this paper. We review and discuss the interconnectedness of these concepts and apply them when comparing the language policies and internationalization of higher education in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. At the same time, we view the issue of the internationalization of higher education in the Baltic countries in the context of declining demographic trends locally (Chawla, Betcherman, & Banjeri, 2007; Mizikaci & Baumgartl, 2007) and the intensifying competition for university-bound students internationally.

Internationalization, Europeanization, globalization, and language in higher education

The discussion of cross-national higher education activities in Europe requires consideration of three terms: internationalization, Europeanization, and globalization. These terms are similar in the sense that they characterize a trend away from a closed national system of higher education toward a system where multiple actors interact on multiple levels of action (Teichler, 2004). But there are also important differences between these concepts and their implications. The literature makes a distinction between globalization and internationalization of higher education by construing the former as a matter of primarily economic competition and the latter

as a program of mostly academic cooperation (Frolich & Veiga, 2005). Europeanization, in turn, is viewed as the regional version of internationalization rather than globalization (Teichler, 2004). As Teichler (2004) explains, Europeanization is driven by policies set on the European level, such as the Bologna process, which calls for the standardization of study programs and degrees across Europe, and the encouragement of horizontal mobility and cooperation between academic institutions.

Although the literature describes the differences between these terms along the lines of academic cooperation and competition, developments with respect to higher education language policy and international student mobility indicate that there is some convergence between their meanings and ultimate outcomes. Numerous studies (e.g. Donker, 1993; Kerklaan, Moreira, & Boersma, 2008; Landberg & Kalpazidou Schmidt, 2010; and Sullivan & Enever, 2009) see the expansion of English as a language of instruction in countries with different local languages regardless of whether the issue is viewed in the context of globalization or internationalization, or the Europeanization of higher education.

The role of language is important in the context of international student movement. Frolich and Veiga (2005) conclude that “The language policies are closely related to the internationalization engagements and could be seen concurrently as a factor impeding and fostering internationalization” (p. 9). Luijten-Lub, Polydorides, van der Wende, and Williams (2004) argue that language may attract international students from similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds, while it may be a barrier to bringing international students to countries with less-spoken languages (as cited in Frolich & Veiga, 2005). It stems from the literature that the internationalization of higher education appears to drive the expansion of English rather than increase the diversity of languages used. Despite the political initiative on the level of the European Union to support multilingual education (Enever, 2009), there is a growing number of higher education study programs in Europe offered in the “globalization language, English” (Brock-Utne, 2002, p. 292). In their comparative study of national policies for internationalization of higher education in seven Western European countries, Luijten-Lub, Polydorides, van der Wende, and Williams (2005) conclude that “English is becoming the new lingua franca in higher education” (p. 160). Writing on the Europeanization of higher education, Sullivan and Enever (2009) argue that the increasing use of English has received “impetus from the establishment of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA)” (p. 216), explaining that many universities that initially did not use English increasingly perceive a need to make courses in English available to students from other EHEA countries.

The forces of globalization may explain why English, and not any other language, is the new Latin of internationalizing European academia. Research shows that English has many more non-native speakers than native speakers, and that it is used more often in settings with no native speakers present compared to settings with native English speakers (Haberland, 2011). English is the global language of

competition for international students and some universities are in a much better position to take advantage of this than others. Marginson (2006) and Stromquist (2002) point out that English as the lingua franca offers a major advantage for academic institutions in countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. These countries can easily market their higher education programs abroad because many students worldwide seek instruction in English. Thus, given the globally dominant role of English as the language of academia and the fact that the language of instruction is critical to a country's capacity to attract foreign students, other countries are under pressure to open study programs in English if they wish to compete for students internationally.

At the same time, Dale (1999) emphasizes that "'Globalization' is not, as sometimes appears to be implied, the answer to any questions about the nature and orientations of national policies, but it does require one to consider anew how those policies are formed, shaped and directed" (p. 1). While Dale (*ibid.*) argues that globalization has not made nation states obsolete or irrelevant, he also admits that all states to some degree have lost their capacity to make policy independently. Due to globalization, states face similar patterns of challenges and shape their responses to these challenges in similar ways. Dale (*ibid.*) refers to the idea put forward by Habermas that governments have to adapt their "national welfare systems to what is called the capacity for international competition" (p. 2). Competition in higher education takes on a global character as institutions of tertiary education strive to become internationally attractive. The expectation that internationalization is a way of ensuring quality in higher education, and thus facilitating the economic competitiveness of higher education systems, is closely related to the use of English in their curriculum (Frolich & Veiga, 2005; Luijten-Lub, van der Wende & Huisman, 2005).

