

Ukrainian Universities in European Educational and Scientific Space: Achievements, Opportunities and Barriers

This article aims to discuss the achievements, opportunities and barriers that stand in the way of entering Ukrainian universities into the common European educational and scientific space. On the basis of analysis of expert survey shows how Ukrainian universities, teachers and students corresponds to European standards of education.

Contradictions of the modernization of university education in the context of Ukraine's European integration

Ukraine's accession to the Bologna Process in 2005 contributed to the rapid convergence of the university education in the country with European standards. I. Zharskaya and V. Netkova have analysed the dynamics of major indices of higher education market and have found out the main trends of its development¹. One of the major trends is the rapid approach of Ukrainian universities with European standards. Although this process began in the 90s of the twentieth century². Currently, scientists admit that the world of the university is no longer confined to its classic model. The most common model is the "entrepreneurial university"; the model of an "academic university"; the model of a "corporate university"; the model of a "regional university complex"; the model of an "open university"; the model of a "research university"³. The model of the entrepreneurial university

¹ See Жарская И. А., Неткова В. Н. 'Современное состояние и тенденции развития образовательных услуг в Украине: статистические оценки' (Contemporary condition and tendencies of development of educational services in Ukraine: statistical evaluation) у «Статистика України» 2/2014 http://ukrstat.org/druk/Magazine/2014/2/an_r.htm

² See Корсак К. В. 'Світова вища освіта. Порівняння і визнання закордонних кваліфікацій і дипломів' (World higher education. Comparison and legitimation of foreign classifications and diplomas), (Київ: МАУП-МКА, 1997. – 208 с.).

³ See Поляков М. В. 'Класичний університет: еволюція, сучасний стан, перспективи' (Classical university: evolution, contemporary situation, perspectives), (Київ: Генеза, 2004. – 416 с.).

(the entrepreneurial university) has been used successfully by European universities, and it is gaining popularity in the modern world (particularly in Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, etc.)⁴. However, scientists note that commercialization of higher education and universities' loss of autonomy (academic, financial, etc.) damage universities⁵. In Ukraine, the search for an optimal model of a modern university is going on. Evaluation of the quality of educational activities of Ukrainian universities and the quality of students' preparation is not complex in nature. Scientists admit the limitations of trying to assess the quality of education in Ukraine using basic statistical approaches and methods used in the management of goods and services quality⁶. In our opinion, sociological research may be useful. For example, the achievements and limitations of Ukrainian students and universities to some extent are reflected in the data of the European project EVROSTUDENT⁷.

Modernisation of educational activity in modern Ukraine is taking place in the context of European integration requirements. University education is increasingly becoming a multivariate, diverse, multi-model one; there is a constant search for the optimal model of a European university. This model must meet both European and national standards. University education in Ukraine is being reformed to become available. Trained professionals are to become competitive in the labour market and adapted to the new conditions of society. The processes of democratisation of educational space, stratification and education variability, its regionalisation and its desire to meet European standards facilitate this. Social changes in modern Ukrainian universities are designed to ensure Ukraine's accession to the European educational and scientific space. Knowledge is a determinant of the national competitiveness and resource of the innovative paradigm. Ukraine can only fit into this paradigm through the increasing participation in the international division of intellectual labour and the internationalisation of staff training.

Ukrainian model of the university education is based on Ukrainian realities, resources, culture, social institutions. University education in modern Ukraine is

4 See Susanti D. 'Privatisation and marketisation of higher education in Indonesia: the challenge for equal access and academic values' in *Higher Education*, Volume 61, Issue 2. – 2011. – Pp. 209–218.

5 See Head S. 'The grim threat to British universities' in *The New York Review of Books*. January 13. – 2011. – [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2011/jan/13/grimthreat-british-universities/?page=2>

6 See Герасименко С.С., Герасименко В.С. 'Статистика качества высшего образования в Украине: к постановке проблемы' (Statistics of the quality of higher education in Ukraine: statement of the problem) у «Статистика України». – 3/2014. http://ukrstat.org/druk/Magazine/2014/3/zm_r.htm

7 See 'Social and Economic Conditions in Europe. Synopsis of Indicators.' EVROSTUDENT V 2012-2015. – [Electronic resource]. – Mode of access: <http://creativecommons.org/by-sa/4.0/>

a temporal life value, as evidenced by the fact that the majority of Ukrainians aspire to enter the university and consider it desirable for their children and grandchildren. Most researchers give such examples of constructive changes in university education of Ukraine. Institutional changes: development of non-public university education, establishment of the private education as an integral part of the reform process; development of the institute of second higher education; transformation of universities into subjects of educational policy and independent players in the education market. Structural changes: diversity of types of higher education institutions; variety of programmes and learning forms; new practices of staff training, which are required by the labour market and consumers of the education services. Functional changes: increased financial autonomy of universities; democratisation of decision-making mechanisms, internal policy of university life; development of the system of extra educational services; using European standards in organisation, technology, forms and methods of learning.

