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UKRAINE'S HIGHER EDUCATION AND THE BOLOGNA PROCESS

The article deals with the present condition of Ukraine's higher education system. Ukraine's higher education system has a significant potential for more productively utilising the possibility of utilising its strong educational foundations so that its universities can compete with universities elsewhere. Ukraine has great possibilities for increasing its competitiveness and meeting the essential prerequisites to develop universities which are globally competitive.

Keywords: higher education, quality of education, economic effectiveness, competitiveness, sustainability, management model, collaboration, strategic objective, labour productivity.

В статті розглядається сучасний стан системи вищої освіти в Україні. Система вищої освіти в Україні має значний потенціал для більш ефективного використання можливостей свого освітнього потенціалу. Українські університети можуть конкурувати з університетами зарубіжних країн. Україна має більші можливості для підвищення своєї конкурентоздатності та умови для розвитку університетів, котрі будуть конкурентноздатними на світовому ринку.

Ключові слова: вища освіта, якість освіти, економічна ефективність, конкурентоздатність, стійкий розвиток, модель адміністративного управління, співробітництво, стратегічна ціль, продуктивність праці.

A look at the Higher Education sector in Ukraine points toward impressive achievements made in the past. Drawing upon those strong foundations, this paper explores if there has been any challenges which have not allowed Ukrainian universities to rise to a higher ranking. Based on a selection of professional reports and academic publications this paper draws attention to possible steps forward to help overcome the obstacles in the way of making higher education in Ukraine more effective and competitive.

Ukraine has enjoyed 7th place in terms of tertiary enrolment ratio and higher ranking in quality of maths and science education as well as quality of education system. In Ukraine the 99,51% literacy rate is the same as for many advanced countries. It is known to have allocated up to 7,4% of Public Spending on Higher Education. In 2010, it was among states allocating the world highest public expenses on education, including 2,6% of GDP spent on higher education. The number of students per 10,000 people rose from 432 (in 2002) to presently 602 [1].

Another point of strength is mentioned by the *Universitas 21* report which acknowledged the high level of gender equality in student population, access to higher education as notable advantages and competitive gains of the Ukrainian Higher Education system. This is something where much more progress can be made further. [2]

All such indicators offer a promise of huge possibilities despite big problems faced presently. For example, the IT industry presently projects over \$5 billion value with 500 companies, 100 e-commerce firms and another 100 research and development companies, 2000 start-up companies and 50,000 engineers in the IT sector. According to an assessment made by European Commission under the Programme for Research & Technological Development (2007-2013) in the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) within the former Soviet Union, Ukraine had developed a strong tradition in the fields of cybernetics, mathematics and computer science. [3]

The above parameters could prove more impressive if similar progress could be made in areas such as the quality of education and its economic effectiveness which can influence (a) the efficiency of the employed class and (b) its contribution to national income. Such analysis may also invite attention if there are any imbalances in the labour market and also to what is the true economic effectiveness of Ukraine's education. This also draws attention to check if there has been any disproportionate emphasise to produce specialists more than their needed number in the labour market. The progress made in the past and potential for improvement in the future depends on how much effort is to make structural changes and how much attention is paid to readjusting content, goals, objectives, methods and technologies. [4]

There is a need to clarify that simply educating the youth does not necessarily mean to elevate their competitiveness. The challenges faced by many youth include under employment and under payment which could lead to a lack of prospects and lack of motivation. Although there have been up to 800 higher education institutions in the country, their overall research contribution remains low when compared with Poland, Hungary and Turkey. [5]

Higher Education reforms in Ukraine can serve as a path to renewal. Opening up to European partners will not only allow to review the great distances which Higher Education in Ukraine has covered so far but also to determine the distance which remain in order to make it more effective and competitive. It will also help Ukraine in making continuous attempts to reform and modernise national higher education. But this depends on the matter whether universities' senior management take it as difficulties in opportunities or consider it opportunities in difficulties.

At universities' leadership may ensure less focus on procedures yet more on the outcomes of reforms. Those who are in senior higher education positions sometimes feel being dragged down by insufficient capabilities rather than their capacity to improve and expand and perform better. One reason behind that could be insufficient yardsticks to measure good practices.

