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Prospects for financial and economic support of educational services in Ukraine

Perspektywy wsparcia finansowego i ekonomicznego usług edukacyjnych w Ukrainie

ABSTRACT

The collection of primary and secondary information was carried out to research the experience of supporting higher education seekers in several countries, namely: Colombia, Iran, Azerbaijan, Poland, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, and the Czech Republic. The primary attention was paid to the study of normative documents and the generalization of practical experience of financial and economic support of higher education seekers in the mentioned countries. The study of the specified world experience was carried out to develop and present in this article appropriate financial and economic models of support for those seeking educational services in Ukraine. As a result of the research, the author proposed the following set of supporting models of funding: public, business, loan, and self-financing, which should be implemented in Ukraine together and directed to different categories of students.

Keywords: educational services, public funding, business financing of education, student credit, self-financing.

INTRODUCTION

In Ukraine, a systematic approach to forming and developing a harmonious personality has not yet been designed. Personality in which the balanced combination of not only internal physical and mental health but also the love for a healthy social and natural habitat as well as (being not less important!) the ability and willingness to preserve, protect and improve it were presented. Such a person should be the foundation of civil society because they are highly educated, focused on actual humanitarian values and high living standards, and

STRESZCZENIE

Zbiór informacji pierwotnych i wtórnych przeprowadzono w celu zbadania doświadczeń wspierania osób poszukujących edukacji w szkołach wyższych w wielu krajach, a mianowicie: Kolumbii, Iranie, Azerbejdżanie, Polsce, Kanadzie, Francji, Niemczech, Hiszpanii, Czechach. Główną uwagę zwrócono na badanie dokumentów normatywnych oraz uogólnienie praktycznych doświadczeń finansowego i ekonomicznego wspierania studentów we wspomnianych krajach. Badanie określonych doświadczeń światowych przeprowadzono w celu opracowania i przedstawienia w artykule odpowiednich modeli finansowo-ekonomicznych wsparcia studentów w Ukrainie. W wyniku przeprowadzonych badań autorka zaproponowała następujący zestaw wspierających modeli finansowych i ekonomicznych: publiczna, biznesowa, kredytowa i samofinansująca się, które powinny być wspólnie wdrażane w Ukrainie i kierowane do różnych kategorii studentów.

Słowa kluczowe: usługi edukacyjne, środki publiczne, biznes-finansowanie edukacji, kredyt dla studentów, samofinansowanie.

therefore, they are difficult and even impossible to manipulate.

Hence our belief in the validity of the following theses: there is a close connection between the problems of low quality of life and the lack of a systematic approach to the formation of a harmonious person; both of these problems are complex and urgent to be solved; in the system of balanced personality development, higher education is only one of the subsystems of education at different levels; proceeding from the previous thesis, all work on improving the form and con-

tent of higher education as a subsystem (including the process of educational standards harmonization) must take into consideration the fact of the interdependence between the elements of the whole system.

1. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The analysis of scientific publications devoted to the problem has shown that as of today there are essential preconditions for solving the mentioned problem in Ukraine.

Among other factors, the first should be called Ukraine's participation in the Bologna Process, which it joined in 2005 and became one of the 48 European member countries. The Bologna process aims to create and develop a European scientific and educational space (European Commission, 2020). On this path, a lot has already been done to bring the national higher education system in line with the European one. This includes the development of lifelong learning strategies, the definition of an educational degree and its duration, educational programs improvement and bringing them closer to the requirements of the labor market, implementation of the ECTS system, dissemination of innovative teaching methods, etc. (Yuzyk et al., 2019).

Secondly, since the signing of the Association Agreement between Ukraine and the European Union, the processes of domestic standards harmonization in our country in all spheres of life, including education with European ones, have been intensified (Council of the European Union, 2014). The growth of academic mobility volumes in 2014–2023 evidenced significant progress in the chosen path. However, there is a negative point in this undoubtedly progressive Ukraine trend – the directions of students and teachers migration clearly convinced that our country has ended up on the periphery of the educational space, and not only of the European one.

We consider mentioned preconditions to be, to a large extent, forming a favorable environment to achieve the goal we have set. But in addition to them, there are sufficient deterrent factors. On top of that, these are the following: an imbalance of the educational system in terms of preparing specialists in accordance with the national needs and, at the same time, excessive attention to “fancy” specialties, discrepancy in the level of remuneration of employees of education with the social significance of their work, the absence of state regulatory mechanisms (including financial ones) that would motivate talented students and teachers to develop as effectively as possible and, in addition, to remain in Ukraine (Council of the European Union, 2014; Ahn et al., 2021; etc.).

