THE ROLE OF STAKEHOLDERS IN ENSURING THE QUALITY OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN UKRAINE: COOPERATION AND PARTNERSHIP

O PAPEL DAS PARTES INTERESSADAS NA GARANTIA DA QUALIDADE DO ENSINO SUPERIOR NA UCRÂNIA: COOPERAÇÃO E PARCERIA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the proposed article is to analyse the role of stakeholders in ensuring the quality of education, which also involves the study of existing systems for establishing cooperation and partnerships to achieve more effective learning. The realisation of this goal involved using a scientific survey method conducted among 56 stakeholders in one day, which helped establish independent and unbiased assessments. The results show that most respondents are ambivalent or optimistic about the institution of stakeholders. The main types of such partnerships are internships and practice, joint practice programmes, joint research projects, support of educational courses, participation in lectures and seminars, and participation in career fairs. At the same time, the study identifies the main difficulties that affect the implementation of this cooperation: lack of effective communication, different priorities of higher education institutions and stakeholders, financial constraints, outdated curricula and lack of teacher qualifications, and specific legislative barriers. The conclusions suggest steps to improve the situation: a qualified review of curricula, advanced training of teachers, development of appropriate practical skills, creation of qualified advisory boards with business representatives to develop curricula and courses, introduction of unique monitoring and improvement of educational infrastructure.

Keywords: academic standards, educational reforms, community engagement, institutional cooperation, quality management.

RESUMO

O objetivo do artigo proposto é analisar o papel dos intervenientes na garantia da qualidade da educação, o que implica também o estudo dos sistemas existentes para o estabelecimento de cooperação e parcerias com vista a uma aprendizagem mais eficaz. A concretização deste objetivo envolveu a utilização de um método de inquérito científico realizado a 56 intervenientes num dia, o que permitiu estabelecer avaliações independentes e imparciais. Os resultados mostram que a maioria dos inquiridos é ambivalente ou otimista em relação à instituição das partes interessadas. Os principais tipos de parcerias são estágios e práticas, programas de práticas conjuntas, projectos de investigação conjuntos, apoio a cursos de formação, participação em palestras e seminários e participação em feiras de carreiras. Ao mesmo tempo, o estudo identifica as principais dificuldades que afectam a implementação desta cooperação: falta de comunicação eficaz, diferentes prioridades das instituições de ensino superior e das partes interessadas, restrições financeiras, currículos desactualizados e falta de qualificações dos professores, bem como obstáculos legislativos específicos. As conclusões sugerem medidas para melhorar a situação: uma revisão qualificada dos currículos, formação avançada dos professores, desenvolvimento de competências práticas adequadas, criação de conselhos consultivos qualificados com representantes das empresas para desenvolver currículos e cursos, introdução de um acompanhamento único e melhoria das infra-estruturas educativas.

Palavras-chave: padrões académicos, reformas educativas, envolvimento da comunidade, cooperação institucional, gestão da qualidade.

Introduction

In today's context, the quality of higher education is becoming an important part of educational policy at both national and supranational levels. The governments of modern countries that want to further innovative development, achieve social welfare and integrate modern technologies into the educational process generate relevant solutions to implement the influence of stakeholders on

education. In Ukrainian realities, when it comes to European integration processes and the evolution of the Bologna system, the issue of improving the quality of education is even more relevant, as in the context of the post-war reconstruction of the country after the Russian aggression, the training of highly qualified specialists will become extremely important (Zayachuk, 2024). In particular, to meet other economic challenges of the modern world. In particular, to meet other economic challenges of the modern world. In such circumstances, implementing tasks to improve the quality of education will require further broad involvement of stakeholders - governmental and non-governmental organisations, representatives of scientific and educational institutions, students, employers, and, in some cases, even representatives of NGOs or international partner organisations. Cooperation and partnership at this stage become the basis for the formation and further evolution of innovative higher education systems. (Ramachandran; Al-Mughairi; Al-Azri, 2022).