Although there are multiple issues associated with the quality of study content delivered by a non-native speaker (Sullivan & Enever, 2009), the perception of the quality of higher education in a country and at an institution is essential for students making decisions about pursuing a degree abroad. Student mobility is one of the central characteristics of the internationalization of higher education (Teichler, 2004). Evidence shows that European higher education systems in the context of internationalization increasingly develop policies to target student immigration (Frolich & Veiga, 2005; Teichler, 2004). Researchers observe that such national policy developments are linked to policies for attracting foreign fee-paying students, and not as much to social, political, cultural, and academic reasons (Luijten-Lub et al., 2004 as cited in Frolich & Veiga, 2005; Stromquist, 2002). Thus, competition for international students is yet another feature that characterizes both the globalization and internationalization of higher education.

Less visible in these debates are arguments in favor of using other large and regionally important languages when internationalizing higher education. Kozma and Radacsi (2000) argue that tertiary institutions should offer study programs in minority languages and "should play a special role in the multicultural and polyglot

Europe of the future” (p. 45). These authors cite examples of interinstitutional collaboration in border areas with mixed ethnic populations and claim that changes favorable to multilingual university education “will have to be achieved against an unfavorable background of economic hardship and restructuring” (Kozma & Radacsi, 2000, p. 45). The authors do not make a case for regional languages balancing out the dominance of English in higher education, but they advocate that higher education has the power to form a bridge between people on two sides of a political border. What Kozma and Radacsi (2000) overlook here, however, are the sometimes divisive political histories and attitudes existing between countries that may be the greatest hindrance to regional cross-border internationalization. In the Baltic context, policy decisions regarding the use of language are still framed by thorny historical legacies of Soviet occupation.

The context for contemporary higher education language policies in the Baltic states

After the breakdown of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, the Baltic states, among other newly emerged democracies, had to engage in the process of state and nation building; this in practice meant the development of a shared idea of the state and nation among the population (Norgaard & Johannsen, 1999). Reforming the systems of education that had experienced consistent Russification during Soviet rule was crucial in this task. The two-stream school system for children educated in Russian and for children educated in the local titular language was one such historical legacy to be addressed in education (Silova & Catlaks, 2001).

Reforms that followed in this vein allowed for education in the languages of local ethnic minorities while at the same time strengthening the titular languages as the means for acquiring education (Hogan-Brun, 2007; Priedite, 2005). A focus on bilingual general education, with the national language as the primary, foundational language, as a means of fostering social cohesion was characteristic in all three Baltic cases. However, various aspects of language reforms in education differed between Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. In the case of Latvia, language reform requiring increasing the proportion of the curriculum taught in Latvian in minority schools resulted in inflamed exchanges between the governing Latvian elite and a large part of the Russian population (Hogan-Brun, 2006; Priedite, 2005).

While language reforms in general education kept making news headlines, the transition to higher education in the official national languages did not stir such emotion. Prior to the Baltic states’ independence, institutions of higher education in the three countries, all of them state owned, were required to implement study programs in Russian, the official language of the Soviet Union, along with study programs in the local titular language. In the USSR, higher education was applied as a tool for the top-down reshaping of the social structure along not only socio-economic but also ethnic lines as different higher education admission criteria were applied to certain social and ethnic groups (Karklins, 1984). After gaining

independence, any admission quotas of a social and ethnic nature were revoked and all three Baltic states reinstated the languages of the titular populations as the official languages of the state as well as higher education. Thus, knowledge of the official language became one of the criteria determining admission to public universities. The use of Russian as the language of instruction at public tertiary institutions was abolished and study programs in Russian became part of the curriculum of private institutions.

