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QUALITY OF EDUCATION: EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE, UNDERSTANDING THE CONCEPT OF EDUCATION QUALITY IN DIFFERENT HISTORICAL ERA

The article focuses on the problem of the quality of education, which is important and at the same time insufficiently studied in educational and pedagogical sciences, the problem of understanding the concept of education quality in different historical eras. Modern foreign and domestic theories of ensuring the quality of education are analyzed. The need to change the concept of teaching, to maintain a balance between teaching and research, to shift the emphasis from memorizing facts to developing the need of the ability to learn is noted. It has been proven that universities should focus on improving educational programs, effective cooperation with employers, dual and practice-oriented education.

Keywords: quality; learning; teaching; stakeholder; qualification skills; state standard; pre-industrial (agrarian) era; industrial age; information age; educational programmes; practice-oriented programs; short-term programs; internship; dual education; qualification gap.

Formulation of the problem. Improving the quality of education depends on many factors. To obtain a positive result, modernization of models and methods of the educational process, understanding of the concept of quality in different historical eras is required. International cooperation, meeting the demand of the labour market, proper remuneration of teachers and scientific research activities should form the basis of improving the quality of higher education in Ukraine, and therefore the model of a modern university.

All this is a guarantee of high “quality of the graduate as an educational product”.

In this context, the relevance and expediency of studying the mentioned problem is of practical importance for the institution of higher education, which is the subject of our investigation.

The purpose of the study is a scientific analysis of ways to modernize the models and methods of the educational process and management in foreign countries and Ukraine, based on the need for continuous professional improvement of scientific and

pedagogical staff of higher education institutions. This stimulates the need for the scientific and pedagogical staff of a higher education institution to gain experience in managing educational processes adequate to modern requirements.

Research methods. The basis of the realization of the research goal is the use of the following research methods: analysis (the experience of foreign and domestic theories of ensuring the quality of education was analyzed), synthesis (the main theories of understanding the concept of the quality of education in different historical eras were determined), generalization (a scientific analysis of ways to modernize models, methods and techniques, used by institutions of higher education in Ukraine and in foreign countries, was made).

Presenting main material. The understanding of the concept of «quality» in many European higher education systems is used as a basic standard closely related to accreditation. The concept of «quality» has a rather long and interesting history, both in theoretical and practical dimensions. In different contexts, the term quality is understood differently. It is a traditional philosophical category that dates to the time of Aristotle:

– quality as perfection, improvement (quality planning, quality control, quality assurance);

– quality as meeting the goals (purpose) [1, c. 20–21].

There are other interpretations of the term «quality»:

– St. Thomas Aquinas defined quality as the mode of existence or action and organization of a substance and separated essential and accidental, active, and passive qualities [2];

– H. Hegel – as a determination identical with being, which means that anything ceases to be what it is when it loses its quality [2];

- peculiarities, features, properties that distinguish one subject from another;
- the internal determination of the subject, which constitutes the specificity that distinguishes it from all others. In relation to our problem, we can consider, particularly, the following specificity – to be a higher education;
- the degree of cost, value, suitability of something for its intended use. It is this aspect that is usually considered in discussions about the quality of higher education;
- quality is a set of characteristics that meet the requirements.

The Oxford Dictionary defines «quality» as: a standard of something that can be determined in relation to other similar things; degree of perfection of something [3]. Quality is determined as a defining or characteristic that someone or something possesses [4]. In the educational context, the quality of education is understood as an indication of the development of education in the state, but at the same time it is an indicator of the compliance of educational policy and education reform with personal and social needs. At the current stage of the society development, the problems of the education quality are also related to the development of a new information civilization, where the development of a quality environment for people, social intelligence and the education system becomes a determining factor in the progress of mankind [4].

The quality of education implies the compliance of learning results with the requirements established by legislation, the relevant standard of education and/or the contract on the provision of educational services; quality of educational activity implies the level of organization, provision and implementation of the educational process, which ensures that individuals receive quality education and meets the requirements established by legislation and/or the contract on the provision of educational services [5].

The quality of education is also a set of properties and characteristics of the educational process; the final result of the educational process and the set of competencies of graduates – a certain level of their knowledge and skills of mental, physical and moral development, achieved by those who study, at a certain stage in accordance with the planned goals; the degree of satisfaction of various participants in the process with educational services provided by educational institutions [2; 6].

The quality of education is a national priority and a prerequisite for the national security of the state, compliance of Ukrainian legislation with international norms and re-

quirements regarding the realization of citizens' right to education.