Additionally, this issue is essential in implementing national requirements for the quality of education and analysing the impact of the global trend of stakeholder involvement in the educational process on the example of a single country. The research problem also aims to clarify the role of stakeholders in modern educational institutions and the extent to which their work is an element of a quality learning environment.

The new principles of higher education institutions management are based on the principles of honesty, trust in establishing and maintaining business contacts, tolerance and faithfulness, responsibility for breach of previously established agreements, social responsibility (environmental, pedagogical, and to society in general), and a tendency to pursue one's interests, but according to the same rules of the game for all (Salvioni; Franzoni; Cassano, 2017). This systematic approach implies the active involvement of all stakeholders in the procedures for regulating the quality of educational environments. The application of the potential of stakeholder participation in practice, in such circumstances, directly impacts the quality of education, including the sustainable development of higher education institutions in general. A problematic issue is the policy of educational institutions

that focus primarily on cooperation with stakeholders at low levels of interaction, which is only partially related to the development of educational institutions and meeting all the requirements of society for modern higher education institutions.

In modern circumstances, stakeholders play a vital role in shaping strategies for the development of educational environments, improving educational and research programmes, and various levels of optimisation of educational processes (Prisăcaru, 2022). Establishing cooperation between educational institutions, regulatory authorities, representatives of employers, students, and civil society institutions significantly expands the understanding of the needs and requirements for the modern educational process. It helps to increase the competitiveness of students in the labour market in the future. The importance of analysing the work of stakeholders also lies in the socio-economic aspect (Tetrevova; Vavra; Munzarova, 2021; Ulyanova; Chaika, 2021). Close cooperation between educational institutions, representatives of business and government agencies helps to formulate appropriate requirements for knowledge and skills that are in demand in economic, technological, social, and innovative aspects. Stakeholder engagement also increases trust in educational institutions, promotes transparency in the coverage of the educational process, and counteracts bias, corruption and other negative manifestations. This social function also contributes to achieving sustainable development goals, a fundamental goal for Ukrainian society in the post-war period.

The purpose of the proposed article is to analyse the role of stakeholders in ensuring the quality of education, which also involves a study of existing systems for establishing cooperation and partnerships to achieve more effective learning. This goal also involves answering the following tasks: assessing the level of cooperation between stakeholders and educational institutions, identifying the most common types of such partnerships, and identifying difficulties that prevent the establishment of more effective links. As a result of these tasks, potential further areas for improving the partnership between Ukrainian higher education institutions and stakeholders will be identified.

Literature review

Over the past decades, researchers have been actively developing the scientific issue of stakeholder interest, which has developed into a particular theory with its evidence and contradictions (Moreno-Carmona; Feria-Domínguez; Merinero-Rodríguez, 2022; Shrestha, 2024). This theory has impacted many private companies' management activities and structure (Langrafe; Barakat; Stocker, 2020). In particular, the modern stakeholder theory is defined as a popular management concept regulating many global companies' internal corporate culture and development strategies (Stukalo; Lytvyn, 2021). Taking into account the interest of different parties in effective management and achieving qualitative transformations has become the main focus of management structures (Mandane Garcia; Jamias, 2023). This has increased the importance of stakeholders, who, according to scholars, are a person or group of stakeholders who influence the implementation of the organisation's goals but are also affected by the organisation's goals (Achhibat; Lebzar, 2024). In practice, this means that almost all individuals who function in or depend on the organisation become stakeholders, thus encompassing not only management and direct employees but also other groups of individuals or organisations. The spread of such connections is the basis for the functioning of stakeholder theory. At the same time, achieving adequate conditions for the implementation of stakeholder theory is possible only when the list of stakeholders is reliably calculated, their interests are taken into account, and a system for measuring and assessing mutual influence is formulated (Al-Amri; Mathew; Zubairi, 2020). This theory has its application in higher education institutions, as the latter also exists to meet the needs of all stakeholders, which is the ultimate goal of their functioning. Applying this theory implies that educational institutions are focused on progress and development, as this cannot be achieved without the interest of all parties. Therefore, the essence of stakeholder interests is essential for the functioning of modern educational institutions.