We have analyzed the methods of solving the outlined problem in post-Soviet countries, Western Europe, Asia, and North and South America, generalized the world experience in financing the providing/obtaining of educational services, and formulated several conclusions:

- in all countries for which the study was conducted, both types of educational institutions are functioning – public and private (Brzezicki, 2020; Study in UK, n.d.; Campus

France, n.d.; etc.);

- private institutions are usually more prestigious since they have the financial capacity to form a better material and technical base, organize comfortable conditions for studying and teaching, attract the best lecturers, and, accordingly, provide the most up-to-date educational technologies (Xuan et al., 2022; Postlewaite, 2020; Munna & Kalam, 2021; etc.);
- countries that pay significant attention to the successful implementation of the national development strategy while having a well-developed system of grants and scholarships to support talented youth, academics, and scientists (Qi et al., 2022; Mediavilla, 2017; Mahrouse, 2021);
- in most countries (from the studied sample), the level of payment for education is comparable to the amount of possible material compensation (in the form of a grant, assistance, etc.) as well as with average wages, which guarantees a decent standard of living (International Commission on the Futures of Education, 2021; Garrard, 2022; Yontz & Wilson, 2021; etc.).

In addition, surveys of representatives from different countries have demonstrated that there is not yet a perfect funding system for providing/obtaining educational services in any of them. Thus, the problem chosen for research is characterized as multi-vectored and complex, so within the framework of this article, we decided to focus exclusively on the financial aspects of its solution.

2. RESEARCH METHODS

Based on a systematic approach to implementing appropriate standards of quality of life through forming a harmonious personality, the author considered it appropriate to work in the following sequence. First, the primary information was collected through in-depth interviews. The respondents were foreign students from Colombia, Iran, Azerbaijan, and Poland studying at the Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute at the time of the survey. Before the survey, students were asked to study regulatory documents and summarize the practical experience of financial and economic support for higher education students in their countries. Secondly, to collect similar information, an analysis of websites offering educational services in the following countries was conducted: Canada, France, Germany, Spain, and the Czech Republic. Thirdly, based on the collected information, the author developed financial and economic support models for students in Ukraine. The following methods were used in developing these models: analysis and synthesis, induction and deduction, and comparison.

The purpose of this article is to outline the essence and conditions for implementing the financial and economic models of support for students of educational services in Ukraine.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS AND EFFECTS

An essential problem for all studied educational systems stems

from the complexity of determining the cost of education, calculation of the volume order to meet society's needs in one or another specialist (which also should affect the cost of education), etc. However, practically in each of the studied foreign systems, there are separate attributes that are useful to be tested and adapted to the education system of our country.

We have formulated initial points for the formation of financial and economic models for the educational services provided/obtained in Ukraine based on the results of a study of existing and favorable and unfavorable factors for the development of a harmonious personality:

- It is necessary to create appropriate financial and economic conditions for the free and comprehensive development of every citizen of Ukraine as a consumer of educational services, incl. in terms of the implementation of the strategy "Education throughout life";
- It is necessary to ensure multivariate financial and economic models (FEM) of their providing/obtaining so as to create conditions for the simultaneous implementation of different models and the possibility of their free choice from potential customers given the significant differentiation of the needs of educational services users;
- The development and implementation of FEM should contribute to the growth of the efficiency, on the one hand, – of the higher education sector in the strategic (long-term) and tactical (short-term) measurements, but on the other hand – at all possible levels (state, university, teacher, student).

The initial points formulated by us emphasize that the development of FEM today is a critical and urgent task, the solution of which determines the successful implementation of the national development of Ukraine strategy and hence the promising position of our state on the world's geopolitical map. There is no need to prove the close relationship between the competitiveness of the worker, the company, and the country, nor the fact that the mentioned indicator, in its turn, depends on conditions (including financial-economic) that provide an opportunity to constantly work on raising its level. The last one (the need for constant improvement) challenges the rapid development of all spheres of life. These require continuous education, which actualizes the need for education throughout life. Thus, in developing FEM, it is necessary to consider that segments of educational services consumers have considerable differentiation for today (on a branch basis, on incomes of applicants, by age, and by type of training). This affects the differences between their needs and therefore requires different methods for satisfying them.

No less critical is an understanding that the choice of a FEM complex of providing/obtaining educational services in the country, their content, and relationship can be considered as a kind of indicator of a chosen strategic development course of the state, the level of social orientation of its political and economic systems, the state of democratization of society, etc.

Proceeding from the above positions, we believe that for Ukraine, it is expedient to have a harmonized combina-

tion of the following FEM of educational services providing/obtaining:

1) Public funding – identification of the most talented entrants, training them for public funds through special training programs using motivational programs for further career and career prospects (the needs of the state guarantee the expediency of the model).

2) Business financing – training specialists, which requires representatives of specific industries at their expense and in close cooperation with them. This involves the coordination of training and practice programs, teaching certain subjects by practitioners, internship of teachers and traineeships by students, and employment of graduates (the business needs guarantee the model's feasibility).