An important area which demands necessary attention is to examine to what extent the employability of graduates is affected because of the supply-demand mismatch in the labour market. [6]

Scholars point out that many Ukrainian universities need to decide whether they wish to become agents shaping globalisation according to their priorities. There is also a need to remain aware about the absence for the enthusiasm to experiment. These challenges are more serious as the country's provincial and national borders are facing both division and separation of social, cultural, economic and intellectual space in former Soviet Union. The ongoing violence and volatility weakens the social viability and economic vibrancy necessary to become competitive. There is a risk that on many performance measures Ukraine risks falling behind not just its neighbours such as Poland but also need to catch up with CIS states that it has been a participant. [7]

According to the 2015 World Competitiveness Ranking highlights released by Switzerland's Institute for Management Development, Eastern Europe countries showed a mixture of results. The Czech Republic rose from (33 to 29) while Poland ascended from (36 to 33rd position). In the Baltic States, Estonia slid from (30 to 31). Though Latvia slipped from (35 to 43) Lithuania gained in the ranking (34 to 28). There is a notable slipped noted owing to the current events in Russia (slid from 38 to 45) and Ukraine (slipped from 49 to 60) highlight the negative impact that armed conflict and the accompanying uncertainty have on competitiveness in an increasingly interconnected international economy. [8]

Many Ukrainian scholars have been already drawing attention to the fact that although the current situation has led to big challenges, it nevertheless opens up new avenues to turn a fresh page towards the path of advancement. In terms of strength the Ukrainian higher education system has a considerable potential for increasing its competitiveness so that its universities can meet the pre-requisites for increased world recognition. [9]

According to Sergiy Kurbatov, the International University Rankings provide us a picture and guideline about quality and standards to be developed. Without this simple picture it is impossible to identify the dimension for reforming the system of higher education. In this way, University rankings force educational institutions to be more relevant to contemporary reality, to become prepared for open competition and to make universities more attractive for the market. The biggest contribution of the Bologna process is that it is exposing Ukraine to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). It will help Ukrainian universities to move to sustainability and efficiency. It is pointed out that one advantage of the globalisation is that it helps institutions and individuals to bring life changing shifts in their circumstances. The Bologna system can help the Ukrainian universities by serving as a platform of renewal engaging with such initiative allows Ukrainian universities an opportunity to modernise and upgrade. The Bologna Process can help Ukrainian universities create a wider space for academic partnership; allows them to get closer to external partnerships and to tap new opportunities to become more competitive. [10].

Universities in Ukraine should take steps for validation of their academic potential and wider recognition of the qualification transferred. They also need to have talented people for assuring quality and enhancing it. The Bologna process can help them establish and expand institutional involvement at many levels. Partnership with management and business administration schools may make it possible to establish innovative for promoting industry and innovation. Such partnerships can help the Ukrainian universities design roadmap for connectivity, to connect for sharing and transferring know-how. Such partnerships will allow to strengthen intuitions and also to reinforce past achievement. The interaction can help Ukrainian universities to customise, adapt and adjust with the future needs in mind. Closer collaboration can also prove helpful to improve the relevance of education to needs of the future. It can also help to harness the strengths by capitalising on new openings, moreover it can also facilitate develop support structures for enhancement, efficiency and effectiveness of higher education in Ukraine. Such collaboration can contribute connectivity, creativity and collaboration.

In the opinion of V. Satsyk, the absence of efficient management model in practice at Ukrainian universities can be seen as one of the key barriers in their way to perform better in world rankings. Measures to make Ukrainian universities more competitive

require a strategy by way of further research to formulate relevant strategic objectives selecting appropriate methods for their achievement and identifying key determinants that specific universities can improve to get higher ranking. Although many academics emphasize on modernisation, it must also accompany; improving economic performance of the universities; adapting to technological changes; and developing ever improving efficiency. Such an approach will make universities dynamic, adaptive to consumers and will prioritise innovation oriented towards entrepreneurship and market orientation. In many effective economies, research in higher education is seen serving as instruments for economic performance and growth and for attaining better competency. Thus the creation, diffusion and exploitation of scientific and technical knowledge will help converting research achievements into commercial and technological progress. [11].