Let us consider the problems arising in the universities of Ukraine, in terms of data obtained during the national survey “Expert evaluation of the modernisation of higher education in Ukraine.” This study was conducted with the author’s participation by the sociologists of V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (field stage was taking place from November 10th to December 10th 2014; 540 lecturers polled represented all regions of Ukraine; criteria for selecting experts: the main workplace of an expert was a position at the universities of Ukraine, involvement in research and teaching and university activities, expert’s work experience at universities is one year or more).

Then we will give an expert evaluation of the situation in universities of Ukraine on their way to European educational and scientific space.

Expert opinion as for the impact of the new Ukrainian law “On the Higher Education” (2014) on the situation in education. In the course of the study there have been found particular differences in the experts’ evaluation of its impact. It can indicate their carefulness in giving projections in a time when Ukrainian society is in a deep systemic crisis, which inevitably affects the institution of higher education. Conventionally, the following groups of experts were created: “optimists” (cumulative score was 47%) – those who hope that the situation in higher education “will be much better (4 %) or “probably will be better” (43 %); “desperate in any change” (23 %) – believe that the situation in education with the adoption of the new Law “won’t change”; “pessimists” (17 %) – are inclined to think that the situation in education “rather becomes worse” (15 %) or even “become much worse” (12 %). 13 % of the experts didn’t define their position. Experts rated the possible impact of the Law on the processes of modernisation of

higher education more optimistically on those, who are employed in government (state) universities, compared with private (for example, government (state) universities there are 51% of “optimists” and only 37% in private ones).

Barriers to the modernisation of higher education in Ukraine, experts associated with the factors such as “lack of funding higher education” (55 % of responses, in government (state) universities 57 %, in private ones – 48 %) “weak material base of Ukrainian universities” (46 % in general, in government (state) universities 48 % in private ones – 40 %), “lack of specific mechanisms for implementing change in higher education in Ukraine” (44 %), “lack of effective educational management” (31 %). Other factors, experts say, cause less significant impact on high school compliance with the new requirements, but they cannot be ignored. First, we are talking about such characteristics of human resources of the national high school as “lack of motivation of lecturers to work under the new rules”, “conservatism, dogmatism, the inertia of lecturers' thinking”, “unwillingness to compete”. In fact, these are socio-cultural barriers that impede modernisation processes in education. However, they are more evident among lecturers, compared with students. This may cause a number of problems in the relationship “student – lecturer” and apply for misunderstanding, respect, and so on. Eventually it may retard the transition to a new relationship between students and lecturers.

Expert evaluation of innovations in higher education in Ukraine. In recent years, high school Ukraine has brought a number of changes that have been actively discussed by the representatives of high school and community. According to the expert survey, such changes as following are estimated as the most positive ones in Ukrainian universities: creating opportunities for academic mobility of lecturers, practitioners' involvement in the learning process, innovations in organising and conducting research activities at the university, creating opportunities for academic mobility of students; transition to 2-level education: bachelor-master and others. Most of the innovations are in the area of positive assessments. An adverse reaction in the teaching environment is caused by a few measures that increase bureaucracy and their assessment is in the area of negative values. This is the formalisation of control over the lecturers' work, increasing the number of documents that record their activities; increasing time for students' independent work and reducing classroom training; increasing the number of written works, written credits and exams. Thus, academic staff do not perceive activities that promote formalism in evaluating their performance and reduce space of direct communication with students, which is happening due to the total transition of Ukrainian universities to the written control and assessment of students' knowledge. Finally, the innovations applied to the system of higher edu-

cation are strategically aimed at full integration of Ukraine into a single European education and research area. It can be concluded that these changes are only entering the culture of Ukrainian universities, although the main ones are supported by the academic staff, as it can be conducted from our expert survey of lecturers.

