

The shifting tides of higher education in Ukraine: background, expectations and reality

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The paper presents an analysis of the higher education system in Ukraine, with a particular focus on university governance, its background, and its development in contemporary times and future. The study of the university governance is carried out by applying the model of the governance equalizer. In addition, the shifting trends in state regulation, academic and managerial self-governance, competition and stakeholder guidance are examined. The work concentrates on presenting the revolutionary reforms of the Law On Higher Education from 2014 and its impact on the governance equalizer model pertinent to the Ukrainian higher education system. Furthermore, global and national trends are presented and their connection to the higher education system in the country is outlined.

Key words: Higher education, New Public Management, governance equalizer.

Introduction

Higher Education (HE) is one of the most important elements of the state policy of Ukraine. Researchers and scientists in the field of HE consider higher education institutions (HEIs) as the main agents for developing the innovative thinking approach and culture, creating a competitive society and promoting market development at the national and international levels. It should be mentioned that Ukrainian HE is in a transition phase and many aspects of university governance have to be investigated. In particular, one must consider the new law On Higher Education adopted on the 1st of July, 2014, which led to the implementation of revolutionary system changes in HE at the national level and the adoption of significant reforms at the institutional level.

The educational reforms that stemmed from the law were elaborated within the framework of the Bologna Process. They are connected to the concepts of New Public Management (NPM), which were put into practice in the United States and in many countries across Europe. In essence, NPM denotes “a switch from traditionally legalistic

steering mechanisms of top-down implementation of normative formulae to a more economically driven steering system based on contractual consent on objectives to be achieved” (Kohler & Huber, 2006, p. 23). In order to evaluate thoroughly how the higher education system has changed since the introduction of NPM reforms, it is important to first investigate the peculiarities of the former HE system, outline the advantages and disadvantages, and prognosticate the possible impact of prior regulations on the contemporary ones.

In this context, the quality of educational services and of the university management system have become core issues of the HE realm. Therefore, new approaches to identify and measure the effectiveness of institutional governance and the correlation among HEIs, state and other stakeholders are required. Taking into consideration the various dimensions and variables pertaining to the higher education sector in Ukraine, there is a need to identify the optimal form and approach to implement NPM reforms and shape the direction of future development based on the specific context of the country and of the HE system in general. Moreover, when analysing and interpreting the degree of suitability of NPM strategies for universities, different factors must be considered, such as the profile of institutions, the leadership style, the governance model and traditions, the organizational culture, the communication practices, and the like. Hence, the above-mentioned peculiarities of a HEI have an impact on the national model of HE effectiveness. However, the aim of the current paper is to introduce a generalized representation of the HE system in Ukraine, reflecting on NPM concepts and applying the governance equalizer model.

Analysis of the relevant researches and publications

Among the practitioners of the modern Ukrainian higher education system we can distinguish Mikhail Zgurovskiy, Vasyl Kremen, Stanislav Nikolaenko, who examined the internal and external functioning of Ukrainian universities and explored ways of bringing the HE system closer to the Bologna standards. Volodymyr Andreitsev and Anatoliy Getman have been investigating the legal framework of Ukrainian HE. To specify, they analysed and developed the modern state governance in the field of education, described the characteristics of diverse models of HE and defined the perspectives of HE development in Ukraine.

Since the present work brings attention to the recent NPM-oriented reforms in Ukraine, it is relevant to provide the literature review on the works which identify the features of NPM, its applicability to the higher education sector, and possible shortcomings. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the work *Higher Education Governance between Democratic Culture, Academic Aspirations and Market Forces* (2006) by Jürgen Kohler and Josef Huber. This book covers the background, significance and purpose of HE, discusses the need to reconsider the framework of HE systems in light of NPM approaches and provides examples of case studies conducted in Georgia, Estonia, Serbia and Turkey.

