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Prospects of implementing educational audit in Ukrainian higher education institutions

Introduction. The European integration processes cover more and more spheres of life, including higher education. Reforms and modernization of higher education are closely connected with the Bologna Process. In Ukraine the modernization of higher education institutions has started from the liquidation of pseudo-universities, which have no license. Today there are 347 higher educational institutions of the third and fourth levels of accreditation, 87 universities have the status of national. At the same time Ukraine does not take the principal place at the world's market of education service. Only those universities in Ukraine are known abroad, which have some agreements on cooperation with the western universities.

Unfortunately, at present, Ukrainian institutions are far from being able to compete with international ones. The top ten most competitive universities certainly comprise two European ones (Oxford and Cambridge universities). The Moscow State University is at the 74th place out of 100, and Ukrainian institutions of higher education didn't enter even the top thousand. Quality in education, both secondary and higher, influences the competitiveness of a country. To increase competitiveness, Ukraine needs critical mass of highly qualified specialists hence the quality of higher education is one of the key factors of success to accomplish this task. The system of education should enable the students to acquire knowledge and skills that keep up with the current economic demands. It should also train the graduates for labour mobility and facilitate their adaptation to the changing conditions. The rapid economic growth in Ukraine during the last decade created new opportunities for career development, but it also placed new requirements on the professional staff. Employers, recruiters and independent experts point to the glaring gap between the skills of university graduates and labour market challenges. Criticism of unprofessionalism, corruption and overall degradation of the education system has become ubiquitous. A tool for realization of high quality educational model is education quality monitoring. The main component of this tool is implementation of educational audit. This issue should be examined in detail.

It is important to emphasize that educational audit is firmly on the agenda for higher education institutions; both quality assurance and quality enhance-

ment are now considered essential components of any educational audit. Ukrainian higher education institutions have a responsibility to produce educational programmes and services of a high standard, which meets the needs of students. The educational audit— as part of the quality assurance procedures has an important part to play in this process, in collaboration with service providers.

The definition of the term „Audit” should be clarified at the beginning. In the context of quality in higher education, it is a process for checking that procedures are in place to assure quality, integrity or standards of provision and outcomes. An educational audit is a practical approach to professional accountability within the educational service. An objective of educational audit is 'to contribute, in conjunction with other mechanisms, to the promotion and enhancement of high quality in teaching and learning'. An educational unit may be a small section within an institution, a whole institution or a group of institutions within a local education authority [Ainsworth 1989].

V. Bolotov, O. Garaschuk, N. Efremov, N. Nikitin, V. Samoylova, A. Shmelev are Ukrainian and Russian researchers who describe in their publications the problems of educational audit implementation, evaluation of educational activity, quality of educational process and performance evaluation in education.

Main body. In order to examine educational audit it is essential to understand that performance evaluation in education, carried out through the educational audit process, embraces:

- all aspects of the activities of the authority, institution or unit under review;
- consideration of both effectiveness (i.e. quality, the relationship between expectations and outcomes) and efficiency (which covers relevant considerations of economy and the relationship between inputs and outcomes).

An educational auditing procedure is very important in the light of:

- rapid and far reaching change in the purpose and range of further education;
- increased Government scrutiny of and insistence on value for money in all public sector activities;
- a systematic and comprehensive approach to education management is essential.

As for essential features of the educational auditing process, effective educational audit comes from collaboration between an audit team, selected to represent a range of legitimate interests, and staff in higher education establishments or those parts of them being audited. Contributions will be made to audit exercises by both colleagues and line managers, and evaluation will cover organizational policies and practices as well as the delivery of the service.

It is necessary to emphasize that educational audit seeks to improve the performance of managers and staff, by engaging them in active learning through the processes of identifying key questions and responding to critical appraisal, leading to personal and institutional improvement. The climate in which this organ-

izational development can blossom has to be positive and supportive, and therefore non-threatening. The intention should be to move to philosophy where the educational audit becomes an internally led continuing activity, which seeks to make more explicit and supportive the concept of professional accountability and leads to a continual improvement in the quality of service provided.

Educational audit enables consistent quality assurance of the educational opportunities. The principles on which the process and audit tool are based:

- Partnership working.
- Multi-professional approach.
- Shared responsibility for assessment.
- Action planning .
- Quality enhancement.

Best practice guidance for use of the audit process and audit tool is:

- Partnership engagement is maintained throughout the educational audit cycle with practice and academic staff undertaking the process together.
- Educational audit of the placement is undertaken once on behalf of all proEducational audit takes place on an annual basis.
- Sources of evidence include existing reports from other assessment/inspection processes.
- Learners and service users are included in the process at every appropriate opportunity.
- Dissemination of good practice forms part of every action plan to ensure attainment of standards is followed by enhancement.
- Review of the mentor/practice educator register and the statement of capacity is not confined to an annual event.

The benefits of educational auditing process are the following: it allows for the reconciliation of bottom-up and top down planning. It allows for practitioners at all levels including non-academic staff, to become involved in the process of analyzing, recording and reporting the qualitative aspects of their work. Recognition of the importance of the process of educational auditing leads to a deeper acknowledgement that all internal processes, systems and arrangements which enhance the involvement of all individuals have inherent in them performance indicators of quality. The identification of these indicators provides valid yardsticks for judging performance. Linking personal involvement and professional accountability in formulating and subsequently monitoring performance evaluation is a fundamental benefit of implementing the concept of educational audit.

It should be stressed that educational audit, a crucial process in any Quality Management System (QMS) is popularly defined as a systematic, independent and documented practice for obtaining and evaluating evidence objectively to determine the extent to which audit criteria (conformance and effectiveness) are

fulfilled. Educational auditing procedure offers higher education institutions expertise in developing their internal quality management and provides a certification of their quality management. How the process of educational auditing is carried out in higher education institutions in Ukraine is analyzed below.

