

HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY ASSURANCE IN THE CONTEXT OF INTEGRATION INTO THE EHEA (ON THE EXAMPLE OF DEPARTMENTAL HEIS)

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Annotation. *The process of higher education quality assurance is a strategic priority for the development of higher education in Ukraine. To meet the EHEA standards in the sphere of higher education for the Ukrainian HEIS to cooperate with European ones the conceptual foundations of the reform of higher education, which are designed to provide quality educational services, are to be considered. Changes in external quality assurance are analysed: the creation and first results of the activities carried out by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The role of the departmental universities in ensuring the internal quality of higher education, its monitoring and control is investigated.*

Key words: *higher education, external and internal quality assurance in higher education, departmental universities.*

Introduction. Higher education is the sphere with the help of which the professional life of a person is realized, he or she becomes a specialist and creates the foundation of the financial security for the future. The key task of the system of higher education is to become a good employable specialist. As it is stated in The “Standards and Recommendations for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area”: “Higher education aims to fulfil multiple purposes; including preparing students for active citizenship, for their future careers (e.g. contributing to their employability), supporting their personal development, creating a broad advanced knowledge base and stimulating research and innovation” [12]. Ukrainian higher education is in the process of reforming in accordance with the requirements of the Bologna Process. The Bologna Process envisages the implementation of the main provisions of the Bologna Declaration for the integration of Ukraine's education system into the European Higher Education Area, which requires the implementation of European standards in the educational and scientific space, the development of common criteria and standards based on the quality of higher education.

The problem of the higher education quality is relevant due to the situation existing both inside and outside the education system. According to Ukrainian scientist V. Lugovyy, in Ukraine “higher education, in particular, is characterized by inefficient organization, dispersion, fragmentation, incompleteness, high expenditures, low institutional capacity and insufficient quality, and therefore require substantial optimization” [7, 68].

The need to review existing approaches to quality assurance in higher education is

linked to such factors as “the absence of the Ukrainian higher education institutions in the rankings of world-class universities, e.g. the top international Times and Shanghai rankings; low interest of young people from European and other countries in getting diploma in Ukrainian universities; bad reputation of the graduates of many higher education institutions of Ukraine due to the low level of professional training, etc. The gross approach in higher education during the 20 years of independence has led to a doubling of the country's GDP by a third of the universities, and the number of students has tripled” [6, 5-6]. As we can see, it is necessary to improve the quality of educational services, which is a priority for the development of modern competitive higher education in Ukraine.

Methods and materials. A considerable amount of research has been devoted to the study of theoretical and applied features of higher education quality assurance in Ukraine and in the European Higher Education Area.

While assessing the domestic development of higher education quality assurance, V. Lugovyy and Zh. Talanova note that “in Ukraine, a quality culture based on a balanced combination of minimum and high quality improvement standards with the tendency of the latter to dominate, is in the start point. But there is tendency to spread another standards based on the use of ratings and real accreditation educational programs and activities of educational institutions” [1, 26], taking into account and improving their excellence and development in the world practice.

Researchers draw their attention to the experience of reputable international non-governmental organizations: the European Quality Assurance Agency (EQAA) and the International Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (INQAAHE). Scientists consider it possible to introduce the principles and concepts developed by these organizations as a terminological minimum necessary to carry out researches in this field: “... INQAAHE, first, recognizes the theoretically and practically complex category of ‘quality in higher education’, seeks to theoretically and practically substantiate quality improvement and the quality assurance system facilitate the definition of appropriate standards of institutions [1, 27].

Describing the functioning of modern universities, S. Kalashnikova notes that they operate on the principles of openness and partnership as well as on a new model of higher education governance, which “includes – many levels and many actors (participants); rules, procedures and mechanisms for their interaction to achieve common goals” and “causes a change in the role of the state in the management of higher education (from regulator to facilitator) and delegation (redistribution) of the state powers among new actors (participants) in the governance process [3, 9]. Thus, researchers recognize the role of different stakeholders in the functioning of higher education.

The current tendencies of development influence the transformation of the higher education system of Ukraine, in particular, the specialized educational institutions, which is a complex non-linear process. The components of this process are: democratization, innovative processes in higher education: the emergence of new specialties, educational programs, technologies and teaching aids, the dissemination of modern methods of

management and marketing of higher education; globalization and Europeanization: transformation of Ukrainian education in the context of the globalization of modern education and the formation of a joint European Higher Education Area [17, 27].

However, such problem as the peculiarities of quality assurance of higher education in specialized higher education institutions is not widely represented in the academic discourse. Therefore, the purpose of the present paper is to analyse the quality assurance in specialized higher education institutions of Ukraine based on the relevant regulations.