Another fundamental work that is used in the current paper is *On the Way Towards New Public Management? The Governance of University Systems in England, the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany* (2007) by Harry de Boer, Jürgen Enders, and Uwe Schimank. The authors conduct an analytical study on the evolution of NPM in European university systems, and provide an assessment of the state of NPM indicators in four countries: England, the Netherlands, Austria, and Germany. The work also introduces a new empirical model called the governance equalizer for determining the level of each NPM dimension in a given country according to the proposed benchmark.

In the last few years, several studies that focus on the NPM concept and its possibilities for implementation were published in Ukraine. For example, Veronika Kovalchuk (2014) explores the idea of the new public management, analyses practical approaches of implementing it in different countries, and suggests ways to introduce the reform in Ukraine. Another Ukrainian researcher, Olena Vorobiova (2015), presents the key models of the “new public management” and “good governance”, and outlines the strengths and weaknesses of the respective models in terms of their application to the Ukrainian context.

Most of the authors took the Western model of university governance and state regulation as a standard of comparison and designed a similar model for Ukrainian HE (Lilia Dubko, Natalia Garashchenko, Natalia Yasinska). In their publications, the scientists highlighted the stages and trends of a university's evolution in terms of governance, and also characterized each direction of functioning in diverse historical and economic periods. Their key idea is to introduce the basis of a new university in the modern governance model in Ukraine.

Oleksandr Romanovskiy, a well-known Ukrainian scholar in economics and pedagogy of HE, published two books – *The Phenomenon of Entrepreneurship in Universities Worldwide* (2012) and *Innovative Activity of Research Entrepreneurial Universities in the USA* (2012), which discuss aspects of new public management. In his works, Romanovsky emphasized the peculiarities of university (academic) entrepreneurship, and highlighted its impact on the economic development of the country and the business activities of HEIs. By analysing the models of university entrepreneurship in developed countries, the author elaborates a prototype for innovative NPM-oriented development for the Ukrainian HE system.

The analysis of scientific literature on the aspects of university governance and its connection with the State reveals that institutional management processes in Ukrainian institutions are multifaceted and have to be explored from different perspectives. In this context, one must take into consideration the background, profile, and the environment in which the university operates. A new era for university governance has been launched with the recent adoption of the legal framework. Consequently, this development demands a comprehensive investigation of the practical implementation of educational reforms, the changes at all levels of institutional administration, the shifts in practical involvement of academic staff and other stakeholders in the university management, and the rationales for the current university leadership models and their impact on educational quality.

Research objective

The research objective of the paper is to analyse the university governance system in Ukraine based on the following time dimensions – past (2010 onwards), present (2015) and future (2020). In addition, the study aims at defining the contradictions of HE developments in Ukraine, outlining the prospective scenario for HE in the context of modernization and European integration processes, and identifying the positive and negative impact of these trends.

Methodology

In order to reach the research objective, several theoretical and practical methods were applied in this study. Thus, the paper uses research analysis to explore the specific features and levels of university governance. Synthesis is applied by combining different data and descriptions of university activity and its connection to the State into one holistic analysis, which presents the system of HE in a particular period of time. The comparative classification method contributes to defining the positive and negative factors influencing the HE system in Ukraine and determining ways of avoiding the obstacles to the modernization and improvement of the system.

Induction reasoning is used in the paper as it focuses on specific case studies of particular universities in Ukraine. Then, findings are generalized and applied to the higher education system as a whole. The research also includes a deductive approach, describing the general education environment at the national level and switching to particular cases at the institutional level.

The empirical methods are comprised of observation and comparison. The comparison method identifies similarities, differences, features, and functions of the Ukrainian HE system pertaining to the following three time frames (the past - from 2010 to 2015, the present - the year 2015, and the future - from 2015 to 2020). The measurement of progress or decline of the five components of the governance equalizer, as well as the summarized strengths and weaknesses of the HE system are provided according to the observation method.

