

Leadership in Ukrainian educational dimension

Raisa Gryshkova

Institute of Philology

Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University

Desantnykiv str. 10-68, 54003 Mykolaiv

Ukraine

e-mail: raissagrishkova@gmail.com

Abstract This paper focuses on the solution of the problem of leadership in higher education in Ukraine from the viewpoint of European educational dimension. It is not a secret that no one of Ukrainian universities is indexed in the list of the best world's or European higher educational establishments. The reasons for such a situation are in the quality of our education which leaves much to be desired, poor material base and absence of modern equipment, obsolete textbooks, traditional post-soviet approaches to teaching and many others. Having analysed the main reasons for the drawbacks in Ukrainian higher educational system, the paper proposes a variant of changing the situation for better. In order to come from massive education characteristic for Ukraine to qualitative higher education it is necessary to change the attitude to learning in the society. Students and their parents should understand that not a diploma, but real knowledge and practical skills play the most important role on the labour market. It is also necessary to refuse from reproductive learning and come to the development of students' creative thinking. Transition from lecture-seminar organization of the academic process to tutorial system will help improve the university educators' qualification and give a chance to every student to become an active participant of the academic process. Implementation of dual education on the basis of cooperation of the university and business structures will help graduates to faster adapt to real practical activity. Parallel development of the teaching process and scientific research activity of students and educators is necessary for bettering the quality of education. Certain steps towards the leadership in Ukrainian education are described on the example of Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University, which is ranked among the best in the south of Ukraine.

1 Introduction

The problem of leadership in higher education constantly attracts attention of the Ukrainian government, scientists, politicians, and community (Shevchenko 2018). Progressively thinking people understand that the future of our country depends on the young generation and its desire to work for the benefit of their native country. The development of higher education in Europe is taking place under the conditions of integration of scientific knowledge, indefinite and unforeseen social situations and constant growth of interdisciplinary problems (Deem et al. 2008). As it is stated in Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, *“higher education, research and innovation play a crucial role in supporting social cohesion, economic growth and global competitiveness. Given the desire for European societies to become increasingly knowledge-based, higher education is an essential component of socio-economic and cultural development. At the same time an increasing demand for skills and competences requires higher education to respond in new ways”* (ENQA 2015).

The system of higher education in Ukraine is coming through numerous difficulties trying to reach the top position in European and world ratings (Round and Rodgers 2009). It appeared to be not so easy to overcome traditional post-soviet approaches to university education as most of the people who rule the development of higher school in Ukraine belong to the older generation. They are reluctant to introduce any new approaches or modern technologies in education. In the research devoted to modern models of the development of university education in Ukraine Meshchaninov (2005) underlined that *“competitive in the 21st century would be the university systems where there would be not only more professors or books in the library but those where the educators' potential would be more completely supplied by informative and communicative technologies of gaining knowledge with complete integration of the academic community into the world informative environment”* (Meshchaninov 2005). Ukrainian ex-minister of education academic Ziazun (2014) considered that the traditional model of education aimed at transition of necessary knowledge and skills from the older generation to a future specialist is now losing its actuality. A need to replace the strategic and global purposes of education has appeared. Now it is necessary to change the educational orientation from a specialist's knowledge to his personal qualities. This is the aim and the means of his preparation for professional activity. In conditions of uncertain and constantly changing environment university graduates' personal qualities such as decisiveness,