Recent research has shown that a total of 8 higher education institutions were certified in Ukraine by the beginning of 2012, including the University of Economics and Law „Krok”, Donetsk State Institute of Nonferrous Metals, Odessa Institute of Continuous Education for Managers of Water Transport, the Centre for Training and Certification of Shipboard Personnel of Sevastopol National Technical University, the Institute of Investment Management, the European University, Lviv State Ivan Franko University, and the National Aviation University. A number of other Ukrainian universities are preparing for QMS certification, for instance, the National University of Life and Environmental Sciences of Ukraine and Lviv Polytechnic National University. An analysis of their experiences allows emphasizing the following positive developments:

- Ukrainian higher education institutions do increasing work aimed at creation, implementation, and certification of quality management systems in accordance with the requirements and recommendations of the quality management standard;
- Ukrainian higher education institutions conduct self-assessment aimed to identify key areas in educational, scientific, administrative, financial, economic, and business activities to be improved;
- Some higher education institutions work to set up strategic partnership systems that give them feedback from employers of their graduates.

Many higher education institutions in Ukraine have set up special structural units to manage the quality of their training. However, based on the experience of development and implementation of the quality management system within higher education institutions, a number of problems hindering the creation and effective use of such systems can be identified:

- lack of unequivocally defined legal framework for a clear and coherent organization of work aimed at setting up such quality management systems in higher education;
- lack of necessary manuals and guidelines for the implementation of principles of quality management in higher education;
- weakening of links with industry and consequential educational curricula isolated from present industrial needs;
- lack of qualified middle-level university managers;
- reluctance of the faculty to adopt new principles of management;
- insufficient governmental support to higher education institutions in the introduction of quality management principles;

- lack of financial resources to effectively improve quality management in higher education.

Performance of the said activities requires extensive research based on the international and domestic experience in implementing quality management systems in higher education.

Therefore, effective quality management certification in higher education institutions should adhere to certain key reference points:

- quality training of students is based on the quality teaching capacity of higher education institutions;
- enrolment competition;
- quality education as a design of relevant plans and curricula;
- active research activities of the faculty and the involvement of students in them;
- systematic teaching of university subjects throughout the academic year as well as the systematic assessment of students' knowledge;
- support of graduates in better employment by occupation that is, in fact, a major criterion of university performance evaluation;
- focus on effective educational work;
- feedback from graduates, employers, and society;
- focus on continuing education.

The effective functioning of the quality system can provide evidence for potential customers as to what a university can do for them. Sustainable turn-out, better administration, better performance, cost optimization, and the improved image will reinforce the position of the university in the educational market in Ukraine. „Setting up an effective system of management in higher education based on the quality management system will significantly increase the level of competence of graduates and their competitiveness in the labour market” [Момот 2007]. Actual for further development is the improvement in organizational and functional structure of higher education institutions for the effective implementation of the principles of quality management system in Ukraine. These goals can be achieved through the development of its strategic short-term and medium-term plans, its innovation infrastructure, sound personnel policy in the field of science and education, and the setting up of a strategic partner network providing the ‘university-customer’ feedback.

Conclusion: The major points covered by this paper may be summarized as follows: the conducted analysis proved that educational audit as a new educational service has just begun to be realized in Ukrainian higher education institutions. Such system should be implemented on voluntarily basis; it must not duplicate state control of governing bodies of higher education institutions. However, it is necessary to solve a number of legal, socio-economic, psychological and pedagogical problems for educational audit to become the integral part of

the quality assessment system in Ukrainian higher educational institutions. It should be emphasized that Ukraine as a young developing European country faces the double scale of problems in higher education: those of primary concern of general European education community and specifically Ukrainian ones. Thus, one of the main problems of higher education in Ukraine is its quality. Today we can state that the most prestigious higher educational institutions in Ukraine, including those existing and developing for centuries, have low indices compared to the actual world ratings. The reason is not only imperfect licensing and accreditation, but also lack of impartial external assessment of students' knowledge by independent institutions, low academic motivation of students. Therefore, further development of Ukraine as a European state is not possible without improving the education quality based on the mechanisms of educational audit.

Literature

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Abstract

The article examines essential features of educational audit in higher education institutions of Ukraine. Different factors which influence the introduction educational audit in Ukrainian higher education institutions are researched. Some possible ways to facilitate the widespread use of educational audit in Ukrainian higher education institutions are outlined

Key words: educational audit, higher educational institutions, competitiveness, quality management systems (QMS), certification.

Аннотация

В статье проводится анализ особенностей образовательного аудита в высших учебных заведениях Украины. Изучаются различные факторы, влияющие на внедрение образовательного аудита в украинские вузы. Описаны возможные пути содействия широкому использованию образовательного аудита в высших учебных заведениях Украины.

Perspektywy realizacji edukacyjnego audytu w ukraińskich instytucjach szkolnictwa wyższego

Streszczenie

W artykule przeanalizowano cechy instytucjonalnego audytu edukacyjnego szkolnictwa wyższego na Ukrainie. Różne czynniki wpływające na wprowadzenie edukacyjnego audytu w ukraińskich uczelniach. Możliwe sposoby promowania szerszego wykorzystania instytucjonalnego audytu edukacyjnego szkolnictwa wyższego na Ukrainie.

Słowa kluczowe: instytucjonalny audyt edukacyjny instytucji szkolnictwa wyższego, konkurencyjność, systemy zarządzania jakością (QMS), certyfikacja.