The role of stakeholders in ensuring the quality of higher education is realised through creating and adjusting standards and curricula, assessing

educational outcomes, monitoring graduates' career paths, etc. It is a complement to the state policy: the authorities form the regulatory framework by setting specific quality standards, educational institutions fulfil such requirements by implementing the basic standards, students provide feedback, and employers formulate requirements for the skills and abilities of students (Davlikanova; Hofstetter, 2020). In such circumstances, we are talking about optimising learning, which increases graduates' competitiveness in the labour market.

This issue has been partially addressed in the works of scholars. First, the study of integrating different stakeholder groups into the analysis of processes in higher education in Ukraine can be traced in Aleksandrova (2020). Other scholars have also substantiated the importance of using the experience of different stakeholders in the process of implementing quality assurance (Borodiyenko; Melnyk; Nychkalo, 2023; Devadze; Gechbaia, 2024). However, there are sceptical assessments. For example, Debych (2021) is quite critical of the shortcomings of the stakeholder engagement system. Specific legislative difficulties, institutional problems in the field of integration of the stakeholder institution into the higher education system, and ways to increase the effectiveness of such cooperation have also been the subject of scientific consideration (Iskakova, 2023; Popova, 2022; Pvidaichyk et al., 2022). The issue of cooperation between higher education institutions and business representatives in the field of innovation and the overall impact of such interaction on the economic development of Ukraine has been traced in several relevant studies (Dzhym et al., 2023; Oglu Daanov, 2023; Tiurina et al., 2022).

Researchers have also emphasised the importance of defining the roles of the two parties in conducting joint work, substantiating ideas for taking into account the interests of all stakeholders to improve education (Potwora, 2023; Zadorozhna-Kniahnytska; Khadzhinova, 2023). Several scientific works have been devoted to the problems of influences and relationships with stakeholders to increase the effectiveness of the strategic development of educational institutions (Garrido-Yserte; Gallo-Rivera, 2020; Wise; Dickinson; Katan, 2018).

It is essential to note some theoretical results obtained by Osipian (2017), who demonstrated specific problems against the background of introducing foreign experience in applying the stakeholder approach to managing higher education institutions in Ukraine. The author also outlines gaps in the legislative framework for using stakeholders as a mechanism for improving the governance system of higher education institutions.

Valuable developments are also presented by researchers (Adhikari; Shrestha, 2022; Tymoshenko, 2023), who have identified a set of critical ideas for improving the system of interaction between higher education institutions and stakeholders. First, it is about directing the interaction towards achieving the development of the individual region and the country as a whole. An equally important role is played by the partnership nature of establishing contacts, which also aims to establish the purpose of the work, its content, and interaction methods. The focus on ensuring cooperation in the future is also highlighted - such long-term plans will help to combine the use of Ukrainian and international experience and technological support for the interaction system. Considering these conclusions is an essential foundation for further elaboration on this topic.

However, in the future, certain aspects of this issue will require further study, as the experience of using stakeholders in cooperation with higher education institutions is transforming along with public perceptions of the realisation of the interests of all stakeholders as a strategic component of education reforms. For this reason, it is also important to further substantiate the positive impact of partnership cooperation on the work of all participants in such activities, including improving the educational system's competitive advantages.

Methodology

Research Design

A cross-sectional study was chosen as the research type. In particular, in this study, the primary data were collected simultaneously to obtain immediate confirmation of the opinions and experiences of different stakeholders. The sample

was comprehensive, and purposive and snowball sampling techniques were used accordingly. This approach allowed for a thorough approach to the chosen topic and characterisation of the role of stakeholders in the modern higher education system of Ukraine.

Sample

Two types of sampling were used to conduct this study and find participants. In particular, targeted and snowball sampling. As part of the targeted sampling, letters of invitation were sent to individual organisations and representatives of influential businesses in Ukraine. Thus, 27 participants were included in the study. Next, we used the snowball sampling mechanism, when 1 respondent can recommend the next one. This helped to include other stakeholders in the study. The inclusion criteria were broad:

1. Representatives should be involved in activities related to quality assurance in higher education
2. Representatives should be involved in decision-making on the formation of higher education development strategies
3. Potential participants should cooperate with educational institutions.