ability to work in a team, leadership, positive thinking, success orientation, readiness to bear responsibility would be more important than they were before (Ziaziun 2014). From the viewpoint of Sysoeva “the main idea of improving higher education in Ukraine lies in reaching a radically new level of the quality of a higher school graduate’s professional training. Nowadays scientists, practical workers and employers are worried about the contradictions between a large amount of knowledge students gained at universities and absence of practical skills to use the knowledge in professional activity. Getting rid of these contradictions depends on the organization of the academic process at universities and improving the quality of pedagogical competence of university educators” (Sysoeva 2011). In his speech at the meeting of the Atlantic Council in Washington USA on the 23rd of May 2016 Kvit mentioned that “*most universities have not used the advantages of their autonomy because their authorities do not want to bear responsibility for taking decisions and work in the direction of improving quality of education. Conservative rectors, passive teachers and indifferent students – these are the realities of modern Ukrainian education*” (Atlantic Council 2016). We consider students’ indifference as a result of using old teaching approaches in the new social conditions when a lot of modern challenges present themselves in the academic process and on the labour market. Ignoring these new challenges makes a harmful effect on students’ attitude towards studying in Ukraine and further life perspectives. It is really important for our country to provide qualitative education for young people and give them possibilities for self-development and self-realization. Being not satisfied with knowledge they can gain at Ukrainian universities the most talented and purposeful students leave the country and continue their education at European or at American universities. It is a dangerous tendency because Ukraine risks to stay without really gifted young people who can change the current situation for better and work for the benefit of our country.

2 Higher education in Ukraine

In order to find the best ways for changing the current situation in Ukrainian system of higher education we considered the problems of improving university education from two sides: on the part of the state and on the part of universities themselves. To make a conclusion a lot of the latest publications on the topic were analysed state documents were attentively learned and critically assessed. Recommendations of international educational organizations were taken into consideration as well as reports on activity of different universities’ authorities. Results of students’ questionnaires concerning their satisfaction with the quality of education they gain in Ukraine were generalized. The activity of some additional services at certain universities was described and evaluated. Learner’s needs were analysed and classified.

Modern educational dimension comprises implementation of real university autonomy (including economic), academic honesty in all spheres of university life, minimizing reasons for various abuses of power. The critical analysis of the latest publications on the topic of our research revealed that many of Ukrainian leading scientists and educators understand the problems of our higher school and are ready to attract the public attention to the solution of these problems but the state officials do not want to hear their voices and are indifferent to the needs of universities. They are busy with their political preferences, general situation in the government and coming elections.

3 Results and outcomes for Ukrainian higher education

During almost twenty-eight years of independence the system of higher education in Ukraine has come through many changes, a lot of different decrees and laws were adopted, new approaches to teaching were implemented, computerization of all educational establishments was introduced. But because of absence of common understanding of current requirements for modern education and a single systematic approach to educational reforms, constant changes of ministers of education and science with their personal vision of necessary reforms the system of Ukrainian higher education remains obsolete and far from leadership position even among the post-soviet countries saying nothing about international ratings. Moreover, it had lost the best features of soviet traditional educational system and has not gained new modern parameters. At the beginning of this century it was believed that total computerization of all educational processes would be able to better the situation in academic and scientific spheres. But in the course of time it became clear that to install computers and teach students and teachers to use them is not enough for bringing new ideas in reforming the system of education. Ukrainian universities were too dependent on the state decisions and their activity was regulated by constantly changing decrees and instructions. At that time most of Ukrainian higher educational establishments were reorganized from regular institutes into universities without any changes in their internal structure, requirements towards the level of teaching, concentration on the quality of students’ knowledge etc.

On the state level some progressive laws and state programs were adopted: “Education. Ukraine of the 21st century” (Rada 1991), National Doctrine of the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine (Rada 2001), the Laws of Ukraine “About higher education” (Rada 2014), “About Education” (Rada 2017). Some decrees

were also aimed at modernization and optimization the situation in educational sphere. But in most cases the changes were proclaimed but not performed. The implementation of these documents was blocked because of absence of necessary state financing and a number of other reasons. A strong will of the state authorities to integrate Ukrainian education into the European educational community was announced but no practical steps were done. Ukraine joined the Bologna process and our national educational community hoped for qualitative changes in higher school, but those changes appeared more formal than real. They did not help bettering the quality assurance in the country. The level of our students' professional training does not correspond to modern requirements and new educational standards are not implemented. Ukrainian universities do not gain real autonomy and they are still dependent on the state. Yet it is necessary to notice that the National Agency for the control of the Quality of Higher Education which was mentioned in the Law of Ukraine "About higher education" (Rada 2014), was at last created at the end of 2018. It is supposed to partly substitute the activity of the Ministry of education and science in the sphere of the quality assurance and be independent from the state. It has vast perspectives in the area of increasing requirements to quality of higher education on the internal and external levels. But now it is still in the process of creation and defining its main ideas and competences.