3) Credit financing – obtaining a loan for college education (from the future employer, from an independent sponsor, from the state, etc.) – this model in Ukraine is possible today only if the state guarantees the financial security of both the lender and the borrower.

4) Self-financing – training at own expense (expediency of the model is guaranteed by the educational institution and the state based on the data base on the needs of specialists).

The introduction of these models in the territory of our country requires the development of appropriate ideological (conceptual), marketing, and legal support, to which (among other things) the following components should be included: 1 – strategy of innovative development of education; 2 – the procedure of forming the infrastructure for providing informational support of decision-making; 3 – the criteria for determining the appropriateness of choosing one or another FEM for the providing/obtaining of educational services; 4 – a list and a sequence of amendments making to the legislative framework, the purpose of which is to ensure the efficient functioning of each model, as well as obtaining additional opportunities for financing educational services.

An important task that needs to be solved in the context of the implementation of the proposed FEM providing/obtaining of educational services is to determine the criteria of expediency of choosing one or another model. We believe that the first of these – State (Public) Funding – should have the following criteria: 1) the state's need for specialists (accurate and reliable information provided by the above information supports the decision-making system); 2) assessment of the applicant's success and 3) the amount of material support necessary to provide the applicant with the appropriate quality of life.

We emphasize mainly that unlike the current state funding proposed by us, firstly, it should be aimed at motivating the training of the most talented students; secondly, it should be formed based on scientifically substantiated data on state needs in specialists; and thirdly, it should foresee volumes that guarantee a high level of motivation of the scholarship's holders.

In assessing the success of an applicant, we consider as worth the experience of Colombia as an exemplary, because

the rating of entrants is compiled based on independent testing, which runs across the whole country in one day (RocApply, n.d.). The first 100 entrants on the rating automatically become state scholarship holders, and the size of the scholarship (\$ 370 per month) exceeds the cost of a consumer basket (\$ 350 per month). A similar selection procedure is also in force in Iran, where the best applicants are selected within the direction chosen by them (physical and mathematical, applied sciences, humanities, art). It is essential that the required number of students for each area is determined in consideration to the geographical location and specialization of the region where the university is located, for example, coal mining, fishing, wood processing or oil refining industry, etc.

Proceeding from the structure of the educational services consumers market, government funding should cover several programs intended for schoolchildren, students, graduate students, and young scientists and grants for remarkable achievements in the chosen field of activity. Each program will have its peculiarities (including financial and economic ones), determined by the specifics of the segment and its needs. For example, at the beginning of the path of obtaining higher education, consumers of educational services are not yet able support themselves financially (it refers to university students aged 17–18 years) and are entirely dependent on supporters. At the same time, students, post-graduate students, and young scientists can participate in research work funded by the customer. All these circumstances, as well as other factors that determine the needs of the scholars (the actual cost and optimal composition of the consumer basket, the level of inflation, the specific needs of the training industry, etc.), should be taken into account. After all, the primary purpose of these programs is to motivate talented citizens to creative search and the full impact of the results of this search.

Anticipating the disagreement of the opponents with the stated approach and their main argument – significant expenditures of the state budget for the implementation of the proposed programs, we want to note that all countries, now classified as developed, began their rapid development precisely from the increase of target expenditures on education and science. A state that does not finance its intellectual resources – loses it. This is confirmed by a massive outflow of “brains” from Ukraine to those countries, where the financial and economic conditions correspond to representations of emigrants and reflect the worth of their contribution payment and prospects of growth.

Business Financing – the choice of this model is based on the following criteria: 1) high achievements in a particular industry or activity (for example, prize places in contests or competitions on the chosen subject, a scientific and technological development that may be of interest to business representatives, etc.); 2) positive references from employers interested in continuing cooperation with the candidate (for example, after successful testing, internship or practice); 3) the forecasted need of the employer in obtaining a qualified

specialist (i.e., the expected availability of a vacant place for a future employee after they have received higher education); 4) solvency of the creditor company (i.e., his ability to finance scholarship training and his needs in providing the necessary standard of living).

The described model may have variations depending on whether the scholarship holder should return the funds to the lending company after graduation and finding employment or not. A partial financing option is also possible at the expense of a scholarship in form of a part-time job already during college education under a flexible work schedule, freelance jobs, fulfilling creative tasks at weekends, and carrying out analytical work in the framework of educational tasks.

So, a business financing model can be very beneficial both for businesses and scholarship holders. Businesses, for a relatively small amount of money, will receive a skilled analysis of activities, access to the latest techniques, and substantiated suggestions for improving performance indicators – all this will be obtained while doing tasks on subjects, research work of scientific circles, tasks within the framework of the departments' research work, course and diploma projects. At the same time, in the contract, it is expedient to provide for the possibility of adjusting the subject of these types of work to update them in accordance with the situational or prospective needs of the enterprise.

