

2014-2020 Operational
Programme for the
European Union Funds
Investments in Lithuania



VYTAUTAS
MAGNUS
UNIVERSITY
M C M X X I I

"Digital badges for students' assessment and recognition. A university case"

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The main goal of the paper

- is to describe current practice and experience of one university in application of digital badges with particular attention to *two research questions*:
- What are the purposes of issuing digital badges to students?
- How digital badges are used in fully online or blended learning studies referring to student's assessment and recognition?



- There is a considerable number of studies which already refer the use of DB in HE.
- Badges are growing in popularity in HE (Stefaniak & Carey, 2019).
- Researchers and practitioners have offered solutions how to introduce DB, what information has to be embedded in metadata of DB, how the learner can earn DB, what technical standards allow sharing digital badges with others.



DBs in HE

- Nonetheless, each university implements DBs differently and solves emerging problems in its own way.
- The traditional university setting is trusting more paradigms of academic credentialing and educational assessment and is not particularly keen on including a new type of credentials in the form of digital badges that are transforming education and learning (Casilli & Hickey, 2016).



Theoretical findings demonstrate that DB at Universities are issued for different purposes and on different levels as shown:

Level	Purpose
University	To award teachers and/or students for activities in Learning Management system.
Programme	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encouragement of motivation 2. Assessment of learning achievements 3. Certification through micro-credentials
Course	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Recognition of skills, experiences and knowledge gained outside academia.



Case study design

- A case study design has been selected in order to analyse real-life issues and practices.
- Virtual learning environment (VLE) and characteristics of meta data of digital badges have been analysed.



- The unit of the case study is comprised of 13 different study courses and datasheets, generated by VLE analytical tools, where digital badges were created, activated, and issued to students.
- All of the analysed study courses belong to either humanities or social sciences.
- Besides, the analysed courses are designed for blended or fully online learning mode.



The data collection method

is analysis of the database of a VLE.

VLE was used as the database to collect evidence of digital badge design and application for students' motivation and recognition.

A careful examination of the metadata of digital badges was performed in order to find out information on their type and purpose.

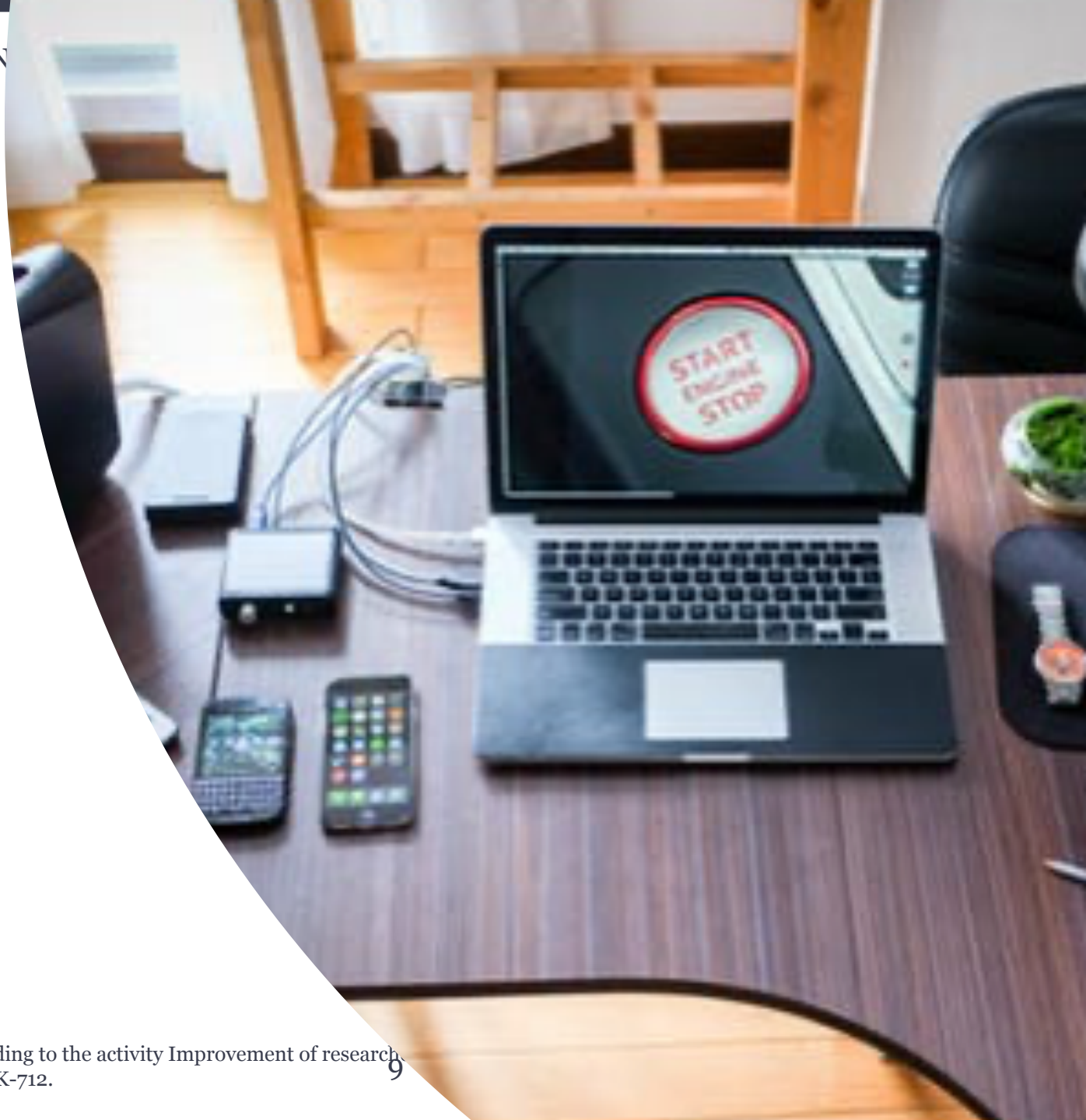




The Findings

The case analyses of existing application and practices of DBs at university reveal the purposes of issuing digital badges to students.

- The vast majority of digital badges that have been issued to students is to help to assess students' knowledge, skills, and competencies.
- The minority of DBs demonstrate willingness of teachers to admit soft skills, personal features of students, to motivate them to study.





The Findings

Unfortunately, recognition of knowledge, skills, and competencies *gained in other environments* that do not belong to the university using DB do not take please at the University.





The Findings

- In most cases not the system but teachers decide whether to give a DB or not while this might be rather subjective.
- As a contrast, a more objective procedure could be suggested when the system itself gives digital badges to students after they fulfil predefined criteria.



To Conclude

- Virtual learning environment analysis proves that digital badges are used in fully online or blended learning studies.
- Digital badge metadata analysis confirms a rather poor and detail lacking descriptions about when and why digital badges are being issued.





Research findings suggest

All those findings indicate that teachers desperately need training in preparing data, describing results, and employing virtual learning platform to create digital badge based on evidences.