Further shift in the use of languages in higher education, moving from Russian to English as an international medium of communication, was fostered by the need to modernize the higher education curriculum, especially in the social sciences. During the Soviet era there were virtually no contacts between tertiary institutions in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and institutions outside the USSR (Eurydice, 2010a, p. 240). Higher education, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, was strongly ideological (Nikolaeva, 2006). One of the challenges arising with independence was the need to depoliticize, modernize, and internationalize local higher education. Modernization of higher education in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania included the creation of new study programs with curricular content previously absent such as communications, political science, business administration, public relations, international relations, and so forth. The curriculum in these programs was more often than not modeled on international standards (Dovladbekova, Muravska, & Paas, 2006). International academic collaboration agreements with Western countries enabling the international mobility of students and academic staff as one of the ways of promoting positive changes in higher education came into effect as well. Some collaborations of this kind were already started at the end of the 1980s (Eurydice, 2010b).

Scandinavian countries, Germany, the UK, the US, and Canada were among the first Western countries to develop contacts with the Baltic states in the field of higher education, consisting of the exchange of education specialists, training, and other material support (Eurydice, 2010b). Sustained efforts to improve social science education were provided by EuroFaculty, set up by the Council of the Baltic Sea States in 1993 and funded by Denmark, Finland, Germany, Norway, and the UK, as well as by the EU PHARE and TEMPUS funds dedicated to upgrading university education in economics, social science, and law (Dovladbekova, Muravska, & Paas, 2006, p. 179). Accession to the EU strengthened the direction of the Europeanization and internationalization of higher education in the Baltic countries. The Baltic states engaged actively in the Bologna process and activities toward forming the EHEA.

The modernization of higher education in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania meant the introduction of English as a working language. For example, nearly all courses taught in the programs of EuroFaculty were taught in English and most contemporary research became available in English. Thus, although English is the most commonly used foreign language in higher education settings in the Baltic countries, contemporary language policy in higher education in the Baltic countries

is impacted by prior historical context and is aimed at sustaining and developing the use of the national languages in higher education. The need to strengthen the international competitiveness of the national higher education systems is also becoming an issue driving the reconsideration of higher education language policy. The systems of higher education of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania have merged into the global flow of international students, meaning that students not only come to these countries, but also leave them to study abroad. Most international students from the Baltic countries choose to pursue their degree either in the United States or Western European countries, or in Russia (UNESCO, 2006, 2009, 2010). There is a steady trend of predominantly outbound student mobility as there are more outbound than inbound international students in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (UNESCO, 2006, 2009, 2010). (See Tables 1 and 2.)

The overall negative demographic slope, demonstrating a decreasing number of eligible higher education applicants in the Baltic states, poses yet another challenge to their systems of higher education. By some forecasts for 2025, the aging and shrinking of the population will reduce the number of the student-age cohort by more than 40 percent in Latvia and Lithuania and close to 40 percent in Estonia (Chawla et al., 2007, p. 235). Estimates for the longer term are even more dramatic and predict that by 2050 the national enrollment in higher education in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania alone will be insufficient to ensure the survival of the systems (Mizikaci & Baumgartl, 2007). Thus, the ability of local systems of higher education to attract more international students may be a key strategy for maintaining academic quality standards at tertiary educational institutions. In that case, the Baltic institutions will have to compete for students with other higher education institutions at the regional, European, and global level. The language of instruction at the schools of higher learning will become crucial for attracting international students.

Research design description

To explore how language policies in the higher education systems of the Baltics have changed in response to internationalization, policy documents and data on study programs in various languages and foreign student enrollment was collected and analyzed in early 2009. The principle sources of data are policy framework documents, national laws and regulations pertaining to the use of language in higher education, and goals for internationalizing the tertiary education sector. Public records on study programs offered in languages other than official national languages and the number of foreign students enrolled in various programs were obtained for all three countries.

Latvian-language proficiency helped the researchers to retrieve data on Latvia independently, using public records alone. To access data on Estonia and Lithuania the researchers contacted representatives of the ministries of education in both countries. In the case of Lithuania, contacts were also made with representatives

Lithuania												
2004	6,926	4.10	2.90	Germany	1,701	UK	1,487	UK	1,968			
2007	6,762	3.70	2.60	Russia	1,690	Germany	1,405	Germany	1,302			
2008	6,928	3.40	2.60	US	691	Russia	869	Russia	869*			
				Poland	628*	Latvia	838**	US	496			
				Latvia	507*	US	548	Poland	397*			

*Data—1 year; **data—2 years.