1. Material, financial, personnel and scientific resources of society and the state are directed to ensuring the quality of education.

2. The high quality of education implies the relationship between education and science, pedagogical theory, and practice.

3. The quality of education is determined on the basis of state education standards and public evaluation of educational services.

4. The state constantly monitors the quality of education, ensures its transparency, and promotes the development of public control [3].

The driving force of institutional quality assurance is the improvement of learning and teaching. Improving learning and teaching involves changing the concept of teaching: maintaining a balance between teaching and research; involvement of stakeholders; development of educational environment and educational resources; requirements for the professionalism of the teaching staff and opportunities for continuous development. It is necessary to shift the emphasis from teaching to learning, from memorizing facts to the development of learning ability needs, from meeting economic needs to meeting individual needs. The learning result is significantly improved if the learning process is more like a team game than individual «races»; that is, collective work increases students' involvement in learning, improves thinking and deepens students' understanding of this or that educational material. Considering the above, the domestic system of higher education should be reoriented to the practical component, which in turn makes it possible to increase the level of employment of graduates, to modernize the list of fields of knowledge and specialties, to integrate educational institutions in accordance with the requirements of the Ukrainian labour market. The main problem of higher education in Ukraine is a diploma of subject knowledge, not qualification skills. The higher education system should not be developed in an academic vacuum [7].

Understanding the quality of education in different eras. American researchers T. Kuhn and E. Toffler believe that the development of humanity occurred through the following stages: agrarian, industrial, and informational. For each era, the quality of education was determined differently, depending on the conditions of social development and scientific and technological progress [1; 8; 9].

The *pre-industrial (agrarian)* era is a stage of socio-economic development, in which the

largest contribution to the value of material goods is made by the value of resources produced in agriculture.

The main features of agrarian society are:

- relatively weak social differentiation with elements of rigid hierarchy (casteism, feudalism and slavery);
- predominance of the rural population;
- the main type of production is agriculture;
- some development of processing production (production of agricultural products);
- insignificant development of industrial sectors [9].

The appearance and spread of book printing, in turn, had a huge impact on the development of medieval European education at that time, realizing such tasks as «to make the Bible more accessible to a large number of readers not only in Latin, but also in their native language, to provide students and university teachers with basic treatises, first of all, to multiply ordinary books, notes, ... to make the reading of these books accessible to the general public». The key characteristics that determined the quality of higher education received in those conditions were:

- compliance of its content with the requirements of a specific university and professor;
- artificial nature of training, personal contact of the professor with the student («master – apprentice» model);
- the basic paradigm is the dominant dependence of the quality of higher education on the «quality» of the teacher;
- weak connection of higher education with the needs of the economy;
- lack of inter-university unification and coordination відсутність;
- autonomous existence and development of few university centres [4].

The *Industrial Age* is an age that relies on the use of technology and machines to ensure mass production, support a large population, and division of labour [10, с. 23–24].

The industrial society replaced the pre-industrial society and marked a new stage in the development of society, when the bulk of the population is employed in plants and factories (in industry); and it is also a stage of the historical development of mankind, which is characterized by the dominance of industrial production over agricultural one, the quantitative predominance of the urban population over the rural one; the high level of industrial production is characterized by its mechanization and automation, the use of achievements of scientific and technical progress that causes great qualitative changes in other spheres of social life as well – social, domestic, political, cultural.

The special features of industrial development were:

- dependence of productions on each other;
- institutionalization of states (appearance of kindergartens, hospitals, communal services);
- rapid economic growth;
- significant population growth;
- growth in consumption, level and quality of life (these processes were characterized by instability, cyclicity and unevenness across countries and regions);
- the division of labour reached a very high level;
- the main type of energy was mechanical (steam engines, internal combustion engines and various generators);
- the main means of production was industrial capital: buildings, machines and equipment;
- 45-65% of the working population was employed in industry;
- the main social conflict was between labour and capital;
- the social structure of society was based on property factors and is not formally strictly hierarchical;
- social and spatial mobility increased significantly;
- rationalization of labor (Taylor) [11].

The quality of education in the industrial era was determined by the following features:

- compliance of educational content with standards/specifications;
- the emergence and victory of statistical methods of selective control of learning;
- mass character of specialist training;
- unification of the content of education;
- transition to state funding and control;
- introduction of quality assessment principles borrowed from industry;
- standardized programs, tests [6].