Participants

In this way, 56 respondents were selected and divided into 3 main groups of stakeholders: 1. Participants from organisations are involved in the accreditation and licensing of educational institutions. 2. Business representatives (from various industries). 3. Representatives of NGOs. Table 1 provides a more detailed breakdown of respondents by their type of business.

Table 1 – General information about the participants of this study

Activities	N	%
Organisations involved in accreditation and licensing	7	12,5%
Business representatives	39	69,6%
1. Industry	7 of 39	18%
2. Construction	6 of 39	15%
3. Agriculture and the environment	6 of 39	15%
4. Trade	7 of 39	18%
5. Management	5 of 39	13%
6. Security sector	4 of 39	10%
7. Medicine	4 of 39	10%
Representatives from civil society organisations	10	17,9%
Overall	56	100%

Source: compiled by the authors.

All participants in this study gave their personalised consent to participate and to have their data processed.

Procedure and tools

In this cross-sectional study, the respondents were interviewed during the same period (02.10.2024). This helped to ensure the homogeneity of the data obtained from different stakeholder groups. The participants were interviewed using the Zoom platform and divided into two sections. In the first section, which lasted from 13.30-16.00, representatives from NGOs and participants involved in licensing and accreditation were interviewed. Interviews with business representatives took place from 16.30-18.00. The semi-structured interviews were chosen because the representatives were asked broad questions, answering which they could recall different areas of their activities to ensure the quality of education. Participants were requested to complete a questionnaire with extra responses following the semi-structured interviews. This was carried out to thoroughly evaluate stakeholders' role in guaranteeing the calibre of higher education. The questions included additional demographic information, the degree of collaboration with educational institutions, and identifying significant obstacles. These questions were formed on a Likert scale (providing a score from 1 to 5) and consisted of open-

ended questions. Open-ended questions allowed respondents to assess their own opinions on the functioning of the cooperation mechanism with higher education institutions and stakeholders.

Data analysis

The data analysis was also carried out in stages. In particular, the qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analysed first. For this purpose, the data were first transcribed and then coded. The coding method helped identify the interviewees' main trends and attitudes towards cooperation with higher education institutions. The qualitative analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaires consisted of a content analysis of the responses. This was done to identify the main themes related to barriers and opportunities for cooperation between businesses and universities. All responses were transferred to Excel spreadsheets and divided into the following areas: general assessment of current quality standards of higher education, type of cooperation with the educational institution, main obstacles, and potential development prospects.

Results

The changes in the twenty-first century are associated with the main processes of globalisation, digitalisation, internationalisation and informatisation of society. They demonstrate the development of a knowledge-based society, which is becoming a critical factor in economic development (Vakulenko; Iermolenko; Bourmistrov, 2024). At the same time, the main current trends in the development of education in Ukraine include the acceleration of the pace of society and, as a result, the requirement to prepare for life in a rapidly changing environment (adaptation), the transition to a knowledge and skills-based society, and a significant increase in intercultural communication (Zayachuk, 2024). These factors contribute to the younger generation's critical need to develop modern thinking (Carrillo-Durán; García García, 2020; Cheng; Adekola; Albia, 2021). For this reason, the skills of communication and tolerance, digital literacy, social skills, etc., are becoming

essential (Sedash, 2022). The outlined trends of global development define interrelated areas of Ukrainian higher education; in particular, they also refer to raising the educational level of the population, increasing the level of internationalisation of education, active development of university autonomy, cooperation of higher education institutions with business and public institutions (Longoria; López-Forniés; Sáenz, 2021; Okai-Ugbaje; Ardzejewska; Imran, 2020). These directions also influence the formation of the main vectors of Ukraine's state policy in higher education: increasing accessibility of education, ensuring its high quality, and increasing financial efficiency. During the interviews, respondents were divided into those who were optimistic, critical or neutral. Among the optimistic approaches, respondents mentioned the digitalisation of education, integration of international programmes, the impact of international trends, the use of technology, etc. Among the critical responses, there was an emphasis on insufficient funding in the higher education sector, a lack of proper practical orientation, and a low level of cooperation with business (See Table 2).