Source: Table constructed based on data available in UNESCO Institute for Statistics Global Education Digest (2006, 2009, 2010).

Table 2

Inbound Student Mobility to the Baltic States

Country	Inbound students	Net mobility	Inbound mobility rate (%)	2004	2007	2008	No. of students arriving	No. of students arriving
Estonia								
2004	1,090*	-2,631	1.7*	CE Europe	n.a.	North America and Western Europe	646*	696
2007	966	-2,279		North America and Western Europe	307*	CE Europe	307*	247
				<i>Top 5 region of origin for inbound students</i>		East Asia and the Pacific	116*	58
2008	1,032	-2,428	1.50	Central Asia	6*	Central Asia	6*	10
				Other	15*	Other	15*	31

Table 3

An Overview of Higher Education Systems, Student Mobility, and Study Programs in Foreign Languages in the Baltic Countries in 2008/2009

	Foreign students (% of student pop.)	Top five countries by foreign student origin (nr. of students)	Ethnic composition of the country (%)	Students studying in		Type of HEI with study programs in		Number of HEI that offer study programs in		Outbound student mobility (% of student pop.)	Top five destinations for local students (nr. of students)
				English	Russian	English	Russian	English	Russian		
Estonia	1,032**	Finland (602) Latvia (111) Russia (55)	Estonian 68 Russian 26 Other 6	1,076	7,144	Mostly public	Public and private	9	16	3,468 (5.1%)	Finland (681) UK (658) Germany (594) Russia (558)*
Population: 1.3 million	-1,50%	China (51)	(Year 2000)								
Number of higher education institutions: 34	1,079***										
Total enrollment: 68,399 students		Lithuania (25) Russia (398) Lithuania (301)		1,658	11,482	Public	Private	10	9	4,059 (3.2%)	US (245) UK (1,145) Russia (788)*
Latvia	1,475**										
Population: 2.2 million	-1,20%	Georgia (108) Germany (98)	Other 12 (Year 2002)								
Number of higher education institutions: 56	1,583***										
Total enrollment: 112,555 students		Estonia (88)									Germany (684) US (363) France (165)

Lithuania	2955**	Belarus (1946)	Lithuanian 83%	4,117	1,905	Mostly public	9	5	6928 (3.4%)	UK (1968)
	-1.40%	Poland (288)	Polish 7%							Germany (1302)
Population: 3.3 mil.	2820***	Germany (154)	Russian 6%							Russia (869)*
Number of HEI: 46		Turkey (146)	Other 4%							USA (496)
Total enrollment: 201,005 students		Russia (117)	(Year 2001)							Poland (397)*

*Data—1 year; **data by UNESCO; ***data by ministries of education in the Baltic countries
Source: Data provided by UNESCO (2010), ministries of education in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania (2009), and census offices at the Baltic countries (2009, 2011).

of the largest public universities. In the process of requesting data, the researchers applied a semi-structured interview protocol in order to obtain comparable data for the three countries that also captures nationally specific information. Data garnered from expert sources in Estonia and Lithuania was provided in writing via email correspondence (K. Klooster, analyst at the Estonian MoER, personal communication, 12 February 2009; A. Sirkaite, chief specialist at the Division of Higher Education at Lithuanian MoES, personal communication, 9 March 2009; K. Starkus, Division of Law at Lithuanian MoES, personal communication, 6 March, 2009).

Data obtained for this study were organized in order to develop a description of higher education language policy, study programs in foreign languages, and foreign student enrollment patterns in each of the Baltic countries. The conclusions in this paper on the intersection of language policy and internationalization of higher education were derived by comparative analysis of data on Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania and by evaluating this data in light of propositions made in the literature on internationalization and globalization of higher education with respect to competitiveness and language of instruction.