Expert opinion on the status and prospects of modernisation processes that occur at the level of higher education. Experts were offered, firstly, to evaluate the dynamics of change in their university for the last year, and secondly – to express their opinion on the priority issues that they believe should be solved in the university. Almost 39 % of experts said that the situation in their universities has no changes for the last year; almost 24 % felt improvements and a third outlined that the situation in their university became worse. Experts note the complexity of the situation in nationwide universities, regardless of their gender, age, work experience, activity profile, academic degree, employment in the public or private educational establishment.

Systemic crisis affected all the institutions of higher education in Ukraine, which requires finding ways to minimise the negative effects of existing risks. This is why as a part of the survey the experts were offered a projective situation: “Imagine that you are the Rector of your University. Which problems of the institution would you decide in the first place?” Obtained in the course of our research data show that in the experts’ public opinion the priority of issues is as follows. The first block consists of the questions (more than half of experts marked them) of lecturers’ salary increase (63 % of responses) and modern technical support of academic activities (51 %). The second block (marked by 30 to 50 % of the experts) included the problems such as academic mobility increase, collaboration with potential employers (37 %), access to modern information and communication technologies. The third block consisted of the problems (noted by 20 to 30 % of the experts) of lecturers’ professional development, organising individual workload of lecturers, diversification of funding sources of a university. These problems are perceived differently in public and private Ukrainian universities. At the same trends, public and private universities have both common problems and differences. Thus, private universities have such problems as lecturers’ salary increase, support of the lecturers with great experience, virtualisation of the activities (website of the university, department, chair), distance learning. Yet, public universities have problems associated with modern technical support of academic activities, access to modern information and communication resources, publishing. However, it should be kept in mind that public and private Ukrainian universities may have different ideas about the expediency of implementing certain innovations in the modernisation of higher education in Ukraine.

For example, 42 % of experts in public universities called the issue of academic mobility an urgent problem and 30 % – in private ones, but that does not mean that in private universities it is more common. The situation is similar with publishing activity because there is often a lack of funds in public universities, and private ones sometimes ignore it completely.

Experts' evaluations note differences in the urgent problems of university depending on the length of the lecturers' work. The experts with work experience of over 10 years are worried about their workload three times more than those who have been working up to 3 years. Obviously, this is influenced by the fact that the formers had an opportunity to observe the process of raising initial workload of a high school lecturer, which has been taking place in recent years, which significantly increased the labour intensity of a lecturer, caused the lack of time to scientific work and so on.

The impact of commercialisation on the higher education system in Ukraine, experts generally described as controversial, with some negative connotation. Most experts outline the unwillingness of Ukrainian universities to function in the market environments. Some experts admit the need to find alternative sources of financing Ukrainian universities, but most of them tend to the idea of direct funding of higher education from the state budget. This, in turn, can be a significant barrier to social and cultural modernisation of higher education in Ukraine, regardless of the basic models that will be used during this upgrade.

The existence of Ukrainian universities under pressure of the market economy is problematic. In this vein, scholars outline the processes of commercialisation of universities in Ukraine as state organisations; relations transformation with the state and the emergence of new actors in the university field; the difference between the level of the universities in addressing the needs of new social challenges set by society, and the presence of their means and mechanisms for their implementation. In Ukraine, on the one hand, the structure of the training of highly qualified stuff obviously does not meet the needs of the labour market, leading to unemployment of university graduates and threatens to unbalance the quality of labour supply demand. On the other hand, informational (post-industrial) society leaves no life-chances for person without higher education. There service departments of the University, their dominant orientation is focusing on harmonisation of relations between the educational services market and the labour market.

Ukrainian student in teachers' evaluations

Characteristics of a modern student: attitude to studying in expert evaluation. According to most of the experts, the positive characteristics of students' attitude

to studying are inherent to the smaller part of them. According to the half of the experts, there are some the students, whose good attitude to studying is only in their presence in a classroom, and that's all. Mostly, the attitude of students to studying is caused by a pragmatic view, direct material interest, (for example, the role of student's rating in the scholarships) fear of sanctions that can be imposed on a student by a lecturer for inadequate efforts; interest in the subjects studied; social and psychological atmosphere in a student's group; pragmatic (career) motives as the desire to secure professional career; consideration for future employment success and desire to become highly qualified specialists. According to the experts, the orientation of students on the result in study was the most important. Least of all, the attitude of students to their studying is caused by parents control, self-esteem ("unwillingness to be left behind"), charges made for education. Thus, according to the experts, pragmatic view dominates and depends on the demands of lecturers.