Table 2 – Stakeholders' attitudes to the current state of higher education in Ukraine

Attitude	Statements (main ideas)	N	%
Optimistic	"Higher education is developing despite the war" "Higher education is developing through the integration of international educational programmes" "The state of education is improving due to the influence of international trends" "Many young teachers use new teaching methods."	20	35,7%
Critical	"I assess the state of higher education as unsatisfactory" "Many of the programmes are outdated, and the teachers do not have up-to-date knowledge" "Teachers do not have modern skills" "The programmes are not aimed at mastering the practice" "The development of higher education in Ukraine suffers from insufficient funding"	14	25%
Neutral position	"There is progress in leading educational institutions, but many others suffer from corruption" "Although modern technologies influence the process of acquiring knowledge, modern teachers are still not qualified to use new methods." "Even though modern teachers use various innovative teaching methods, many graduates lack practical skills."	21	39,3%

Source: compiled by the authors.

As can be seen from Table 2, the distribution of responses from the interviews shows that most respondents have an ambivalent attitude toward the state of higher education in Ukraine (39.3%). However, there is a significant proportion of those who assess the situation in a positive way (35.7%). Accordingly, the current quality standards of higher education are generally rated as "4" (30.4%), satisfactory – 26.8%. Thus, these data generally indicate the importance of implementing modern standards. Figure 1 presents the primary stakeholder assessments of the current quality standards of higher education in Ukraine.

Figure 1 – Stakeholder assessments of the quality of current higher education standards in Ukraine
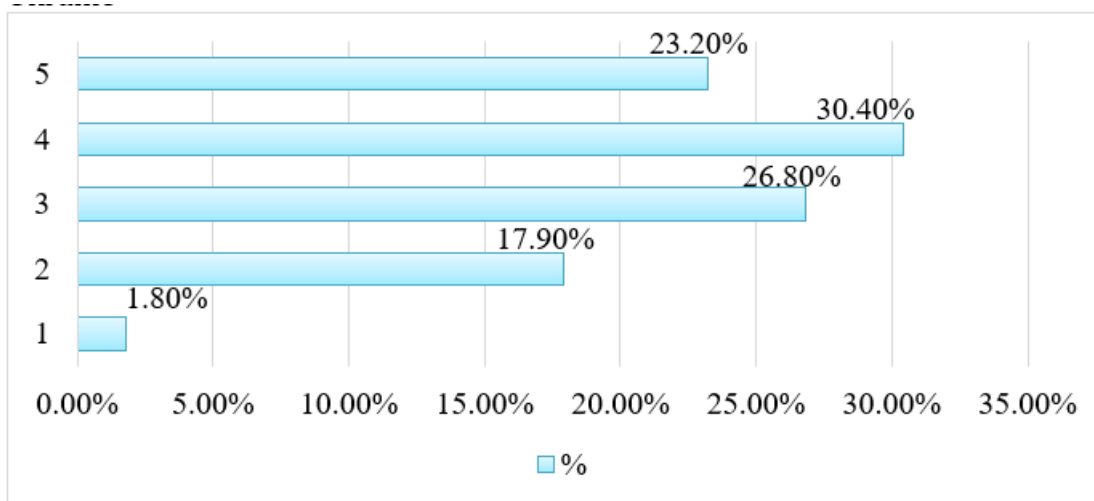
In Ukraine, cooperation between stakeholders and higher education institutions is carried out in several ways. In particular, a notable area is the organisation of internships. In particular, business representatives offer students the opportunity to do their internships at their companies (16 people, or 28.6%, mentioned this). The development of joint programmes is also becoming a prominent area. Accordingly, there is cooperation in creating programmes combining university studies with practical work in a company (7 people, or 12.5%). The implementation of joint research projects (funding of research, organisation of joint (5 people, or 8.9%). Another critical area is the support of modern educational programmes through recommendations in developing new courses or sponsoring educational programmes (11 people or 19.6%). At the same time, based on the analysis of the questionnaires, it became apparent that stakeholders also participate in cooperation with educational institutions as guests at lectures or seminars and career fairs (10 people (17.9%) and 7 people (12.5%), respectively). At the latter, students have the opportunity to introduce their career choices. Figure 2 shows the main types of cooperation between higher education institutions and stakeholders.