International student mobility and study programs in foreign languages in the Baltic countries

Systems of higher education in the three Baltic states are rather small, just like the countries themselves. By 2009, the total number of students in higher education ranged from almost 70,000 in Estonia to about 200,000 in Lithuania, with Latvia in between. Due to liberal market approaches toward private higher education in Latvia (Pachuashvili, 2009), the total number of tertiary institutions in this country was greater than in any other two. (See Table 3.)

In terms of international student enrollment, there were more similarities than differences between the three Baltic neighbors. By 2009, there was almost the same proportion of foreign students enrolled in degree study programs at higher educational institutions in all three countries, ranging from 1.2 percent in Latvia to 1.5 percent in Estonia. International students represented 70 countries in Estonia, 58 countries in Latvia, and about 75 countries in Lithuania.

Russia was among the top five “sending” countries of international students to all three Baltic States. At the same time, especially in Estonia and Latvia, most students in Russian language study programs were local Russian-speaking residents. Both in Estonia and Latvia, there were more students studying in Russian than in English (K. Klooster, personal communication, 12 February 2009). In Latvia, Russian-study programs enrolled 11,482 students, almost seven times more than the number enrolled in programs in English—1,658 (Latvian Ministry of Education and Science, 2009). In addition, in Latvia nearly all international students at public universities were enrolled in English-language study programs, while at private institutions the majority of international students studied in Russian. Only in Lithuania, where the number of international full-degree students has quadrupled since 2005, did

more students study in English than in Russian (Statistics Lithuania, 2009a). As in the two other Baltic countries, the number of students in Lithuania in programs with a foreign language of instruction was substantially higher than the number of international students in the country. This difference could be explained by the presence of local students in study programs with foreign languages of instruction. Yet, unlike in Estonia and Latvia, residents of the rather monoethnic Lithuania opted for studying in English when choosing to study in foreign language.

Among the most popular study programs taught in English in all three Baltic States were programs in business, medical sciences, and social sciences. Well-attended study programs delivered in Russian in Latvia and Estonia included the areas of information technologies, logistics, and business (Estonian MoER, 2010; Latvian MoES, 2009). The most common programs delivered in Russian in Lithuania, however, were social sciences and arts (Bologna Process Website, 2009).

In 2009, higher education institutions in all Baltic countries offered multiple study programs in English next to the study content in the national official languages and in Russian. There was no evidence of substantial penetration of EU languages other than English as media of instruction in all three Baltic states. In Estonia and Latvia, Russian-language study programs reflected local demand rather than an international orientation in higher education.

Inbound and outbound student mobility in all three Baltic countries revealed regional, European, and global dimensions. Among the most popular destinations for Baltic youth were countries like Germany, Russia, the UK, and the US. In 2008, there were about three times more students who left to study abroad than inbound students who came to study in Estonia, Latvia, or Lithuania from some other country. Thus, the Baltic states were losing in the global competition for international students.

Language policies and internationalization of higher education in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania

The “action arena” (Ostrom, 2005) for international student mobility and the availability of study programs in foreign languages in the Baltic countries is framed by national policies. A review of policy documents that ground internationalization of higher education and support study programs in English in the Baltic countries reveals a more globalizing approach in Estonia and more protectionist attitudes in Latvia and Lithuania.

Since 2006, Estonian national policy has been oriented toward rising the international visibility, openness, and competitiveness of Estonian higher education (Eurydice, 2010a, p. 242; Riigikogu, 2006). In order to achieve this goal by 2015, policy prescribes that three percent of all permanent teaching positions at higher education institutions should be filled by foreign faculty, the proportion of foreign doctoral students and postdoctoral students should reach 10 percent, and the number of foreign students should reach 2,000, about two times more than in

2008 (Riigikogu, 2006). Estonian higher education development strategy is explicit about transitioning to graduate education in English as a way to “boost the attractiveness of Estonian higher education and increase the opportunities available to [Estonian] local students and their subsequent competitiveness in the international labor market” (ibid., p. 7).

To foster internationalization, the Estonian government has pledged financial support to study programs in foreign languages so long as the curriculum is coordinated with the general strategic development of the country (Eurydice, 2010a). National strategic goals involve the development and use of the Estonian language in academic contexts while supporting the internationalization of higher education (Estonian Language Foundation, 2011). Catherine College of Tallinn University, which offers study programs in Russian transitioning to instruction in Estonian by the last year of studies, is an example of accommodating both the aims of internationalization and supporting Estonian language in higher education (Tallinn University, n.d.).