On the part of universities, it should be mentioned that their will to change the situation and make young people get education in Ukraine is not supported on the state level where the idea of internationalization of education became very popular. This idea really opens unlimited perspectives for our university graduates but who will build prosperous society in Ukraine if young, talented and purposeful people stay in the West? Thinking about the future of our country university authorities understand that only bettering the quality of our higher education it is possible to bring students back to Ukraine after their training in European countries.

4 Discussions and implications

Lots of efforts to improve the situation in our higher education have been made but the results are rather poor. The Law of Ukraine "About higher education" adopted in 2014 was aimed at changing the existing rules but it came into contradiction with the interests of conservatory oriented Ukrainian politicians, state employees and universities managers. As the ex-minister of science and education of Ukraine Kvit states in his "The road map of reforming higher education in Ukraine" that mechanisms of honest academic competition did not work, and professional reputation still has not become the main capital in the system of higher education. Some of the points of academic autonomy were successfully implemented but financial autonomy of higher educational establishments had been blocked. The economic situation at Ukrainian universities was not changed. As a result, there were no qualitative changes in academic life and our best universities still have no visible perspectives to occupy leadership positions in the famous international ratings (DT 2018).

Every year more and more Ukrainian students leave our country to get higher education at European universities. This process is positive by itself, but it appeared to have harmful consequences for the future of our state. Statistics shows that more than 70 % of the young people who got education abroad do not want to come back to Ukraine and prefer to stay in the country where they studied. There they have more chances to find a well-paid job, to realize their life potential, to build a successful professional career. In Ukraine it is rather problematic to gain knowledge and skills which can make our universities graduates competitive at the labour market. The reasons for that lie in the fact that during the years of Ukrainian independence more than eight hundred universities came into being. Their appearance was based on the state national program "Education. Ukraine of the 21st century"(Rada 1991). Besides stating democratization and humanization in teaching it abolished the monopoly of the state in the educational sphere. This decision provoked the appearance of a number of private schools and universities. They announced their ability to train specialists of any profession but in the course of time it appeared most of them had very poor material base, limited resources for training really competitive specialists, were lack of professional teachers who could bear responsibility for the quality of their students' knowledge. Most of the professors at such universities worked full time at state educational establishments and part time at private universities. They were not interested in the results of their students' studying at newly formed universities and performed their teaching duties formally. By the end of 2010 it became clear that the era of private higher educational establishments had come to an end. Almost 78% of private universities were closed because of absence of students, low level of knowledge and parents' disappointment in the ability of their children to find job after graduating from such universities. The pursuit for a diploma had stopped as soon as people understood that under the new circumstances of a market economy potential employers were more interested in an applicants' knowledge and professional skills than in the diploma. But the consequences of such "sources of knowledge" together with the post-soviet syndrome of traditional approaches to teaching continue to influence the higher educational system in Ukraine. They lowered the level of university graduates' professional knowledge and skills and gave way to so called "*massovization*" (hording). This term was used Kvit, first mentioned in his "The road map of reforming higher education in Ukraine". In this research he states that "nowadays almost 80% of Ukrainian secondary school leavers become students. This fact makes us not only European record holders. This process is accompanied by students' infant

attitude towards chosen profession: almost 50 % of students mark absence of motivation for studying and mention their parents' advice in choosing a profession. Only 14 % of students are going to work according to the chosen specialty" (DT 2018). The author of the research explains the "hording" partly by social reasons namely by crisis events in economy on one hand and considerable decrease in requirements and quality of education in many Ukrainian universities on the other hand.

