

Ph. D. (Pedagogical Sciences) **IHOR KOLODII**

Lviv Polytechnic National University,
12, S. Bandera Str., Lviv, 79013, Ukraine,
E-mail: Ihor.S.Kolodii@lpnu.ua

Ph. D. (Pedagogical Sciences) **MARYANA HAVRAN**

Lviv Polytechnic National University,
12, S. Bandera Str., Lviv, 79013, Ukraine,
E-mail: Mariana.I.Havran@lpnu.ua

**CURRENT ASPECTS OF IMPLEMENTING
INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM
AT A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION
(the Experience of Lviv Polytechnic National University)**

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The article deals with the experience of implementing internal quality assurance system (IQAS) at Lviv Polytechnic National University. The authors explore the current problems of quality improvement in training specialists at higher schools. The legislative framework of higher education for providing high-quality education and improving the educational process is considered. The authors prove that every higher education institution should use quality management system that cannot be provided without a modern integrated higher education quality assurance system in general and all of its components in particular. They present the modern internal quality assurance system for educational activities and higher education at Lviv Polytechnic National University that allows training competitive specialists in various fields of vocational education. The researchers highlight the conceptual principles of quality assurance for educational activities and higher education at the University. The authors identify procedures and measures for IQAS implementation and University staff and units that are responsible for IQAS organization and effective operation. They define the main functions of the system for monitoring and quality control of the educational process and training specialists, and the main tasks and functions of the Quality Management System Assurance Department of Lviv Polytechnic.

Key words: quality, quality of education, internal quality assurance system, IQAS, quality management system, quality of educational process outcomes.

Introduction

The problem of ensuring and improving the quality of higher education is the major one in the education reforms of our state. It is simultaneously the aim of implementing reforms and the most important criterion for their success. Nowadays the effect of market mechanisms, increasing competition in the educational and research services market, requires that higher education institutions improve their work quality, increase their responsibility for their own activities and graduates.

The quality of education is a national priority and a prerequisite for the national security of the country, adherence to the international norms and national legislation on the realization of citizens' rights to education. Today, the quality of education is an indicator, which determines the effectiveness of the functioning of

state education system at any stage of its development, especially during the period of modernization.

The Law of Ukraine "On Education" states that education is a basis for intellectual, spiritual, physical and cultural development of the person, his successful socialization, economic well-being; a guarantee of development of the society united by common values and culture, and the state (Law of Ukraine "On Education").

The National Doctrine of Education Development states that education is a basis for the development of the person, society, nation and state; and a guarantee of the future of Ukraine. It is a determining factor in the political, socio-economic, cultural and scientific life of a society. Education reproduces and increases the intellectual, spiritual and economic potential of a society.

Education is a strategic resource for improving people's well-being, ensuring national interests, strengthening state's authority and competitiveness on the international scene (Natsionalna doktryna rozvytku osvity, 2004).

Article 1 of the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" states that the quality of higher education is the level of knowledge, skills, abilities and other competencies acquired by a person that reflects his competence in accordance with higher education standards.

The quality of educational activities is the level of organizing the educational process at a higher education institution that meets higher education standards, provides high-quality higher education for people and promotes the creation of new knowledge.

Most scientists and practitioners working in the field of education consider that education quality improvement is the main problem of education reforms. Today, our awareness of this problem and our grasp of what education quality is, how it is defined, what it depends on, how it can be improved, and why the reforms are being implemented with such a difficulty are the cause for concern.

There is no doubt that in modern conditions the quality of education determines the competitiveness of any domestic higher education institution.

The aim of the study

The aim of the article is to explore the current problems of quality improvement in training specialists at higher schools, implementing an internal quality assurance system at higher education institutions of Ukraine considering Lviv Polytechnic National University experience.

Theoretical framework and research methods

Many research works are devoted to the problem of the quality of higher education in Ukraine. Thus, the quality management of pedagogical activity under current market conditions is the subject of scientific interest of such researchers as Alohina (2014), Buhrov (2011), Dombrovskiy (2013), Luhoviy, & Talanova (2013a), Riabchenko (2015). Sushentseva, & Zhytnyk (2014) studies the education quality management. The development of quality assurance system for the higher education of Ukraine is highlighted in the studies of Zakharchenko, Luhoviy, Rashkevych, & Talanova (2014). Such researchers as Luhoviy, & Talanova (2013b) study evaluation and stimulation process as well as the development of competitive education institutions in the market conditions.

In recent years, a large number of publications have been focused on the issues of adapting the current system to formal requirements and criteria determined by the Bologna Process. At the same time, there are studies that raise doubts about the reality of improving the quality of national education system in such format. "It is naive and utopian hope that higher education will be

completely improved, put on civilized rails and integrated into the European Higher Education Area in a socially sick society" (Riabchenko, 2015, p. 25). Moreover, we agree to it, understanding that the social education institution is not isolated, but it is an integral part of Ukrainian society.

Results

Education, like any process or the result of human activity, has a defined quality. The quality of education is a set of competencies and professional characteristics that reflect a specialist's ability to carry out professional activities in accordance with the requirements of the modern economic development stage, at a certain level of efficiency and professional success, with understanding social responsibility for the results of the professional activity.

The quality of education characterizes not only the result of educational activity, qualities of a specialist, being a graduate of a higher education institution, but also the factors in the formation of this result, which depends on the purpose of education, its content and methodology, organization and technology. We should consciously influence all of these features and manage them. Education requires a quality management system that should be used by every higher education institution. This system cannot be without a modern integrated higher education quality assurance system in general and all of its components in particular.