Unlike in Estonia where national policy has a uniform approach to public and private institutions of higher education in respect to internationalization and the use of foreign languages, public institutions in Latvia face more regulations than private ones. Public universities in Latvia are limited by law to offering study programs in official languages of the EU, based on international agreements between tertiary institutions (Saeima, 1995). Foreigners studying in these programs for a duration of more than six months or acquiring more than 20 credit points are required to learn Latvian as part of their higher education program. If only a part of the curriculum of study program is delivered in a foreign—official EU—language at a public institution, the portion in the foreign language of instruction should not exceed 20 percent of a study program and it cannot include the qualification exam for final diploma work. According to the law, non-EU languages at public universities can be used only if they are taught as a special study program aimed at teaching a particular language and culture (e.g., Chinese) (Saeima, 1995). None of these regulations are compulsory in private institutions of higher education in Latvia, which thus enjoy more freedom in developing study programs in foreign languages of instruction than public universities.

Overall, official higher education internationalization policy in Latvia emphasizes institutional collaboration in the framework of the EU and international academic agreements. The government has pledged support to fostering the international competitiveness of Latvia’s higher education via promoting its internationalization and reducing immigration barriers to inbound academic mobility (Latvian Cabinet of Ministers, 2009). Nevertheless, the recruitment of foreign students in the face of the declining demographic slope of the traditional university age cohort is not addressed by the national policy and remains primarily a concern for institutions of higher education in Latvia.

Most southern of the Baltic countries, Lithuania has formulated a goal of developing its international dimension as part of its plan to improve the quality of

higher education and ensure its competitiveness on the European level and globally. Its program for the internationalization of higher education aims at increasing the number of foreign students and establishing study programs with foreign languages of instruction (A. Sirkaite, personal communication, 9 March 2009). There is a political goal to promote joint degree programs with institutions of higher education abroad, especially on the masters and Ph.D. level (Eurydice, 2010c, pp. 339–40).

A feature that distinguishes the Lithuanian approach to internationalization of higher education from its northern neighbors is their normative emphasis on attracting “gifted foreign students” to the country’s higher education system (A. Sirkaite, personal communication, 9 March 2009). When inviting foreign students, Lithuania gives a strategic priority to scholars intending to study Lithuanian philology as this is viewed as an essential step in preserving and developing national identity (Eurydice, 2010c). Another feature that distinguishes the Lithuanian approach is its special policy toward foreign students of Lithuanian origin. There are annual quotas for the preferential admission of the children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren of emigrants and of foreigners of Lithuanian descent (Eurydice, 2010c).

The approach of higher education language policy in Lithuania is closer to the one carried out in Latvia than in Estonia. According to the law, the medium of instruction at public tertiary institutions is Lithuanian (Seimas, 2009). Other languages can be used if the content of a study program is linked to another language, lectures are delivered by foreign faculty, or part of joint degree program is carried out outside Lithuania. Teaching in a foreign language can also take place in study programs for foreigners, in the case of study exchanges, or at private institutions of higher education. Overall, universities in Lithuania mostly offer courses and not full study programs in foreign languages of instruction (Eurydice, 2010c).

A review of national policies in the Baltic states shows that increasing the international competitiveness of the national higher education system is an aim shared by all three countries. An explicit link, however, between competitiveness, internationalization, and English-instructed higher education is only outlined by Estonian policy. Estonian policy documents place an emphasis on gains from an international environment accessible to Estonian students at home, assuming that study programs in English would attract more foreign students to Estonia. In the policies of the other two Baltic countries such explicit statements were absent altogether, thus calling into question the link that Latvian and Lithuanian policies make between internationalization, language of instruction, and fostering the international competitiveness of their higher education systems. The policies of these two countries tend to view their higher education systems in the framework of EU student mobility rather than in the context of a competitive global market for students. Overall, the concept of promoting the international competitiveness of national higher education by using English-language study programs to attract international students as signs of globalizing higher education were present in Estonian policy but not in Latvia and Lithuania, where there continued to be an emphasis on intra-European cooperation.