Results. Quality management in educational is a mandatory component of the public education in Ukraine. Governance in the field of education has been identified as a priority of the state educational policy of Ukraine to ensure the constitutional right of the citizens to have equal access to the education. The main conceptual foundations of higher education reform, defined by the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education", taking into account the requirements of the Bologna Process, European standards and approaches to the provision of quality educational services, etc. include following:

- autonomy to higher education institutions.
- licensing and accreditation.
- changing of the concept of public procurement in higher education.
- optimization of the structure and network of higher education institutions, their subordination and enlargement of universities.
- strengthening partnerships with employers and involving them in defining the content of higher education.
- improving the quality and competitiveness of higher education [5].

Therefore, the problem of the higher education quality is related to conceptual reforming of the sphere of education. 'Quality' is defined as the combination of features and characteristics of a product or service that determine its ability to meet the needs of the consumer. 'Quality of education' is an indicator of the correlation of goals and results, measures of achievement of the goal. 'The quality of educational services' is a social category to determine the status and effectiveness of the educational process [8, 74].

A comprehensive definition of the quality of higher education is found in the National Glossary of Higher Education: "Quality in Higher Education: a characteristic of higher education that reflects the relevance of learning outcomes, educational processes and institutional conditions to the actual development goals of the individual and society. Higher education quality is a key concept of the Bologna Process. The European Higher Education Area Qualifications Framework (2005), European Standards and Recommendations for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (2005) were developed to provide it, the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (2004) and the European Register for Quality Assurance in Higher Education were established (2008)" [10, 66].

There is a system of criteria for quality assurance and evaluation of higher education, the so-called "Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area", adopted in 2005. The Standards are used by quality assurance institutions and agencies as a major recommendation document for external and internal

quality assurance systems in higher education. The Standards are based on the vision of the quality of education as a result of interaction between key stakeholders of the educational process, namely: teachers, students and the educational environment of the institution [12]. Quality assurance should guarantee a learning environment in which program content; learning opportunities and resources are consistent with this goal [12].

The “Standards and Recommendations for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” form a system of criteria at the European level that specifies the performance of quality assurance agencies. Due to a well-established system of standards, it is possible not only for state actors but also for non-governmental organizations operating in the relevant field within the European Higher Education Area to apply these regulations. These standards also allow the public to participate in their implementation, because one of the principles of the "Standards and Recommendations for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area" is to take into account the needs and expectations of all other stakeholders and society [12].

The Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area set out a list of European Standards for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, consisting of:

- “common framework for quality assurance systems for learning and teaching at European, national and institutional level; -
- the assurance and improvement of quality of higher education in the European higher education area;
- mutual trust, thus facilitating recognition and mobility within and across national borders;
- information on quality assurance in the EHE” [12].

Considering the peculiarities of implementation of the European quality assurance standards, it should be noted that the quality assurance of higher education is carried out at two levels: external and internal. The external agent for quality assurance in higher education is the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (NAQAHE), and internal agents are the relevant structural units of higher education institutions. The 2019-2020 NAQAHE Strategy states that “higher education quality assurance is a requirement of the present, a key principle of the Bologna Declaration and an indisputable priority for the academic community and public education policy in Europe and other developed countries” [9].

In December 2018, in accordance with Resolution No. 224, April 15, 2015, the Statute of the National Agency for Quality Assurance for Higher Education was approved. In accordance with the Statute, NAQAHE is the body that provides external assessment of quality standards.

An internal agent for quality assurance in higher education is the relevant units of the institution of higher education. The institutional structure of the internal system of quality assurance in higher education is “a set of structural units (actors) that ensure the quality of educational activities and the quality of higher education institutions through the implementation of the functions assigned to them” [12]. The purpose of functioning

of the institutional structure of the internal security system is “to create and implement the conditions for qualitative training of highly qualified specialists of the appropriate level, competitive in the labour market, competent, responsible, capable to carry out effective professional activities” [12].

The internal quality assurance system in a higher education institution is composed of several entities: head government bodies, which are partly related to quality assurance in the institution, and special units, which have the exclusive competence of the quality assurance processes. This section is based on the requirements of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" 05.09.2017 (Section V Article 41), Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" 01.07.2014 (Section V Article 16), Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine 30.12.2015 No. 1187 “On Approval of Licensing Conditions for Educational Activities of Educational Institutions”, Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, November 23, 2011 No. 1341 “On Approval of the National Qualifications Framework”, European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. The provisions are based on the principles set out in the European Association for Higher Education Quality Assurance Standards and Recommendations for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, the International Standard for Quality Management Systems ISO 9001: 2015, and - Guidelines for the Institutional Structure of the Internal System quality assurance of educational activities and quality of higher education within the framework of the Erasmus + QUAERE project [4].