The *information age (era)* is a conceptual idea that the modern age will be characterized by wide opportunities [12]:

- to freely transmit/receive information for individuals and have instant access to knowledge that would have been difficult or impossible in previous eras of human development, meeting the requirements of consumers (students, their parents, employers, society as a whole);
- loss of monopoly by universities as a social institution of knowledge transfer;
- the need to speed up the reaction to the created and transmitted knowledge in the face of the relative inertia of universities;
- increasing the role of the social dimension, establishing an emphasis on student-centered and transparent learning;

- systemic “embeddedness” in national, regional and global economies;
- process approach and continuous improvement based on the TQM methodology (total quality of education) [4].

Considering this, «a modern university is an institution that can not only provide high-quality, modern knowledge in the classroom (this is no longer enough), but also organize a whole system around the student, with places of practice, an effective alumni association, and a wide range of employers. Everything else is a philosophy incompatible with university life» [13].

The competitive cost of education is of great importance. It is necessary to understand that «The progress of our state cannot be faster than the progress of our education» (John F. Kennedy) [14]. This is an excellent answer regarding the importance of education for the development of the state. «Universities need to popularize, first of all, educational programs, through popularization of program guarantors, leading teachers, academic and student international exchanges, places of practice, graduates and employers» [15]. Currently, the higher education system and the labour market are mostly disconnected from each other. The system of higher education «is not an island with autonomous provision of its life activity» [16]. Therefore, the problems of the higher education system should be considered in conjunction with the offer of the general secondary education system and the demands of the labour market. It is obvious that university and quality should be identical concepts.

Let us consider «*Effect of education on economic dynamics in Ukraine*» [17]. «Increasing the share of the population with higher education can have a positive effect on the dynamics of production of new types of products, but has no effect on technological development and innovation in the country. This means that coverage of the population by higher education, i.e., the number of diplomas on higher education, does not contribute to the formation of the Ukrainian economy of an innovative type, i.e., a competitive economy» [18]. According to the analysis, «the high educational level of the population does not have an appropriate positive influence on the development of innovative processes in the economy of Ukraine».

Thus, right now, all processes within the system of higher education should be investigated in terms of their innovative nature that should ensure the quality of education, namely: career guidance among applicants, the formation of state orders, the distribution of state budget funds, the participation of employers in the formation of educational

programs and their assessment, student internships, dual education, public reporting of universities, monitoring of graduate employment, development of effective forms of cooperation between the state, universities and business [18]. All this is a drawback of the high «quality of the graduate as an educational product» [18], since «acquiring subject knowledge does not mean the formation of relevant qualification skills by the student» [18]. Therefore, in the labour market, «there is a qualification gap when the graduate’s skills do not meet the demands of the labour market» [18]. It should be understood that «a certified specialist and a qualified specialist are not equivalent concepts» [18]. In order to solve the problems of the qualification gap, «The portfolio of university programs should include not only bachelor’s and master’s programs, but also short-term professional development programs, there should be enough of them to solve this problem; and the university’s relations with graduates should be well organized. These should not be only declared programs, but active ones» [18].

Thus, international cooperation, satisfaction of the demand of the labour market, proper remuneration of teachers and scientific research activity are five components that should form the basis of improving the quality of higher education in Ukraine, and therefore the model of a modern university [19].

For Ukraine, practically oriented education of students is the biggest challenge caused by the war and its consequences. Presumably, the assessment of the quality of higher education should focus on this component and, as a result, on the qualification skills of the graduate [20; 21].

When it comes to what Ukraine’s higher education should look like in the post-war era and what the role of the labour market is, without which the recovery of the country is impossible, the answer is obvious that Ukraine’s higher education should be based on the quality provision of qualifying skills to students. Otherwise, the issue of a diploma with all its formal attributes loses its meaning, because the best attribute of a higher education diploma should be the feedback of employers and graduates, that is, strictly speaking, the labour market [22; 23; 24].

Boston Consulting Group notes that employee’s qualification skills should be updated every 2-4 years after graduating from university, and life-long education is important here [25; 26].

«Emsi Burning Glass analytical company, having analyzed 80 million job vacancies, concludes that now employers demand critical thinking skills from job applicants

4 times more often than the top 5 technical skills» [27; 28].

«Specialists of the European Commission in their report Skills Mismatch and Productivity in the EU note that from 20% to 37% of employers in Europe are sure that the lack of employees with the appropriate skills is a factor that significantly restrains the development of the production of goods and services by their companies» [29].

«Considering the fact that the employment rate of university graduates in the countries of Eastern and Central Europe is quite high - on average about 84%, such a significant qualification gap indicates that the quality of higher education in these countries still does not meet the demands of the labour market for the most part, and employers are still forced to resort to a significant compromise, training graduates at the workplace at their own expense.