In most Ukrainian universities the obsolete lecture-seminar system of teaching is still widely spread. It has been used for more than fifty years and within this system no new challenges were taken into consideration. During this period of time new methods of teaching as well as modern paradigms changed each other but, in our universities, reproductive style of learning still prevails. Students distribute the questions to be discussed at the seminar among the members of the group and each student prepares the answer to his/her question reproducing the material of the text book or the lecture of a professor. No creative tasks, no development of students' critical thinking, no discussion in which the truth can be born. Students mechanically reproduce the material, they are not involved in communicative process, cannot stand for their own point of view and often their personal attitude towards the problem under consideration is not formed. As Malykhin and his colleagues state "the main idea of a seminar is to give students a possibility to practically use their theoretical knowledge in the conditions which model the forms of scientific activity as well as subjective and social contexts of such an activity" (Malykhin et al. 2014). In reality most seminars are still aimed at reproduction of the material from the text book or the professor's ideas from his lectures. We suggest replacing the lecture-seminar system with the tutorial one which gives students more opportunities in forming critical thinking, looking for reasons to prove his/her point of view, teaches to find arguments in the discussion with other students who are advocates of the opposite ideas. Students' creativity as well as the ability to stand for the unpopular idea should become the first priority while assessing their work in class. More attention should be paid to students' independent work and search of additional relevant information on the subjects under consideration.

New approaches to teaching open vast perspectives for the development of academic process as they motivate students to be more active and apply more efforts to reach a success. Repudiation from the lecture-seminar system should be accompanied by implementation of such modern approaches as competence, cultural, contextual, constructivist, etc. Competence approach now widely implemented at secondary school gives students a chance to use their theoretical knowledge in practical activity. This approach helps to gain real experience in usage of integrated knowledge practically. Forming competences in different kinds of students' activity this approach allows build a general competence in learning and gaining necessary skills independently. Cultural approach can be evaluated as a powerful tool in forming students' tolerant attitude towards representatives of other nations, ability to work in a multinational team, getting rid of egocentrism. Being tolerant to their partners' viewpoints university graduates will have more chances for fruitful international cooperation. Having learnt to settle all disputable problems in a non-violated way, students can become excellent team workers. Such kinds of auditorium activity as brain storming, project work, case studies should be more actively used as they teach students to cooperate their efforts to gain a success. We are sure students should have the right to choose the academic disciplines they are mostly interested in. Some academic disciplines should be integrated in one course and not to duplicate each other. Generally, the number of disciplines in one semester should be shortened up to at least four or five (now students have nine – eleven subjects a semester). Their choice will give them a feeling of self-confidence and responsibility for their own decisions. These new challenges are proposed to give students motivation for gaining knowledge and skills, to be positively thinking and success oriented.

Here are the results of students' questionnaires concerning their satisfaction with the quality of education at Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University held in January-February 2019. The aim of the research "Quality of Educational Process" was to fix and monitor students' attitude towards the teaching process at the university, motivation in their choice of the higher educational establishment, analysis of the students' evaluation concerning certain directions of the university activity. 2234 students of the regular form of studying took part in the questionnaire, among them 39,9 % are boys and 60,1 % are girls. Of all the students who participated in the questionnaire 52,7 % pay for their education and 47,3 % do not pay. Answering the question concerning the possibility to independently choose 25% of academic disciplines only 12,7 % of students gave positive answer, 12,6 % mentioned that they may choose only general disciplines, 11,1 % - only professional subjects. 44,0 % noticed the absence of such a choice. In most cases these are the students of the economic faculty and the faculty of computer science where 2/3 of the students can realize their right to choose academic disciplines. In the research students are considered as bearers of the corporate culture of the university, its traditions and values not only in the period of studying but after graduation from the university as well. Depending on the general opinion of the students' community they spread positive or negative information about the university. Generally, 72,0 % of students evaluate the quality of education at this university as "very high" or "high" and are satisfied with quality of knowledge and skills they can get here (CHMNU 2019).

