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IMPLEMENTATION OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION PROCESSES IN NATIONAL HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEMS

In the context of Ukraine's active European integration, the transformation of the national higher education system in accordance with European standards is of particular importance. European integration processes are taking place against the background of modern society's globalization, within which the Bologna Process is developing, aimed at creating a unified higher education space as the foundation for the European Union's competitive economy.

The official beginning of the convergence of European countries' higher education systems is considered to be June 19, 1999, when the Declaration on the Creation of a European Higher Education Area was signed in Bologna, Italy. For Ukraine, this process gained particular relevance after signing the Association Agreement with the European Union, which opened new opportunities while simultaneously presenting new challenges to our state's higher education system.

The Bologna Process is based on the principle of prioritizing learning outcomes over time and content of education, implemented through a competency-based approach. An important aspect is the harmonization of the European higher education system architecture, manifested in the compatibility of academic degrees and development of academic mobility. This is achieved through implementing a three-level system: bachelor's - master's - doctoral studies, with clear differentiation of graduates' competencies at each level.

Keywords: *European integration, higher education transformation, Bologna Process, academic mobility, education quality assurance, university autonomy, competency-based approach, educational reforms.*

Problem Statement. In the context of globalization and European integration, the higher education system is undergoing significant transformations. The implementation of Bologna Process principles creates new opportunities for higher education development while posing complex challenges regarding the preservation of national educational traditions and quality assurance. The analysis of European countries' experience in reforming higher education systems and identifying the most effective approaches to implementing Bologna principles becomes particularly relevant.

An important aspect of the problem is ensuring balance between unification of educational systems and preservation of their national specificity. Mechanisms for quality assurance, development of academic mobility, and implementation of the competency-based approach require detailed study. The issue of higher education funding and university autonomy development remains relevant in conditions of growing competition in the global educational services market.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. Research on European integration

processes in education attracts significant attention from both Ukrainian and foreign scholars. In Ukrainian academic discourse, significant contributions to studying mechanisms of higher education adaptation to European standards have been made by S.V. Kurbatov, V.P. Andrushchenko, and V.I. Luhovyi. Their works focus on analyzing transformation processes in Ukraine's higher education system within the context of European integration.

Presenting main material. The transformation of higher education systems in the context of European integration is a complex and multifaceted process requiring deep analysis and systematic approach. Creating a unified European educational space resulted from long-term evolution of educational systems and international cooperation. It is important to understand that this process began long before signing the Bologna Declaration and was driven by economic and social integration needs of European countries.

The current stage of higher education development is characterized by strengthening globalization processes and increasing role of international academic cooperation. In this context, analyzing European countries' experience in implementing Bologna Process principles becomes particularly significant. Each country, while preserving its national educational traditions, finds its own ways to adapt to common European standards.[3]

The process of harmonizing European educational systems began with the signing of the Sorbonne Declaration in 1998. This document laid the foundation for creating an open European higher education space, which was intended to ensure student and faculty mobility, as well as enhance European education's competitiveness in the global market. It is important to emphasize the use of the term "harmonization" instead of "unification," reflecting the desire to preserve educational systems' diversity while ensuring their compatibility and comparability.

The French higher education system transformation presents particular interest, as it traditionally was characterized by high centralization and significant state role. In adapting to Bologna Process requirements, French universities gained greater autonomy, though this was accompanied by reduced state funding. An important feature of the French system was preserving the specific status of "grandes écoles," which continue to prepare elite personnel for public administration and business.

The Italian higher education system underwent more radical changes. Before reform, it was based on a single-level system with long study periods (4-6 years). Implementing the three-level structure required substantial restructuring of educational programs and changes in educational process organization approaches. Particular attention was paid to developing the second cycle (master's level) as an important link between basic higher education and scientific activity. [6]

Regarding financial mechanisms for higher education:

Special attention should be paid to analyzing financial mechanisms for ensuring higher education in European countries. The transition to the Bologna system was accompanied by changes in university funding systems. There is a trend toward diversifying funding sources and strengthening the role of private investment in higher education. However, significant differences between countries in approaches to higher education funding persist.

In the context of quality assurance, implementing external evaluation systems has become an important aspect. European universities have developed internal quality assurance mechanisms that include regular monitoring of educational programs, assessment of teaching activities, and student involvement in quality assurance processes. Significant attention is paid to developing quality culture as an integral component of the academic environment.

The implementation of a competency-based approach has become an important element of reform. This required substantial revision of educational programs' content and teaching methods. Particular attention is paid to developing students' critical thinking abilities, independent learning skills, and lifelong professional development capabilities. However, there are certain risks of excessive orientation toward labor market needs at the expense of fundamental education. [4] The development of information and communication technologies and digitalization of the educational process have become important factors in higher education transformation. European universities are actively implementing electronic learning management systems, developing distance education forms, and creating virtual educational environments. This contributes to increasing education accessibility and developing academic mobility in virtual format.