Independent work of students and the consequences of its volume growth in the modernisation of higher education. Experts believe that great increase of the volume of independent work has not forced students to work more intensively and regularly throughout the semester. Perhaps this is because independent work of students needs to be systematically monitored. Its methods may be varied, including: the current poll, express-control, test control, colloquium etc. A significant increase of the independent work also did not help to deepen students' knowledge, skills formation for working with educational and scientific literature and did not stimulate scientific research of students, their interest in specific topics and issues. In terms of integration of Ukraine into the European educational space, more attention should be paid to research and methodology of research on improving the content and methods of optimisation of students' independent work. Organisation of students' independent work should be seen as a system of an interaction of a student and educational material on subject that in case of its clear organising by a lecturer will provide activation of future professionals training, will strengthen the creative, independent thinking. Therefore, the main task of independent work is the use of traditional and innovative forms and methods that, complementing each other, would be the only system that could be adapted to the characteristics of the learning process in a particular higher educational establishment in order to optimise studying and highly qualified specialists' training.

Preventing plagiarism by students, expert evaluation. Successful modernisation of higher education is not possible without allocation of the factors that determine the quality of higher education and the transparency of its operation. Plagiarism is able to have a negative impact on the quality of higher education,

university science in general. For 45 % of lecturers it is sometimes possible to prevent plagiarism, 29 % – do it in most cases; 13 % – mostly fail; 3 % – fails to prevent plagiarism. Lecturers are concerned about the spread of plagiarism; all participants expressed the need to prevent the spread of this phenomenon, develop conditions of mutual trust, high standards, openness and creativity, providing academic honesty of high quality.

Role of students in the rating and quality of lecturers. Innovations in higher education includes estimation of rating and quality of lecturers. It is a condition for implementation in Ukrainian universities competitive relations by which schools may have objective parameters of evaluation of the teaching process.

More than half of the experts (54 %) determine the rating of the lecturers to be appropriate, regardless of gender, profile activities, work experience, employment in the public or private sectors of education. Almost a third of the opposite opinion, believes that rating of lecturers is pointless because it can negatively affect the moral atmosphere of the university. One in seven experts couldn't choose his or her position on this issue.

Participation of students in determining the quality of lecturers' work is becoming an increasingly common practice in Ukrainian universities, although it is seen as controversial one by students and lecturers. Besides undeveloped ethical aspects of this issue, this expert survey indicates an unwillingness of lecturers to the assessment of their work by students. Although nearly 51 % of experts believe that it should be, because this technology is a part of the feedback that allows lecturers to adjust their activities and relationships with students. Around 28 % strongly deny the possibility of an official, formalised assessment by students at their university. One in seven experts didn't decide which position to choose on this issue. We've indicated the tendency that the more years the experts are working in higher education, the more negative attitude they have toward students' assessment of lecturers. However, with the development of the student self-government and the spread of partnerships between lecturers and students' assessments of the quality of lecturers' work are becoming more popular.

Ukrainian teachers: correspondence to the challenges of modernization of higher education

Expert evaluation of prestige of the lecturer profession, similarities and differences of national lecturers and their western colleagues. The profession of a high school lecturer in modern Ukraine is inferior to other professions by the factors such as income, power, education and social reputation. Therefore, there is

no coincidence that the prestige of profession of a lecturer in Ukraine is estimated by experts ambiguously: 40 % consider their work to be prestigious, one in three referred this job to non-prestigious ones, and almost 27 % were unable to determine their position.

The half of the experts sees no fundamental differences between Ukrainian lecturers and their western colleagues due to such characteristics as “responsibility”, “level of organisation”, “teaching skills”, “scientific qualification”. However, most Ukrainian lecturers are inferior to the western ones in “knowledge of foreign languages”, academic mobility. Fewer experts consider such features as “computer training”, “ability to establish professional communication” to be the ones with which Ukrainian lecturers feel less qualified than their western colleagues are. An interesting situation can be seen in comparison evaluating such position as “computer knowledge”, where there are the largest differences in the estimation of experts: 51 % of them think that local lecturers are not inferior in computer knowledge to their western colleagues, while a third (34 %) has the opposite opinion and only 4 % indicated that Ukrainian lecturers are more qualified than their western colleagues. We should mention, that 9 – 16 % of experts couldn’t decide which position they support in comparison with the advantages and disadvantages of local and western lecturers. This can be partly explained by insufficient awareness of Ukrainian lecturers of the abilities of their international colleagues. Even in our group of experts only 3 % have experience teaching at Western universities, less than a third (31%) participated in international conferences held abroad (countries of the former USSR). For this reason, a large number of experts (almost 30 %) were unable to assess the level of higher education in Ukraine compared with the European Union or other “Western countries”. The opinions of experts are significantly different: 40% believe the quality of higher education in Ukraine is generally much lower than in the EU or other Western countries, 22 % felt that the education system is a comparable equivalent and 8% said that the level of higher education in Ukraine as a whole is much higher than in the EU.