General management bodies involved in the internal structure of quality assurance of education include:

- Supervisory Board, the composition and functions of which are determined by the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”;
- Academic Council, the composition and functions of which are determined by the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”;
- Rector who is responsible for the activities carried out by the higher education institution and the internal quality assurance system.

Organization, management and control for implementation, monitoring and other operational issues in the field of quality assurance are dealt with by specially created structures and designated persons, which may include:

- the representative of the Rectorate responsible for quality (the responsibilities of the representative may be assigned, for example, to one of the pro-rectors (the first pro-rector).
- scientific and methodological council (quality council);
- special service (structural unit).

According to the guidelines at the faculty level, the entities responsible for quality assurance are the following: the director of the institute or the dean of the faculty is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the quality assurance system and other mechanisms that allow to ensure and improve the quality of educational activities carried out by the institute (the faculty). Quality assurance institutes (faculties) are collegial bodies implementing the institute (faculty) policy in the field of quality assurance of educational activity and quality of higher education.

Higher education quality assurance committee at the institute (faculty) level may include a group of educational program quality examination, a group of diagnostics of the results of higher education applicants, a group of quality assurance of teaching staff, etc. The Education Program Quality Expertise Team is responsible for analysing the quality of educational programs, conducting quality monitoring, and organizing the process of periodically reviewing educational programs.

In addition the Erasmus+QUAERE Implementation Guidelines for the Establishment of the Institutional Structure of the Internal Quality Assurance System for Higher Education and Higher Education within the Erasmus + QUAERE project recommend for the employers (industry advisory committees) to be engaged in a range of activities on quality assurance [4]. The purpose of the employer council is to provide regular input from industry professionals and other external stakeholders into the program and courses as external stakeholders and potential employers [17].

The most important element in the organizational structure of internal quality assurance in higher education is the special unit - the Centre for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. This structural unit of a higher education institution reports to the Rectorate representatives who are in charge for quality assurance. The mission of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Centre is to realize the strategic goals of development of the Higher Education Establishment in order to improve the quality of higher education and educational activities, to ensure that the level of quality of educational services meets the requirements of stakeholders.

Functions of the Higher Education Quality Assurance Centre:

- formation of strategies, policies, procedures and practices for academic quality assurance;
- implementation of quality-related strategic developments within quality assurance procedures and their refinement in accordance with the strategy of higher education institution development;
- promoting the formation of an academic quality culture at the university;
- developing policies and procedures related to the development, monitoring, and periodic review of educational programs [4].

One of the main components of the internal quality assurance system is the involvement of higher education applicants in the management of this system. The decisive role in all processes related to the functioning of the internal quality assurance system belongs to the student self-government, whose activities affect the basic educational, financial and economic and other processes of the higher education institution. Participation of higher education applicants in the quality assurance process can be realized through participation in working groups on monitoring and review of educational programs. Students can have their representatives in the Council for Quality Assurance in Education and Higher Education at the university level [17]. At the institute (faculty) level, students can participate in work of the commission on quality assurance of higher education.

Having considered the existing approaches to the quality of higher education and

the structural and functional principles of quality assurance in higher education, we turn to the analysis of the activity of higher education institutions of a particular type in the field of quality standards.

Institutions of higher education of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine are “state educational institutions which are subordinated to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, established and operate in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine, carry out in accordance with the licensed educational and professional training programs for specialists at certain educational and qualification levels”. Such higher education institutions provide education, training and vocational training in accordance with the regulatory requirements in the field of higher education in order to meet the educational needs of the individual, society and the state, as well as carry out scientific and scientific-technical activities.

The main purpose of the activities carried out by the higher education institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs is to provide the conditions necessary for obtaining a person of higher education, training specialists to work for the bodies and divisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, other executive bodies, enterprises, institutions and organizations of Ukraine [13].

Legal education is a key area of higher education. It has to do with the development of the rule of law, the implementation of law enforcement reforms identified by the Constitution and the President of Ukraine. The development of a network of higher education institutions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine as a component of the national education system is conditioned by the integration of the country into the European educational and scientific space.

The National Academy of Internal Affairs in the context of the implementation of the provisions of the new Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” has declared its intention “despite the difficult socio-political and economic conditions to solve the task of protecting the public order, combating crime, strengthening the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the state, requiring constant personnel and professionalism” [13].

In accordance with the new Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”, the specialized higher education institutions envisage a number of procedures and measures. Among them: annual assessment of higher education applicants through sections of knowledge; checking the level of teaching of the disciplines, especially by young teachers (monitoring the opinion of cadets, students and students); strengthening of requirements for quality of preparation of the academic works at all levels and prevention of academic plagiarism [5].