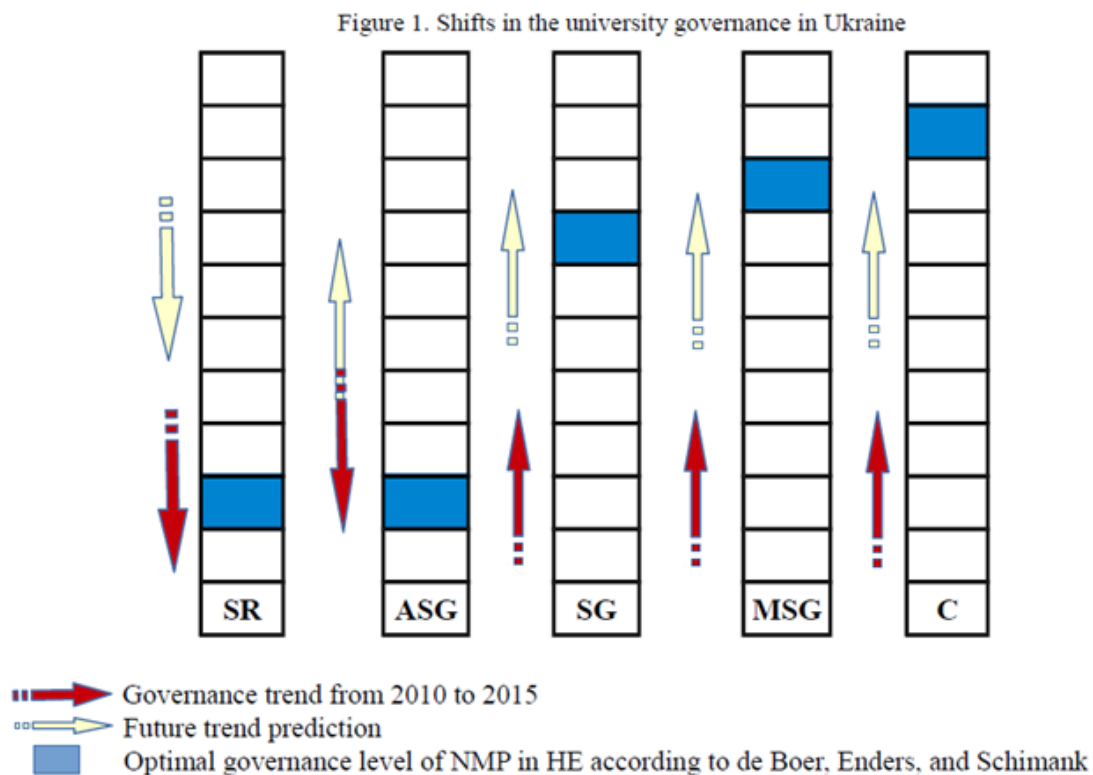
The study uses the governance equalizer as analytical tool, which was introduced to the scientific community and explored in the works of Harry de Boer, Jurgen Enders and Uwe Schimank. To assess the university governance, the scholars elaborated a qualitative model which is analogous to the equalizer, equipment used to adjust the balance between frequency components within an electronic signal. The proposed model distinguishes five dimensions of governance in HE as follows: state regulation (SR), stakeholder guidance (SG), academic self-governance (ASG), managerial self-governance (MSG), competition (C). These dimensions are used to evaluate the situation in the university governance system at a specific point in time using NPM standards and elements of the governance equalizer model.

The strong side of the governance equalizer tool is the rapid and fool proof visual representation of the qualitative model response based on description and comparison methods. The model demonstrates the qualitative level of the NPM dimension and the overall effect of the synergy (fixation of intensification of the final result through combination of partial effects from each of the five dimensions).

However, the weakness of the tool is manifested in its complexity to grade the NPM dimensions, its limitations in terms of performing quantitative data analysis, and consequently, the lack of accurate optimization value. The latter infers infeasibility to estimate slight changes or modifications in the dimensions' indicators and problematic identification of the synergistic effect of the five components of the governance equalizer model. If the governance equalizer had included the characteristics of quantitative assessment of data (descriptive terms such as intensive/weak, neutral or medium, high/low, etc.), or quantitative grades (percentage, scores, etc.), it would have been possible to define the level of impact of each specific dimension on the entire model of university governance.