Today, in the world, there is an international experience in quality management presented by total (general) quality management system (TQM). The experience of using TQM shows that: each faculty member of higher education institution must participate in the achievement of high-quality education. It is obvious that each department and institute must have their "customers" and "suppliers" and provide customers with a wide range of educational services; the quality management system cannot be effective only at the expense of several employees who are obsessed with this idea. All teachers, all departments and other units of the higher education institution must carry out their day-to-day work in accordance with the standard process and work on improvement of this process. The collective organization of work will enable to use most effectively each teacher's and employee's creative possibilities. According to traditional teaching techniques, the teacher is burdened with implementing TQM because he assesses the quality of knowledge considering a significant set of indicators as well as computer support for quality indicators assessment procedure is required. TQM philosophy reflects the basic principles of the concepts developed by the ETFQ for business excellence model.

According to Article 16, the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education", the higher education quality assurance system in Ukraine consists of: the system of providing quality of educational activities and quality of higher education (the

internal quality assurance system) by higher education institutions; the external quality assurance system for educational activities in higher education institution and higher education; the quality assurance system for activities of National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and independent institutions for assessment and quality assurance in higher education.

Today, in Lviv Polytechnic National University, there is a modern internal quality assurance system for educational activities and higher education (IQAS). University IQAS purpose is defined as ensuring requirements and expectations of the consumers (entrants, students, post-graduate students) of University educational services, as well as employers, state authorities and management; monitoring and evaluation of educational process quality at all implementation stages; detection of time reasons for the deviations of the actual qualitative indicators from the internal and external norms; finding the appropriate means and their usage to eliminate the deviations through undertaking fast corrective actions.

The quality assurance for educational activities and higher education at the University is based on the following conceptual principles: University and its employees' responsibility for the quality of educational activities and higher education; autonomy of the University; systematic quality assurance for educational activities and higher education; compliance with European, national and professional standards for the quality assurance in higher education; fundamentality of educational activities; mobility of the participants of educational process; transparency, accessibility and openness of information; innovative educational activities; IQAS continuous improvement; continuous monitoring and improvement of the quality of educational services; involving consumers of educational services, employers and other stakeholders in improving the quality of educational services and IQAS.

The responsibility for IQAS organization and effective operation is presented at all levels: at the University level – the rector, vice rector on scientific and pedagogical work, heads of structural units; at the level of academic institutes – directors of institutes and deans; at the department level – heads of departments, guarantors of educational programs, scientific and pedagogical staff.

In accordance with Article 16, Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”, IQAS provides the implementation of such procedures and measures as: definition of principles and procedures for ensuring the quality of higher education; monitoring and regular revision of educational programs; systematic evaluation of students' performance, results of scientific and pedagogical staff and University departments; regular announcement of evaluation results on the University official website, information boards and by other means; providing professional training for scientific and pedagogical staff; availability of necessary resources for the organization of educational process according to each educational program, including students' self-study activities; availability

of information systems for the effective management of educational process; providing public information about educational programs, degrees of higher education and qualifications; the use of an effective system for preventing and detecting academic plagiarism in University scientists' and students' research works; participation of the University in national and international rating studies of higher education institutions; implementing other procedures and measures.

IQAS consists of the quality assurance process for educational activities and higher education, which is a set of sub-processes and two subsystems. There are such subsystems as a quality evaluation subsystem for educational activities and higher education by generalized criteria, which are determined and based on an aggregate of the average quantitative indicators; and a subsystem for monitoring and managing quality assurance processes and procedures for educational activities and higher education.

The internal organizational procedures and processes of IQAS are based on the “Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area” of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. They include: elaborating educational programmes and curricula, their monitoring and regular revision; student-centred learning; student enrolment formation, assessment, recognition of learning outcomes and student certification; staffing of educational activities; educational and information resources; information management; publicity of the University activities.

The system for monitoring and quality control of the educational process and training specialists is very important today. It includes such functions as assessment of knowledge and determination of the student rankings in the credit-module system of educational process; assessment of students' residual knowledge in academic courses; student practical training assessment; the control at all levels jointly with supervisory control; taking into account requirements and expectations of the main users of the University educational services – students, entrants, employers and the state; timely detection of shortcomings in the educational process and the reasons why these shortcomings arise, etc.

There are people who are responsible for monitoring the quality of educational process and organizing specialist training in the University: at the University level – the rector, vice-rectors in scientific and pedagogical work; at the level of academic institutes – directors of institutes, deans of basic and complete higher education; at the department level – heads of departments, scientific and pedagogical staff.

The Quality Management System Assurance Department of Lviv Polytechnic, being an important structural subdivision, implements the University policy on quality assurance of educational services and the introduction of a quality management system. Today, the Department performs many tasks and functions as

follows: 1) developing recommendations, draft documents for the rector and the Academic Council to improve the regulatory framework for organizing educational process and University quality management system; 2) participating in the development and improvement of techniques for University department rankings, rating assessment of the University scientific and pedagogical staff's activities, and monitoring the quality of training specialists at the University; 3) inspecting the organization of educational process and University structural subdivisions' activities (according to University rector's particular order); 4) analysis of the students' training results and performance and the work of state examination commissions; 5) checking the work of departments and deans' offices; 6) analysis of the rating assessment results of the University scientific and pedagogical staff's activities; 7) planning and registration of University manuals, issuing quality certificates; 8) organizing work on students' residual knowledge control; 9) organizing University departments' rankings procedures; 10) organizing work on holding the 1st and the 2nd rounds of All-Ukrainian Student Olympiads and Qualification Works Contests, collecting and processing reports on their results, etc.

Conclusions

The study proves there is an effective IQAS at Lviv Polytechnic National University that allows training competitive specialists in various fields of vocational education, and IQAS is an integral part of the general quality assurance system for higher education in Ukraine.

It is important to emphasize that the subject under consideration can be further researched into studying domestic and foreign experience of the countries that are reforming their higher education management structures and setting European quality standards in their educational systems.

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