The problem of the police education is a long time necessary to provide reforming for the departmental institutions of higher education, which are subordinate to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in particular regarding the implementation of quality assurance standards and their monitoring [13].

To investigate the activities in the field of quality assurance of higher education in the departmental universities at the level of the internal quality assurance system, we analysed the relevant Regulations on the system of internal quality assurance of education of Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs [14], Lviv University of

Internal Affairs [16] and Dnipropetrovsk University of Internal Affairs [17].

Table 1

**Regulations on the system of internal quality assurance of education:
comparative analyses**

Comparison criteria	Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs	Dnipropetrovsk University of Internal Affairs	Lviv University of Internal Affairs
Regulations on the system of internal quality assurance of education	Established on 18/11/2016	Established on 14/06/2016	Established on 29/08/2018
Units responsible for quality assurance	Rectorate; Academic Council of the University; Scientific and Methodological Council of the University; Academic Council of the Faculty; the dean of the faculty and his deputy; Head of Department; scientific and pedagogical staff.	Rector and Vice-Rectors; Academic Council of the University; The heads of the units and the deans of the faculties; Scientific and Methodological Council of the University; Academic Council of the Faculties;	Rector, Vice-Rectors and Collegiate Bodies: Academic Council of the University, the Supervisory Board of the University; External stakeholders; Each employee of the University within his/her competence
Description of the Powers for the bodies responsible for the internal quality assurance	The powers and forms of control and monitoring of quality assurance are fully detailed in the document.	The powers and forms of control and monitoring of quality assurance are partly detailed in the document.	The powers and forms of control and monitoring of quality assurance are partly detailed in the document.
External stakeholders of the quality assurance	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Stakeholders are mentioned but their powers and forms of their influence are not mentioned
Cooperation with the European associations of specialized higher education institutions of the EU	Not mentioned	Not mentioned	Not mentioned

Source: compiled by authors according to [14], [15], [16]

Considering the internal systems of higher education quality assurance in the departmental universities, it can be stated that since 2016 they have provided more opportunities for the public control which is defined in the proper Regulations. One more important position is the detailed description of the curricular design, the requirements to its creation, monitoring and modernization etc.

The structure of the units who are in charge directly or indirectly for quality assurance is also specified by the proper Regulations but with the accordance to the hierarchy of the university authorities. No special units to insure, control and provide monitoring of quality assurance are organized but the existing units and administrative officials gain additional functions and duties in this sphere. The role and mechanism of how external stakeholders take part in constructing the curricular design is not specified. Any kind of industry advisory committees are not created according to the documents. The suggestions the Erasmus + QUAERE Implementation Guidelines for the Establishment of the Institutional Structure of the Internal Quality Assurance System for Higher Education and Higher Education within the Erasmus + QUAERE project are not taken into account so the Regulations are not balanced while specifying the role and functions of the external stakeholder who are in charge for quality assurance.

Conclusions. 1. The problem of higher education quality assurance is a priority for the modern educational policy of Ukraine. Management of quality assurance is the process of transferring the quality of education as an object of managerial influence into a state characterized by substantiated indicators of the quality of higher education. Internal self-assessment of the activities in quality assurance and independent external evaluation of the activities in this sphere is a mandatory requirement of the European Quality Assurance Association.

2. The quality of Ukraine's higher education is influenced by the objective factors: the level of preparation of the entrants, the qualification and competence of the teaching staff of universities, the conformity of educational programs, logistical and methodological support, etc. The current conditions of higher education development as well as the current tendency of its quantitative evolution require the implementation of training programs without reducing the quality of education by the limited resources. This is possible only through the introduction of new forms, methods and technologies that will more actively involve the administration of universities, scientists, teachers and students in the process of quality management education. The responsibility for higher education quality assurance is taken by the higher education institutions themselves.

3. Departmental higher education institutions have begun the process of introducing an internal system of higher education quality assurance. At this stage, relevant regulations have been worked out. They contain information on the structure and functional authority of the most but not all stakeholders in the quality assurance process, and the recommendations provided in the Guidelines for building the institutional structure of the internal quality assurance system and quality of education. education within the framework of the Erasmus + QUAERE project are not adapted while the Regulations were being formed.

4. In order to ensure European standards for the quality of higher education in specialized higher education institutions, we recommend to adapt the theoretical and methodological developments and case studies developed by the reputable European associations of specialized higher education institutions of the EU: European Union Agency for Law Enforcement Training and the Association of European Police Colleges.

In our opinion, the prospect of future is the study of the clear criteria and indicators of external and internal process of higher education quality assurance in high education institutions especially of departmental universities.

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