Governance equalizer

By applying the governance equalizer model and analysing the HE system in Ukraine within the three suggested timeframes, the university governance can be illustrated as follows:



The picture shows the scale for each of the five dimensions and gives a representation of the past and future trends according to the scenario presented in the paper. Based on the figure, the SR has been on a decreasing trend as the government continues to empower universities with considerable autonomy power. The ASG tends to vary depending on the case, and both SG and MSG have gained strong positions in institutional decision-making. Lastly, the context within which HEIs have the capacity to function dictates the conditions for inter-university competition. Competition in the HE sector has increased dramatically, especially in the period after the adoption of the 2014 law On Higher Education.

Results and discussion

Analysis of the higher education system in 2010

In 2010, the environment of Ukrainian HE could be characterized by two interdependent trends: integration into global education and reinforcement of the legal framework which regulated all aspects of HE in the country. Leading researchers of the National Academy of Pedagogical Sciences of Ukraine state that during this period numerous pivotal changes occurred, which led to transformations of the HE system towards the European standards,

and alteration of the criteria for quality evaluation and quality assurance (National Tempus Office Informational Bulletin, 2013). Simultaneously, all these shifts were supported and authorized by the relevant legislative acts, which created a solid platform for a new educational landscape.

In essence, after the official adoption of the Bologna system in 2005 and the declaration to modernize education according to European standards and guidelines, the transition process spanned over many years. In 2010, the implementation of laws and acts into the university context was not fully completed.

Thus, the state regulation of the university administration was high and broad-based. Aiming at achieving European integration and modernizing HE, certain directives related to the expansion of the university autonomy were approved. Nevertheless, these directives covered only a tiny part of the institutional governance system. As a result of this innovative approach, currently, the rector or the president of a Ukrainian university is responsible for monitoring the internal educational processes and their compliance with the state standards. Moreover, university authorities are granted the right to approve the staff schedule and make alterations to the budget (Vakarchuk, 2008, p. 5).

Another significant leap towards the European benchmark in HE was made through discussions on elaborating laws to alter the structure and work principles of the State accreditation commission. Although the drafted law mentions that the State Accreditation Commission should be detached from the Ministry and become an independent body, the expected outcomes were not actualized by 2010. In fact, the universities' dependence on the State remained the same (Miroshnichenko, 2010).

Stakeholder guidance has had different success rates depending on the university profile. For instance, technical universities cooperate more actively with stakeholders from the business industry. In this regard, educational projects funded by the European Commission have had a considerable impact on the development and improvement of stakeholder guidance within Ukrainian universities. The Tempus program, for example, has been one of the strategic tools of the European Union (EU) to enhance cooperation between the EU and non-EU countries. The outcomes of the Tempus programme in Ukraine demonstrate that universities with technical profiles had a more fruitful and stable cooperation with the industry and the business sector due to mutual interests and

benefits. This feature has implications on the competitiveness of Ukrainian HEIs and brings new approaches to manage a university and its links with external stakeholders.

Academic self-governance has been authoritative at the faculty and department levels. Contrastingly, at the institutional level, the collective bodies (Rector Council, Academic Council, Staff Trade Committee, Student Committee) involved in the academic self-governance serve as advisory units. The ultimate decisions are made by the top managers, who are not taking into consideration the statements of the collective bodies. This aspect points to an insufficient level of development of democratic approaches within Ukrainian universities, and urges to elaborate measures to overcome the out-of-date, top-down tradition for decision making.

Managerial self-governance has been dominant in Ukrainian HEIs. The rector's responsibility is to manage the whole university and to coordinate its activities. According to the institutional Statute, other positions within the university management system have been designed to run and control the specific activities and maintain quality assurance. The cooperation between all these entities has been witnessed within Ukrainian universities.