Significant attention is paid to developing international cooperation and academic mobility. Student and faculty exchange programs, joint educational programs, and research projects have become an integral part of European higher education. However, certain barriers to mobility persist, related to language differences, financial constraints, and administrative procedures.

In the context of modern challenges, the issue of universities' social responsibility gains particular importance. European higher education institutions actively develop social partnership programs, engage in solving global problems, and contribute to sustainable society development. [8]

Research component development in university activities gains special significance in the process of higher education European integration. European universities actively develop research infrastructure, create innovation centers and technology parks, and strengthen cooperation with business in research and development. An important aspect is the integration of educational and research activities, ensuring the preparation of specialists capable of innovation and new knowledge creation.

Current trends in higher education development demonstrate the growing role of interdisciplinary approaches. European universities actively implement interdisciplinary educational programs that allow forming students' systemic thinking and ability to solve complex problems. This is particularly important in the context of modern challenges requiring integration of knowledge from different fields.

European universities pay special attention to developing students' soft skills and entrepreneurial competencies. Special programs and entrepreneurship development centers are being created, innovative teaching methods focused on developing leadership qualities and teamwork skills are being implemented. This contributes to increasing graduates' competitiveness in the labor market and their readiness to create their own businesses. [5]

The implementation of innovative educational platforms and digital learning environments has become a crucial element in the transformation of European higher education systems. Universities are actively developing and implementing comprehensive digital strategies that go beyond simple digitization of educational materials. These strategies encompass the creation of interactive learning environments, implementation of artificial intelligence in educational processes, and development of sophisticated analytics systems for tracking student progress and educational outcomes.

European universities are increasingly focusing on developing sustainable development competencies among students. This includes not only environmental awareness but also

social responsibility and economic sustainability principles. Educational programs are being redesigned to incorporate sustainability concepts across different disciplines, preparing graduates who can contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals. This approach requires a fundamental shift in curriculum design, teaching methods, and assessment practices. [2]

The development of university-business partnerships has taken new forms in recent years. Beyond traditional internships and research collaboration, universities are creating innovation hubs and entrepreneurial ecosystems that serve as bridges between academia and industry. These structures facilitate knowledge transfer, promote innovation, and provide students with real-world experience. Many universities have established dedicated offices for managing industry partnerships, technology transfer, and commercialization of research results.

Quality assurance systems in European higher education have evolved to become more comprehensive and stakeholder-inclusive. Universities are implementing sophisticated internal quality assurance mechanisms that involve regular program reviews, systematic collection of stakeholder feedback, and continuous improvement processes. External quality assurance has also evolved, with a greater focus on institutional effectiveness rather than mere compliance with standards.

The role of university leadership has transformed significantly in the context of European integration. University managers must now possess a broader range of competencies, including strategic planning, financial management, and international relations skills. Leadership development programs have become an essential component of university capacity building, with many institutions investing in professional development for their administrative staff. [2]

International partnership strategies have become more selective and focused on creating sustainable, mutually beneficial relationships. Universities are moving away from quantity-based approaches to international cooperation towards quality-based partnerships that align with their strategic objectives. This includes developing joint research programs, double degree programs, and collaborative online international learning initiatives.

The concept of student-centered learning has evolved to encompass new dimensions of personalization and flexibility. Universities are implementing adaptive learning systems that can accommodate different learning styles and paces. This includes the development of flexible study paths, recognition of prior learning, and implementation of competency-based education models. These approaches are supported by learning analytics and artificial intelligence tools that help identify and address individual student needs.

The integration of research and education has taken new forms with the development of research-based learning approaches. Students are increasingly involved in research activities from the early stages of their education, developing critical thinking and analytical skills through hands-on experience. This approach helps bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, preparing graduates who are better equipped for both academic careers and industry positions.

Professional development of academic staff has become a priority in the context of rapid technological and pedagogical changes. Universities are implementing comprehensive faculty development programs that include both pedagogical training and support for research activities. Special attention is paid to developing digital competencies and skills for online teaching, which became particularly relevant during the global pandemic and continues to be

important in the post-pandemic period.

Conclusions. The analysis of European integration processes in higher education system allows making several important conclusions. Successful transformation of national higher education systems requires a balanced approach that considers both European-wide standards and national educational traditions. European countries' experience demonstrates that excessive unification can lead to loss of important national characteristics and decrease in education quality.

A key factor for successful integration is the development of quality assurance systems and university autonomy. European universities demonstrate the effectiveness of combining internal quality assurance mechanisms with external evaluation and accreditation. Implementation of competency-based approach and development of interdisciplinary educational programs create new opportunities for preparing specialists capable of meeting modern challenges. Development of soft skills and entrepreneurial competencies gains particular importance.

An important aspect of European integration is the development of research component in university activities and strengthening connections between education, science, and business. This contributes to increasing higher education's innovative potential and its role in socio-economic development. Finally, successful integration into the European educational space requires a systematic approach to implementing reforms, active involvement of all stakeholders, and ensuring adequate funding for educational innovations. It is important to ensure balance between global trends and national needs in higher education development.

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