On the national policy level, the Baltic countries did not present the case of what Kozma and Radacsi (2000) call “multilingual European universities,” where curriculum of any given study program is delivered in the language of the state, in English, and in the local language of the minority (p. 45). Study programs in Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania tended to follow the convention of monolingual or at most bilingual instruction, delivered either in the official language, in English or in Russian, or in the official language and a foreign language.

Conclusions

By examining the language policies that framed higher education in the Baltic states at the outset of the second decade of the twenty-first century, the current paper adds to the literature on the internationalization and globalization of higher education in Europe. It discusses the pattern of international student mobility in relation to the use of English and Russian languages within the framework of competition for foreign students in the Baltic countries, an issue that has not been extensively addressed in the literature.

We conclude that by 2009, English, the language of global competition for international students, dominated the internationalization process of higher education in the Baltic countries. This finding confirms observations in the literature that English is the language of academic cooperation as well as competition in higher education (Luijten-Lub, et al., 2006; Stromquist, 2002; Sullivan & Enever, 2009). The dominance of English as the foreign language of instruction appeared to be a sign of internationalization and Europeanization with an emphasis on academic cooperation rather than of globalization with an emphasis on competition of tertiary education—particularly in Latvia and Lithuania. At the policy level, Latvia and Lithuania were predominantly focused on academic collaborations within the EU. Estonia, however, aimed at increasing the numbers of international students in higher education not limited to the EU only. Estonian policy documents showed a clear link between plans to increase the number of domestic students studying in English, the international competitiveness of Estonian higher education, and the economy at large. Thus, although the three Baltic countries were active in internationalizing their higher education, national approaches revealed variations in responses to the globalization of higher education. This supports the notion that countries do not respond to globalization forces in higher education in a uniform manner and strengthens the argument that globalization has not made nation states obsolete or irrelevant even though their policies are influenced by the international context (Dale, 1999).

Inbound and outbound international student mobility analyzed in the paper showed that systems of higher education in all three Baltic states were not spared the global competition for students. In all three countries about three times more students were leaving to study abroad, most to English-speaking countries, than were arriving. In this context, only in Estonia was there an explicit governmental

policy of joining in the global competition for students by offering graduate-level study programs in English. Latvia and Lithuania continued to preserve the national higher education space for the official national languages and to offer public support for study programs emerging as a result of cooperation between local and foreign institutions of higher education, typically from other EU countries. Nevertheless, English dominated the study programs of international orientation in these two countries, affirming its dominant role as the language of academia, one critical to the country's capacity to attract foreign students (van der Wende, 2000).

Despite the status of Russian as lingua franca and the existence of a potential market for international students in the areas of the former Soviet Union, the official higher education policies of the Baltic states were not significantly directed toward promoting student enrollment from the countries to the east of the Baltic border. The presence of study programs in Russian in the Baltic states reflected the demand of the local Russian-speaking population rather than an international orientation or the development of "a multilingual European university" (Kozma & Radacsi, 2000) where the languages of local minorities would be integrated in the curriculum on the equal footing with the official national language and some of the foreign languages. Even though there are considerable minority populations in the Baltic countries, the official policies toward the use of language in higher education at the beginning of the twenty-first century were guided by assertions of strengthening national official languages while advancing the international profile by using instruction in English.

The approach of acknowledging English as the language of international competition for students can be understood in the light of the negative demographic trends, specifically the decreasing number of eligible local higher education applicants in the Baltic states. According to some estimates, demographic decline will be so substantial that it will threaten the survival of higher education systems in the Baltic states (Mizikaci & Baumgartl, 2007). One of the responses to this situation, a policy choice that appears to be conscious in the case of Estonia and less so in the case of other two Baltic countries, is the increase of study content offered in foreign languages, predominantly in English, which would make higher education accessible to students from other countries. At the same time, the availability of English-language study content alone will not be sufficient to increase the number of foreign students and to retain local students inclined to leave for studies abroad. Complex solutions involving internationally accessible, competitive curriculum and student aid benefits will be important for ensuring student enrollment that allows for higher education systems not just to survive but also thrive.

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