Competition has been high in terms of budgeting, number of available staff positions, allocation of student enrolment rates, etc. The decision regarding these financial issues is made based on the position of the university in the national ranking, which is formed according to the following criteria: international activity, scientific achievements, quality of alumni as assessed by employers, and academic communities. The risk induced by this ranking scheme is that universities strive for high numbers, and not necessarily for good quality education.

Higher education in 2015

The period from 2010 to 2015 changed significantly the educational landscape of Ukraine. The financial crisis took place, and numerous educational reforms were launched, leaving universities in severe conditions. The revolutionary movement of 2014 changed rapidly the socio-political system, which included the formation of a new government and a new team for the Ministry of Education and Science.

It should be mentioned that on September 6th, 2014, a law On Higher Education, approved by the Ukrainian Parliament, came into force, becoming one of the most conspicuous system reforms of the recently elected government. The new law foresees the implementation of revolutionary reforms in HE, which aim to bring the university governance model closer to European standards and principles. The explanation of the main trends of the reforms is provided below.

1. *The Establishment of the Independent Body for Quality Control in HE.* The National Agency for Quality Assurance of HE was created as a collegial entity and inherited a considerable part of responsibilities from the Ministry of Education and Science, namely, to control and monitor the education quality of Ukrainian HEIs. In addition, one of the innovations has been the change of ranking criteria for HEIs. The new criteria will urge universities to justify the appropriate quality of their study and research programmes.

These structural and functional novelties in Ukrainian HE inevitably led to increasing competition among universities at the national, and in particular, at the regional level. At the same time, the fact that the Ministry delegates power to control the quality of educational services to the independent body decreases state regulation, which consequently increases managerial self-governance.

2. *University autonomy.* The new regulation imposes distinct limitations for the rector's position. Henceforth, it forbids combining two administrative positions, e.g., working as a rector and as a head of department at the same time. It is worth mentioning that in the past, being both in a top management and a middle management position was common in Ukraine and was perceived as a rule for those who are involved in the university governance.

The change creates new financial opportunities for universities, such as to open their own bank accounts, receive credits, dispose and make decisions concerning property and land. Currently, HEIs can establish scientific parks and enterprises without the consent of the Ministry or other official bodies. Universities are free to administer their own funds, including tuition fees, which cannot be withdrawn from the state or from the local budget. They can transfer money abroad to gain membership in education associations or to participate in scientific conferences. Until 2014, before the resolution of the new law On

Higher Education, these financial operations were impossible due to the strict regulations of the Treasury, and the numerous restrictions imposed by the state. In this context, the increase in managerial self-governance strengthened the position and role of top managers as leaders of HEIs. On the other hand, the change of ideology after the 2014 Revolution urged top managers to choose a democratic or liberal leadership style. This was in line with the orientation towards European democratic rules and principles, and the establishment of anti-corruption observatory bodies.

3. The role of student self-governance increases, alongside the right to form relevant student self-governance bodies. These administrative structures within the university management system are entitled to protect students' interests, to take part in decision-making processes at the institutional level (e.g., propose adjustments in study plans and programmes), to vote for the rector or dean directly, and also to run 0.5% of the total university income. The reform influences the decision-making processes of HEIs and makes slight changes in the functioning and development of both managerial and academic self-governance.

4. Transparency becomes a cornerstone in the new HE environment of Ukraine. To specify, every university is obliged to make information on its activities public, for instance, to publish on the university's website documents related to finances, property, implementation reports, distribution of wages, and the like. In addition, one of the requirements of the new law is to publish online the results and conclusions of the annual internal monitoring report on education quality. The reform on transparency is believed to bridge the gap between universities and stakeholders, by creating optimal conditions for trust, reputation and stability. Thus, in 2015, stakeholder guidance varies from university to university. There are certain cases in Ukraine when the business sector is actively involved in the university management. This applies to universities that cooperate with the industry in creating technological parks, scientific laboratories, business incubators, or promoting academic mobility or internships where stakeholders provide financial assistance.

5. Competitive system of state demand. Starting from 2016 there will be a new mechanism of electronic enrolment to Ukrainian HEIs, which is defined in detail in the new law On

Higher Education. This mechanism will regulate automatically the distribution of state demand.