Educational, methodical and scientific work of lecturers: compliance to the challenges of modernization. One of the ways of Ukraine’s educational system modernization is implementation of the innovative educational technologies and methods in the educational process of higher education establishments. The most common among lecturers, experts say, are such types of work as constant course content updating, the use of new publications, research results (76 %), regular content updates controls, tests, assignments for independent work etc.; constant improvement of their professional competence; constant contact with students,

including via the Internet; active research activities (participation in conferences, writing articles, etc.) (72-74 %). Less common is the use of new informational and communicational technologies in the learning process; use of innovative teaching methods; own-use, non-standard forms of training (55-66 %).

Information and communication technology in the arsenal of the lecturers of Ukraine. Hopes for the modernization of higher education today are largely due to the introduction of new informational and communication technologies, which acquire all members of the educational process. The survey found out the expert opinion on which of these technologies local lecturers are equipped with, and thus allow them to meet modern professional requirements. Among the expert lecturers, there is the most widespread use of electronic textbooks, manuals, teaching materials (75% of responses). About a third (62%) of respondents use electronic resources the library. Almost the same number of lecturers practice e-mailing the tasks to students and others. 60% of expert lecturers have got presentations to accompany the lectures which can be greatly constrained by the lack of appropriate technical support at some universities. Ukrainian higher education is on the verge of transition to on-line studying technologies, and yet lecturers may not be ready for it. Yes, only 9 % of the lecturers use video lectures. The same number of them have their own web resources. The higher education system is developing today on a new technical and technological basis, but Ukrainian lecturers are significantly behind their western colleagues in learning new information and communication technologies, which can be a barrier to the modernization of higher education in Ukraine.

Expert evaluation of affordability of the scientific and pedagogical experience of the western colleagues for the lecturers in Ukraine. United European educational and research space is gradually opening for national lecturers. This is mainly through participation in international scientific events and marginally – due directly to teaching in western universities, research abroad, participation in international research projects. Unequal opportunities for exchange of experience of the local lecturers with their western colleagues, appear depending on whether they have scientific degrees and in public or private university they work. Lecturers of public universities have more opportunities to learn from the experience of their western colleagues. Among the experts and lecturers of public universities 18% were trained in Western universities and research centres (in private universities, there are only 10 %), one in three participated in international research projects (in private universities such practice is only one in ten respondents expert) one in three has experience in international scientific conferences held abroad (in private universities, there are only 22 %). To some extent, it indicates

that lecturers of public educational institutions can more quickly master new educational and scientific technologies that are common in Western countries than their colleagues in private Ukrainian universities. However, this may slow down the processes of modernisation in the private education sector.

Integration processes in the field of university education are now reinforced by globalisation, which became the determining factor in the development of post-industrial world. This is evidenced by the following: appearance of new forms of learning and new areas of international education based on the latest information and the communication technologies; increasing the number of research centres involved in the current issues of training and developing appropriate recommendations; attempts of the developed countries to conduct a coordinated policy and even to develop a common strategy in the field of education, including university. Internationalisation of higher education is transforming national education systems. It allows to improve the quality of education through more active use of scientific and educational potential of leading European universities.

Ukraine has activated the transition to the multi-level system of staff training and continuous education system that meets the requirements of market economy principles and functioning of the united European educational space. Moreover, for this it is advisable to use new communication models in the area of the university research and education. For now communicative means of integrating universities to the common European educational space have not been developed, especially considering the changes that are occurring in the modern educational infrastructure. Standardisation, unification, mass character and individualisation of university education, existence of universities at the crossroads of different cultures – all this updates the role and place theme of new communication practices in the movement of the university to creation of a united European educational and scientific space.

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