Analyst Mariya Aleksynska advises to cast a more nuanced look at the institutional factors and of potential reforms to improve productivity. In the years of transition many cohorts of young workers arriving at the labour market were not adequately educated to fully respond to the new labour demands. For many years the education system continued to over produced service cadres while the economy needed more skilled workers. She points out to education, job mismatch which is coupled with chronic under investment and lack of modernisation in the industrial sector. Also continuing slow restructuring and persistent over staffing and outdated management are among the factors responsible for aggregate low productivity. Institutional interventions should aim at improving educational quality, adjusting curricula to the new market need and also at involving enterprises in the development of curricula. Incentives should be encouraged so that firms can provide apprenticeship, training and internship opportunities so to create bridges between the world of education and employment. Other needed steps must include re-training of professionals; the modernisation of state enterprises and increased public private initiatives. [12]

According to economist, Olga Kupets, a high incidence of education-job mismatch in Ukraine raises important issues about spending on higher education in its current shape, the performance of adult learning, retraining and upgrading of skills. It also draws attention to the way labour market functions, and, also to the degree labour market information is provided to make job seekers successful as well as efficient. This situation also points out towards the decreasing comparative advantage of post socialist countries in terms of the stock of human capital as well as long term consequences of mismatch between education and employment from the perspective of future, demographic trends. [13]

According to a World Bank report, between 2012 and 2035, the Ukrainian labour force may shrink by more than 15%. To compensate this decline and for insuring that life standards do not change, it will become increasingly necessary to keep labour productivity rise steadily. For this it is necessary to avoid skill waste, underutilisation of labour and low mobility of the work force. All such factors make it necessary that Ukraine proceed to become more competitive and connected with knowledge based and innovation led economy. Strengthening co-operation between education and labour market institutions, it is essential to have a better anticipation about skills change so for avoiding skill mismatches and labour underutilisation at a time when the economy is shrinking rapidly and aging population. [14]

In early 2000s while the world average of young people leaving school and joining a college was 60%. In Ukraine, it was 76% (Kremin 2004). In recent years, Ukrainians are

experiencing an increasing need for acquiring competitive qualification to find their deserving place in the regional job market. However, providing increased access to college education in itself is not sufficient towards creating the possibilities for efficient management of human resources and directing them towards higher generation of growth revenue and national income. [15]

Ukraine's higher education system has a significant potential for more productively utilising the possibility of utilising its strong educational foundations so that its universities can compete with universities elsewhere. Ukraine has great possibilities for increasing its competitiveness and meeting the essential pre requisites to develop universities which are globally competitive.

Despite the fact that presently it is lower than many developed countries in terms of competency. Some experts suggest that it usually takes 25 to 30 years for economic growth to happen after reforms are made in education system. Applying this thesis to Ukrainian condition we can assume that providing a full scale educational reform, Ukrainian education system will blossom in a few decades and grow above producing raw or low-tech goods. [16]

More government support is needed in the Ukrainian IT industry, in order to give domestic companies a competitive edge on the global market and a lot of areas in the ICT sector still remain underinvested. However the Government is aware of the needs of the sector and has started placing high priorities in its policies concerning the ICT development of the country. The current pace of industrial development and the global economic situation according to some experts will most likely allow Ukraine to achieve \$10 billion mark in annual IT exports by 2018. On grounds of the above mentioned one may conclude that there is a growing demand for IT services and products not only on the domestic market but also on the international market. [17]

In recent years, Higher Education experts in Ukraine have looked into a diverse range of approaches to education reform. Some of which had an experimental character. The challenges faced by the academia include: under employment and under payment, unsupportive working condition, outdated equipment, all of which continue to pose as obstacles to progress which keep many proposals merely as plans or just recommendations. There is a need for intensifying and accelerating Ukrainian universities interaction with the knowledge society and knowledge economy in Europe. [18]

To sum up, Ukrainians have shown resilience as their society has gone through change and crisis, political competition and military conflict. These factors have affected the real scope educational innovation, consistency and continuity. There are some who see education in Ukraine not as a priority which determines economic growth but as something posing a burden on the economy. In recent years, Ukrainians are experiencing an increasing need for acquiring competitive qualification to find their deserving place in the regional job market. However, providing increased access to college education in itself is not sufficient towards creating the possibilities for efficient management of human resources and directing them towards higher generation of growth revenue and national income.

Finally, there is need for better governance, improved standardisation, more dialogue, efficient benchmarking and an increased exchange of good practices. Ukraine's participation in regional integration processes can help it increase its educational competitiveness in conditions of preserving the best traditions of its national education system.

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