Prospective students, before enrolling, will have access to information on the study programmes and HEIs they would like to enter. After passing the Standardized External Testing, prospective students will be ranked so that the ones at the top of the list will be provided with free education. The university, in turn, receives state funding for the students they enrol.

Thus, the preferences of prospective students are of great importance for Ukrainian HEIs. As a result, the choices students make when selecting an institution have great impact on the ranking of study programmes and universities. In this context, universities must take into consideration the requirements and expectations of prospective students in order to receive state funding. Furthermore, the law also allows private universities to receive state funding if they enrol top students.

6. *State funding for science and research.* The Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine agreed to elaborate a new model for special-purpose funding of scientific developments and inventions in universities. This model is expected to be implemented until 2018 and it targets universities that receive national recognition for research – a status that has to be constantly justified.

All of the above-mentioned reforms have made competition strong in 2015. This is further confirmed by the number of higher education institutions that were closed or merged (from 802 to 300) by the state due to unsatisfactory audit reports, poor quality level of educational services and enrolment rates. In the upcoming period, the Ministry intends to create free competition for academic quality both between universities and institutional staff.

Future scenario for higher education in Ukraine

The future is expected to bring many innovations in the realm of higher education. In the field of state regulation, the legal framework for higher education will be further modernized, universities will be provided with full autonomy, cooperation between higher education institutions and business enterprises at the national level will be

fostered, and effective and transparent tools for monitoring of higher education will be created.

The stakeholder guidance is foreseen to rise dramatically, due to the new regulations. Consequently, representatives from the business sector and the labour market will actively participate in university governance processes. The academic self-governance is expected to stimulate grassroots leadership initiatives among students and empower academic governance units to influence the decision-making process of HEIs. It is expected that more academic staff will be involved in the university administration system, and will gradually become key players of the management system. Managerial self-governance will be characterized by stronger leadership capacity from the senior management of HEIs. In addition, the development of a context-sensitive strategy for effective leadership models in Ukrainian HE is expected. The effectiveness of the managerial self-governance will depend on the personal and professional qualities and capacities of the rector and his administrative team.

Finally, the high requirements of the government and the society will create conditions for increased competition in HE. In efforts to achieve high quality standards, and national and international recognition, universities will have to bring the Bologna principles and reforms into practice.

Challenges for higher education

Several challenges hinder the move to European integration and adoption of NPM-based reforms in the Ukrainian education system. Problems may rise at the individual, institutional or national levels; therefore, their risks should be considered in order to implement successfully the educational initiatives of the Government. Once they are recognized as potential drawbacks, specific methods must be taken to prevent the problems and find reasonable solutions.

A first notable limitation refers to the lack of experience of the university staff in using efficiently their right for autonomy. The new conditions established unusual circumstances for university representatives. Although the new law provides considerably more rights for students and staff members, these stakeholders do not know how to use them to influence decision-making. In most cases, students and academics are

passive, demotivated and reluctant to take part in managerial procedures. The situation could be improved by raising awareness among students and staff of their role in the university system and organizing special workshops to explain how they could utilize their rights to a full extent.

Second, the Ministry of Education recognizes that universities are not sufficiently prepared for the new educational environment. Therefore, the Ministry will advance specific recommendations, which are going to be published and distributed among universities. Despite that, there is a threat that published recommendations will not be sufficient to steer universities towards the new educational model. Thus, the Ministry should consider adopting other strategies to prepare HEIs for educational reforms.

Third, financial changes are required to be carried out in the country in order to improve the quality of higher education. Unfortunately, the financial crisis and the inadequate wage structure for academics impair the quality of teaching and research activities. This is due to the fact that university staff are forced to take additional jobs to compensate for their poor income. Consequently, teachers and researchers do not have the time or the opportunity to provide high quality classes or research.