Figure 2 – Key types of cooperation between higher education institutions and stakeholders implemented in Ukraine
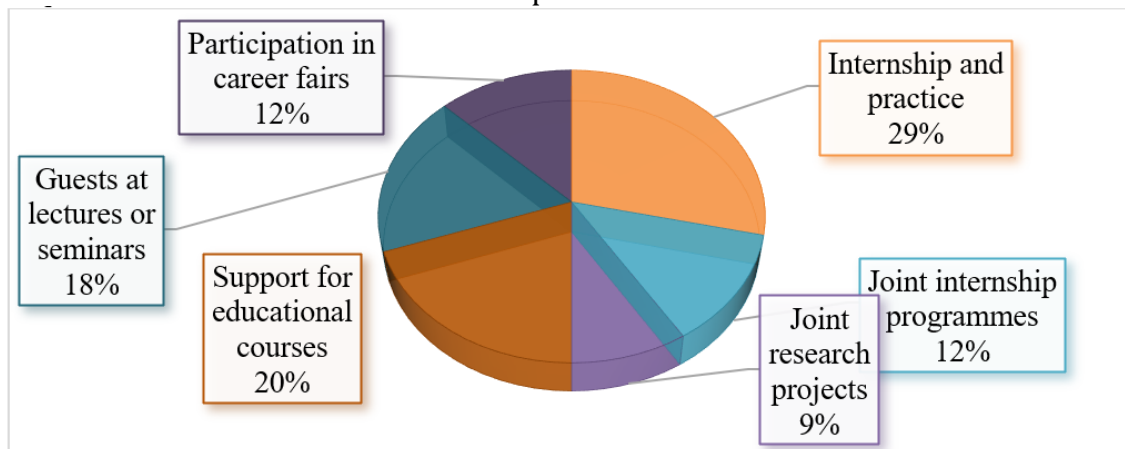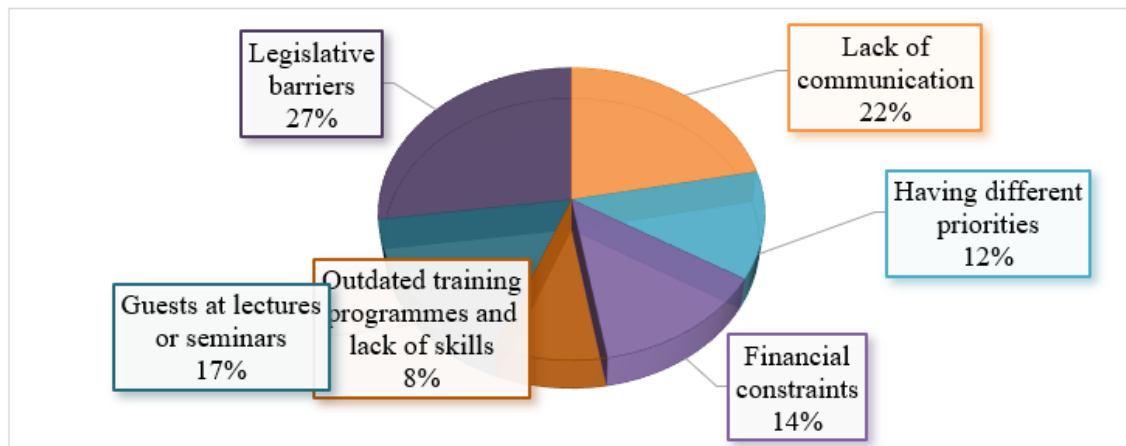

Source: compiled by the authors

By implementing such ways of cooperation between businesses, NGOs or higher education institutions, the quality of education is improved, and the curriculum is adapted to the main market requirements. Most respondents (69.6%) are satisfied or mostly satisfied with the cooperation process between higher education institutions. However, 30.4% of respondents are dissatisfied or primarily dissatisfied with this process. These statements indicate promising areas for further development of this cooperation. The lack of communication is a notable obstacle when identifying the main obstacles to cooperation and partnership between businesses and NGOs, and there needs to be more bodies and edu. This leads to uncertainty in goals and irregular exchange of information.