To gain leadership positions in modern educational dimension it should be beneficial for Ukrainian universities to compete among themselves for the better quality of education and academic honesty. Improving

all spheres of university life and satisfying students' needs on the local level can bring many advantages to universities. Students' self-governing should further develop in cooperation with university authority's activity. A united university community consisting of teachers, students and employees should be created and aim its activity at gaining leadership positions first in the region and then in Ukraine. Recommendations of international educational organizations should be taken into consideration.

Universities should coordinate their activity with the needs of business structures as future potential employers. The requirements of business firms and organizations must be taken into consideration while forming academic curricular and students' professional practice. Now the European labour market is characterized by two contradictory processes: globalization and regionalization of labour resources. Unity and opposition of these processes are the driving force of the labour market development. Cooperation of business and universities can bring a lot of good to both: firms and higher school. The activity of a university should be synchronized with the changes in social and political life in the region and correspond to the best examples of the top European universities. The list of professions students is trained at the university should be coordinated with the necessity of the region in these specialists. University staff managers should constantly monitor the situation on the labour market and quickly react on the changes in demand on the part of state and business structures. Overproduction of specialists of some rare in the soviet time professions resulted in the appearance of the whole "army" of economists and lawyers in Ukraine who cannot find a well-paid job now and have to change their specialization. In European countries and in the USA the process of "head hunting" starts with the third-year students and gives the best students real possibilities to reveal their ambitions and demonstrate their leading potential. In Ukraine this process only begins to develop. As an example we would like to mention the experience of Petro Mohyla Black Sea National University which has formed strong ties with local business structures. During the academic year top managers of the leading businesses used to come to the university and organize special Olympiads, contests, meetings with teachers and students, fairs of professions, Days of career etc. Thanks to this work many university graduates got a prestigious job at the leading firms in Mykolaiv, Ukraine. At the request of "Nibulon" Ltd. which is engaged in an agrarian sector a special group of would-be economists was organized and students were professionally trained for work in agriculture. Top managers of a joint venture "GloboLogic" being themselves graduates of this university often meet with educators who teach at the computer science faculty in order to specialize what students should know and which of their skills should be developed to be employed at "GloboLogic" firm. There are more than ten computer firms in the city and their requirements for the employees include good knowledge of the English language, well developed communication skills, success-oriented life position, ability to take decisions in indefinite situations, etc. In order to satisfy these requirements, the university authorities decide to increase the number of academic hours for learning English, organize special trainings for gaining leadership characteristics, business managers are invited to teach students practical skills necessary for successful employment.

5 Conclusions

All in all, it appears that gaining leadership positions in Ukrainian educational dimension means direction of all common efforts of universities, business structures and community towards providing for better quality of teaching and learning. In the process of the research we came to the conclusion that qualitative changes in education depend on the desire of the university themselves to improve the internal situation within each university and cooperation of educators, students and social community attempts to reach the top position first in the region and then in the country. To start positive changes on the level of a university it is not necessary to wait for the next state document to be adopted. It is necessary to make the first steps by themselves in the frames of the law adopted earlier. University authorities should more widely use possibilities their autonomy gives and not to constantly complain on absence of competences in providing for some radical changes. Such internal measures as modernization of teaching approaches and transfer from lecture-seminar system to tutorial one is in the competence of local universities' administration.

To reach the level of a leading European university more and more students are to be involved in research-scientific activity under the supervision of professors famous in their sphere of science. Unity of students' learning and research activity will form more serious attitude towards gaining knowledge and skills in the chosen profession. To motivate students to broaden their knowledge and master their professional skills different kinds on competitions, contests, Olympiads, special forums and conferences are to be held. It is necessary to organize contests of students' scientific research works with prizes for the winners in order to encourage students' participation. Active cooperation of universities and business structures helps give students right orientation in the world of requirements for professional skills in various spheres. Implementation of dual education on the basis of cooperation of the university and business structures will help graduates to faster adapt to real practical activity.

In order to sum up our findings, it would be important to stress that only some steps on the way of Ukrainian educational system to reaching top position in the European educational environment were described.

However, the examples of the leading universities in Ukraine open vast perspectives for the whole educational system to successfully integrate into the world community of knowledge.

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