Fourth, there is a lack of motivation among university authorities and resistance from the academic and management staff to actualize the educational reforms. Most of the professors do not recognize the need to adopt the Bologna processes in Ukraine and stick to traditional approaches of governance. They adduce numerous arguments in favour of traditional practices and state that the new law On Higher Education and the NPM principles will only debase the HE system of Ukraine, as they do not suit the real needs and capacity of universities.

Tendencies that affect higher education

In the next 5 years, HE development will be subject to the influence of various social, economic, and cultural trends, and the reaction of the state, market, universities and the society to them. Ukraine is one of the cases that has not yet found an optimal solution to the demographic problem, which has an adverse effect on the productivity of the country and on the long-term development of the HE system. New technologies tend to alter the perception of life and education, especially since HE became available even in the most

remote areas and rural districts. This trend has steered universities to develop distance learning tools. Contemporary instruments and approaches to provide educational services outperform the outdated social norms, standards and relationships, bringing the university closer to the needs and expectations of the country.

Globalization interferes with all aspects of life, including the strategies of universities. Thus, scholars and university managers try to get inspired by the best practices of institutional governance found in Western countries. The successful models of European and American universities are connected with the business life, and universities are granted high capacity for self-governance and responsibility for self-financing. The 2014 law On Higher Education introduced a high level of autonomy for the university, which includes financial and administrative independence and other provisions. These innovations are driven by the political preferences towards European integration and adoption of the Bologna process. The current system of HE is in a transition period. Therefore, it still requires time to find the most suitable way to modernize and enhance its activities. Rather than borrowing the model of university governance from other countries with very different backgrounds and cultural values, the process requires the design of a context-specific management model, based on deep analysis of former achievements.

Moreover, the political and military crisis adversely affects HE and, especially, universities in the conflict zone. Currently, the Eastern part of Ukraine is facing war and many universities were evacuated to other cities. Nevertheless, the new provisions are rather complicated for a successful functioning of evacuated HEIs since they do not possess the necessary premises to conduct classes and position the administrative staff. Most institutions of this type moved to forms of distance learning and management systems, due to the fact that many staff members and students were placed in different regions of the country. However, universities are not well-prepared to introduce distance learning education for their students, which raises doubts about the quality of such educational services. At the same time, it urges not only the evacuated universities, but all other HEIs in the country to concentrate on the practical challenges of offering distance HE and elaborate an appropriate model for online education in a situation of military unrest.

Conclusion

The analysis of the background of education through its development from the early 2010s until now shows that the Ukrainian HE system has had a long and complicated path from post-communist approaches to European integration and adoption of the Bologna process.

HE does not exist in isolation; rather, it develops in close connection to political, social, and economic trends. Global and national factors such as demographic changes, military unrest, political crisis, and economic challenges also have a substantial impact on HE, generating ideas and social theories that could be applied to the functional organization of institutions.

Consequently, the modern demands on social development and state policy create a new role for universities in Ukraine, which requires advanced managerial and organizational strategies to fulfil the tasks universities are striving for. The law On Higher Education adopted in 2014 has changed significantly the environment of the HE system. To specify, it led to the implementation of NPM-oriented values into the governance of universities both at national and institutional levels.

Moreover, a HEI is a complex body with diverse and interrelated internal and external elements, which affect the activity and profile of the institution. Thus, the decrease of state regulation in Ukraine has had a positive impact on university autonomy, positioning managerial self-governance higher compared to other dimensions within the university administration system. These changes, in turn, have created optimal conditions for increased competition between different types of universities. Universities strive to receive additional funding and to score high on various quality assurance indicators, which affects their reputation and endeavours. Nevertheless, the success of managerial self-governance is dependent upon the human factor, which may create positive or negative conditions or influence other dimensions of governance (academic self-governance and stakeholder guidance). It should be stated that change is needed not only within institutions, but also within individuals. Many university representatives in Ukraine are resistant to change, yet change should come from the inside.

The transition from former to updated principles is still taking place in Ukraine and it is expected to last for several decades more before universities succeed in finding an appropriate model for self-governance and efficient mechanisms for providing high quality education.

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