In Ukraine, the problem of the qualification gap also exists, but it is significantly aggravated by another problem - a noticeable discrepancy between the supply of graduates in specialties and the demands of the economy for specialties» [30].

Since in recent years, the annual growth rate of the European economy's GDP has been at the level of only a few percent, solving the problem of the mismatch of qualification skills becomes a very urgent issue, on which the development of the European economy depends [31].

Thus, one should not hope that the university audience can form all the qualification skills in students that demanded by employers of the appropriate quality. That is to say, «an educational program that involves low-quality practice at enterprises and organizations, with an ineffective system for evaluating acquired skills, cannot form a high-quality educational product, i.e., a graduate. It is quite possible that the main reason for the «qualification gap» is the underestimated or inadequately realized role of students' practice by universities» [32].

«In many countries of the world, university graduates, forming a powerful professional portfolio to look for their first job, seek to gain practical experience in enterprises and organizations beforehand. Moreover, this applies both to practice in the process of studying at the university, and to internships outside the requirements of the educational program and even after obtaining a diploma of higher education. In other words, even on a formal basis, practice and internships play an important role for graduates and employers, serving as a substitute for work experience in a specialty» [32].

«The International Labour Organization (Geneva) reports that in the countries where student internships and graduate internships are common, e.g., in the USA, the share of interns who get a job at enterprises that were also internship bases, reaches 72%, which is twice as much (35%) as the probability of getting a job at the same enterprises of those graduates who did not undergo an internship at these enterprises. It is important that according to employers, in six out of eight branches of the economy, a student's previous internship experience plays a more significant role in employers' decision to provide employment to graduates than their obtaining a master's degree or completing a certified program» [33].

It is obvious that all universities including Ukrainian ones, should deeply study such reports in order to be able to respond in a timely and qualitative manner to changes in the «qualification gap» indicator, making appropriate adjustments to educational programs, practice programs, and requirements for the preparation, writing and defense of graduation theses, because «zero» should not be the effect of the implementation of qualification skills, but the «qualification gap», which should be systematically monitored by universities. The ability to organize high-quality analytical work at the university level is a necessary prerequisite for overcoming the «qualification gap», survival and development in the market of educational services [34].

Thus, the main task of a modern university is to improve the quality of human capital for «highly technological and innovative development of the country, self-realization of the individual, satisfaction of the society needs of society, the labour market and the state in qualified specialists» [34].

Conclusions and prospects for further investigations. In terms of the implementation of innovative development strategies in the context of the digitalization of the modern educational paradigm, it is relevant to study international and domestic experience, spread and implement innovative approaches to improve the quality of education. In this context, it should be determined what universities should focus their attention on in order to improve the quality of student training. As noted by the international consulting company Boston Consulting Group, the first is the improvement of educational programs to consider the demand of the labour market and reduce the qualification gap. The second is high-quality and intensive relations between the university and employers. The third is lifelong education through the devel-

opment of short-term courses by universities for those employed on the labour market.

Therefore, the subject of our further research can be a scientific analysis of the implementation of the specified tasks, an analysis of the experience of European institutions of higher education, in terms of ensuring the quality of educational activities in universities.

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**ЯКІСТЬ ОСВІТИ: ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКИЙ ДОСВІД, РОЗУМІННЯ ПОНЯТТЯ ЯКОСТІ ОСВІТИ
У РІЗНІ ІСТОРИЧНІ ЕПОХИ**

Порушено і розкрито важливу й водночас недостатньо вивчену в освітніх і педагогічних науках проблему якості освіти, розуміння поняття якості освіти у різних історичних епохах.

Проаналізовано сучасні зарубіжні та вітчизняні теорії забезпечення якості освіти. Зазначено про необхідність зміни концепції викладання, дотримання балансу між викладанням та дослідженням, зміщення акценту від запам'ятовування фактів до розвитку потреб вміння вчитися.

Доведено, що університети мають сконцентрувати увагу на вдосконаленні освітніх програм, на

результативну співпрацю з роботодавцями, дуальне та практикоорієнтоване навчання.

Ключові слова: *якість; навчання; викладання; стейкхолдер; кваліфікаційні навички; державний стандарт; доіндустріальна (аграрна) епоха; індустріальна епоха; інформаційна епоха; освітні програми; практикоорієнтовані програми; короткострокові програми; стажування; дуальна освіта; кваліфікаційний розрив.*

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