

## Editorial

### Trends in the development of higher education in Ukraine: the search for compromises

### Тенденції розвитку вищої освіти в Україні: пошук компромісів

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Since the proclamation of independence, reformation, and transformation processes have been going on in all spheres of the public life of our state. This is due to the enshrinement in the Constitution of Ukraine of the irreversibility of the European and Euro-Atlantic course of Ukraine, as well as the desire to develop and strengthen a democratic, social, legal state. Such processes have not escaped the sphere of higher education.

Today, the policy in the field of higher education is based on the principles of accessibility and competitive basis for its acquisition; independence from political and religious influence; integration into the world education system while preserving and developing national achievements and traditions; continuity; state support of priority areas; publicity, etc. Normative foundations for educational activities based on the above principles are laid down in the Laws of Ukraine "On Education" (No. 2145-VIII dated on the 5th of September 2017), "On Higher Education" (No. 1556-VII dated on the 1st of July 2014) and other regulations.

An important step in ensuring the quality of higher education in Ukraine was the introduction of technologies for admission to study based on the results of the external independent evaluation (which objectively minimized corruption risks of this process and allowed gifted young people to freely choose a specialty and educational institution), the establishment of the National Agency for ensuring the quality of higher education as an independent permanent collegial

body, introduction of the mechanism of the Unified State Qualification Exam in certain specialties, etc. Other legal, socio-economic measures are also taken.

Nevertheless, it seems that the proper level of quality of higher education in Ukraine has not yet been achieved. The main reasons for this are probably the problems with full-fledged financing of education in Ukraine. Therefore, in most cases, the authorities, educational institutions, and the applicants themselves need to find compromise solutions: between cost and quality.

Assessing the state of higher education in Ukraine, it should be noted that the peculiarity of this type of activity in Ukraine is, first of all, the combination of two sources of financing in education: the state and applicants. And, as already mentioned, the state's ability to finance education is limited. This raises the question of the rational distribution of funds for training. At the same time, the mechanism of lending for education (interest-free or with a minimum interest rate) in Ukraine for some reason still does not work.

It should also be noted that for several years in a row the most popular (according to the Unified State Database on Education) among entrants are the following specialties: "Philology", "Law", "Computer Science", "Journalism", "Psychology", "Economy", etc. The number of applications for relevant specialties reaches almost 70 thousand. Instead, for example, in

2021 1734 applications were submitted for the specialty "Chemistry", 1311 for "Physics and Astronomy", 1220 for "Mathematics", 324 for "Railway Transport", 560 for "Woodworking and Furniture Technologies", 36 applications for "Hydropower", etc.

This situation raises the question of the expediency of mechanisms and limits for stimulating "unpopular" but necessary specialties for the state. Obviously, the state must do it! But within what limits – this issue should be decided based on the specific needs of relevant professionals. In this aspect, we must state the lack of effective mechanisms for determining such a need.

The task, which is closely related to the above, is also to find ways to rationally distribute public funding between "top" and "unpopular" educational areas.

The question immediately comes to mind: is it possible to refuse state funding for "top" educational specialties? On the one hand, it is obvious that most graduates of such specialties ("Law", "Computer Science", "Journalism", "Psychology", "Economics", etc.) will not work in the public sector, but in private business. Second, the market for specialists in such specialties is objectively oversaturated. So should the state finance the training of such specialists? On the other hand, the lack of public funding will mean restricting access to such specialties for applicants who are unable to fund their education. And again, a compromise must be sought in resolving this issue as well.

As a way out of the situation, there are more and more suggestions that contracts for state-funded studies should include the obligation of the graduate to work for a certain period (for example, 3 years) in government agencies, institutions, or enterprises. Otherwise - to return to the state the funds spent on the training of such a specialist (personally or by the company that hires such a specialist). Such a mechanism has long been effectively used in institutions with specific training conditions that train the military, police, and so on.

It is impossible to ignore the situation around the training of specialists in the field of "Law". It is in this area that the biggest discussions are taking place. Given the "top" and the importance of this specialty, for several years in a row, there is an active discussion on limiting the market of educational services in this specialty. Given the

real need to improve the quality of training of legal professionals, a position is expressed to limit the range of educational institutions that can provide educational services in this area. However, it seems that this issue does not fully take into account that the presence of a diploma of higher education in law, unlike most other professions, does not guarantee employment in the specialty. In order to practice all key legal professions (judge, prosecutor, lawyer, notary, law enforcement officer, etc.), it is necessary to pass the relevant competitions (additional exams), which are won by the most prepared graduates. And in private companies, the selection is no less careful. Thus, the dilemma arises: is it evil for the state and society if it has more legally aware persons (who, however, find it difficult to apply for positions in the legal professions) if such training is carried out at their expense? Again, the way out is a compromise solution - the search for the optimal ratio between the number of graduates and their quality. And it seems that only competition in an evolutionary way will put everything in its place. Educational institutions that do not provide quality training will not be able to withstand it.

Since we are talking about competition, the question of the cost of educational services cannot be ignored. In particular, in the "top" specialties, the cost of teaching bachelors in 2021 was (approximately): for "Law" - the maximum cost of \$ 2750 per year of study and the minimum - \$ 600; "Computer Science" - \$ 2400 and \$ 600, respectively; "Philology" - \$ 1850 and \$ 300 US, respectively. A rhetorical question arises: how can the cost of training within one specialty differ by 4 or more times?

An important and correct step to regulate this process is the establishment by the government of a minimum (identical) cost of training in certain areas. However, this mechanism cannot be considered perfect. It objectively did not exclude from the sphere of educational activity the dumping activity of certain institutions and should be improved.

Summing up, there are grounds to state that in the field of higher education in Ukraine there is a constant search for compromises in order to build a holistic and high-quality system of educational services. However, despite the difficulties, the movement towards the integration of Ukrainian education into the world education system while preserving and developing national achievements and traditions is confident and progressive.