Different priorities are also evident, which leads to conflicts of interest. Some interviewees pointed out that educational institutions may focus on quick results, while employers need trained specialists (i.e. they are interested in long-term results). Financial constraints also pose another challenge. In particular, it is said that the costs of implementing joint projects can be high for both parties to the partnership. Some respondents also pointed to outdated training programmes that do not meet their needs. There is also a lack of flexibility in curricula that align with the main business requirements.

In some cases, more appropriately trained and qualified personnel are needed. This refers to more teacher training to facilitate practical cooperation with

business representatives. Another major constraint is the existence of specific legislative barriers. Some complex legislative mechanisms may complicate the partnership process. Figure 3 presents the main constraints to partnerships between higher education institutions and stakeholders.

Figure 3 – Key constraints to the implementation of partnerships between universities and stakeholders

Source: compiled by the authors.

Therefore, these restrictions can significantly affect the development of cooperation and partnerships between higher education institutions and stakeholders. Thus, several important initiatives should be taken to improve the quality of higher education. In particular, the curricula should be revised in line with the analysis of the needs of the labour market. At the same time, attention should be paid to introducing new technologies in training courses (in particular, the introduction of blended learning). Another essential task is to improve the qualifications of teachers. This can be done through their participation in international internships, mobility programmes, international conferences, etc. When training students, the focus should be on developing practical skills that are in demand by modern stakeholders in Ukraine. This can be achieved by establishing broader business partnerships to create internship and practice programmes. It is also worth paying attention to forming qualified advisory boards with business representatives to develop curricula and courses in the future. At the same time, it is also worth developing special monitoring of the quality assessment of the

education sector. In the future, effective mechanisms for assessing the quality of education at all levels should be developed and accepted explicitly at the general level. They should cover teaching, material and technical resources, and learning outcomes. At the same time, mutual evaluation could become another area of monitoring. This means introducing a unique feedback system through which students and teachers can mutually evaluate the quality of the educational process. In addition, improving infrastructure and modernising classrooms is the most critical area. Ukraine should invest in modernising laboratories, libraries, media libraries, archives and other educational facilities to provide students with practical knowledge. In general, these areas will improve the quality of higher education and provide comfortable learning conditions.

Discussion

Given the purpose of this study, namely, to determine the role of partnership between stakeholders and higher education institutions, several vital aspects have been identified. In particular, taking into account the study's first objective, it was found that stakeholders have an ambiguous attitude toward the current state of higher education in Ukraine. In particular, most respondents have an ambivalent attitude toward the state of higher education in Ukraine (39.3%). However, there is a significant share of those who assess the situation positively (35.7%). In general, respondents rated the current quality standards of higher education in Ukraine at 4 points out of 5 (30.4%), which is generally relatively high given the realities caused by, among other things, Russian aggression. In general, this confirms the findings of other researchers who consider the existing indicators of cooperation between stakeholders and educational institutions to be relatively high (Kharkivska; Prokopenko, 2023; Sikorska; Gerasymchuk, 2023). At the same time, such indicators of satisfaction with cooperation in Ukrainian realities differ from those in Europe or the world, where the level of good cooperation is at least 4.5 points (Labanauskis; Ginevičius, 2017; Mazurkiewicz; Liuta; Kyrychenko, 2017). Achieving such indicators is currently difficult, as martial law does not allow for the full

implementation of cooperation mechanisms today. However, stakeholders' positive perceptions indicate the prospect of overcoming this difficulty in the future.

The results show that cooperation between stakeholders and higher education institutions is carried out in Ukraine in several ways. One of them is the implementation of internships. It has been found that the development of joint programmes has become a prominent area. Accordingly, there is cooperation in creating curricula combining university studies with practical work in a company. It is also essential to carry out joint research projects and support modern educational programmes through recommendations for developing new courses or sponsoring educational programmes. In general, this set of interaction mechanisms is in line with global practices that have been proven effective in the work of other researchers (Aithal; Aithal, 2023; Beerkens; Udam, 2017). At the same time, it is worth paying attention to the rather low popularity of career fairs in Ukraine. In some European countries, such practices are recognised as extremely effective (Cavallone; Ciasullo; Manna, 2020; Toderas; Stăvaru, 2018). The advantages of such events include invaluable practical experience of direct communication with employers, the opportunity to present your project, etc. Perhaps, in Ukrainian realities, this approach has not yet gained due popularity, although some higher education institutions are actively introducing career fairs (or similar events in the city) into their activities: an interesting situation is when an educational institution itself invites stakeholders to work with students, and not vice versa.

The proposed results also show that respondents are primarily satisfied with the level of cooperation between higher education institutions. However, every third of the stakeholders surveyed is dissatisfied or primarily dissatisfied with the process. The study of the main obstacles to cooperation and partnership between businesses, NGOs, accreditation bodies and educational institutions found that they include a lack of communication, different priorities, which leads to conflicts of interest, financial constraints, outdated curricula, insufficient flexibility of curricula, unsatisfactory level of teacher training, and legislative barriers that hinder cooperation and partnership. This list corresponds to the problems stakeholders face in other countries (Falqueto; Hoffmann; Gomes, 2019; Marshall, 2018). The

European experience shows that overcoming such challenges generally requires revising a significant part of the educational paradigms that individual European educational systems have gone through (Lyytinen; Kohtamäki; Kivistö, 2017). Obviously, we are talking about a change in both the systemic approach to cooperation between educational institutions and stakeholders and a new understanding of the role of higher education in society when it is necessary to move from quantitative enrolment to educational institutions to the definition of quality training and education programmes that would meet the needs of the market. Such transformations are long-lasting but open up new prospects for reforming Ukraine's higher education sector.

The methodology proposed in this study has its limitations. First of all, it is about using the Likert scale, which has drawbacks. The subjective factor plays a role in the survey, which can make adjustments when answering questions. Particularly problematic are the "borderline" scores of 2 and 4: some respondents may assess their experience more negatively and give a score of 2, while others may assess their experience better and give a score of 3. The situation is similar to successful cooperation experiences between stakeholders and higher education institutions. In practice, this does not lead to a profound revision of the scores, but this aspect should be considered when the study results are further processed.

Conclusions

Thus, among the main areas that influence the formation of the main vectors of the state policy of Ukraine in the field of higher education, cooperation between universities and stakeholders takes a prominent place. Respondents were divided into those who were optimistic, critical or neutral. The majority of respondents were ambivalent and optimistic. This indicates the existence of specific difficulties and promising areas for developing this cooperation. It has been established that the main types of such partnerships are internships and practice (28.6%), joint practice programmes (12.5%), joint research projects (8.9%), support of educational courses (19.6%), participation in lectures and seminars (17.9%), and participation

in career fairs (12.5%). At the same time, the study identifies the main difficulties that affect the implementation of this cooperation: lack of effective communication, different priorities of higher education institutions and stakeholders, financial constraints, outdated curricula and lack of teacher qualifications, and specific legislative barriers. The identified difficulties generally affect the effective conduct of cooperation. However, the study offers the following recommendations to improve this partnership:

1. Qualified revision of curricula by the analysis of labour market needs.

2. Improving teachers' qualifications through their participation in international internships, mobility programmes, international conferences, etc.

3. During student training, the main focus should be on developing practical skills that are in demand by modern stakeholders in Ukraine. Create special internship programmes and practices involving modern technologies.

4. Form qualified advisory boards with business representatives to develop training programmes and courses.

5. Introduction of special effective monitoring of the quality assessment of the education sector.

6. Improving infrastructure and modernising classrooms.

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