The most important advantages of a scholarship from this model are guaranteed employment (which today is a significant achievement, especially given the increasing competition in the labor market); obtaining experience in carrying out practical tasks even during the period of studying; obtaining system education according to the program, which is thoroughly worked out and agreed upon by the representatives of the educational institution and business; a deep study of the enterprise's activities peculiarities and the future place of work in it; provided that the creditor's tasks are effectively performed, – acceleration in career growth based on mutually beneficial cooperation.

The next FEM – Credit Financing – is quite common in many countries, however, is still not represented in Ukraine, mainly because of the peculiarities of the domestic financial and credit system. In our opinion, the formation of transparent and reliable legal conditions for the implementation of this model is today an urgent task for the country. However, it should be reminded at once: in all investigated lending systems operating in foreign countries students receive an interest-free loan or a minimum interest rate (2–5%). Its repayment begins only after finding employment and lasts (in most cases) for 20–30 years.

All factors mentioned previously indicate that Credit Financing is especially attractive for most citizens, since the percentage of the most talented (who may qualify for the State Funding) is usually insignificant, as well as the share of the winners of the competitions (with high chances to get the Business Financing). The main advantages of the Credit Fi-

nancing are the following: 1 – the lack of obligations of the recipient to the creditors regarding future employment in precisely defined directions (compared to the previous two FEMs) and 2 – the opportunity to focus exclusively on studying. These can be important criteria for students who are still undeclared and are not definitively decided on the future area of activity or a specific place of work.

As experience of foreign countries shows, public organizations can be involved in loans to students of universities or different educational programs. For example, in Colombia there is a functioning organization which provides an opportunity to receive an interest-free credit for studying. Especially it is worth looking closer at the initiative of the government of this state which canceled the demand for the return of funds received for studying. That is, in fact the state that finances the education of insolvent citizens free of charge. The only criterion that is the basis for a positive solution to the issue of expediency of a loan is the success and diligence of an applicant.

One more example of the material support of the young students, is the experience of Iran, where they receive an interest-free loan for housing (\$ 500 per month) and a loan for creating a family (\$ 1,000 per month). The indicated funds must be paid back in installments after graduation for 30 years.

The fourth item from the list of FEM proposed by us – Self-Financing. The more common name in Ukraine is studying under contract form. Self-Financing is one of the two models presented today in the market of education services of our state. We support the expediency of learning with the costs covered with students' own funds, however, with some adjustments. First, the solvency of the applicant cannot be the only criterion for enrollment in the students' ranks. It's not a secret, that working in a competitive environment higher education institutions are trying to improve their financial position precisely at the expense of "contractors". Some of them are really sufficiently prepared for higher education. However, among them there are those who satisfy purely "material interest" of universities. In practice, this is manifested in reducing the level of quality requirements for cross-border controls; in the replication of the masters' articles, course projects, diplomas, etc., which are questionable on the indicator of "scientific depth"; and in general – in leveling the very concept of "higher education" or "science" as well.

To illustrate again we turn to foreign experience, which is considered appropriate for implementation in Ukraine. In Columbia there is the Institute for the Promotion of Higher entrants for 1000 people in the areas of study. The most successful (100 people) receive funding from the state (see section State Funding). Applicants who occupy 101-500 places receive the right to study at universities. Other entrants (that is, from 501 to 1000 places) do not receive the right to study at the university at all and have to complete the entrance exams once more. Note that only this state examination matters to enter the university, school grades are not considered.

In our opinion, the number of seats for the first two categories described above for Ukraine may be changed and should be determined on the basis of proposed to us by information support decision-making system. However, the very principle of selection we consider worthy of attention – that is, all other FEMs (including Self-Financing) apply only to representatives who have got the right to study at universities.

Secondly, the conclusion of a contract for Self-Financing should take place only after familiarizing of the applicant with those data: 1 – the current need for specialists, 2 – the forecast of the decrease (or increase) in this demand, taking into account the already existing number of students / listeners studying in this direction, 3 – as well as the dynamics of prospective vacancies. In other words, the data of information support decision-making system should be open not only for employees of the education system, but also for the entrants, which should facilitate the adoption of a balanced and well-founded decision on the direction of education.

Thirdly, the upper and lower boundaries of the studying cost with regional and sectoral differentiation should be legally established. We appeal to the experience of Poland where the level of educational costs, which are established by the Ministry of Education of this country, can be increased by neither state nor private higher educational institutions (Educations.com, 2022). Reasonable boundaries will be considered if they are defined by the following criteria: cost of studying in higher educational institutions, the profitability of the future employment industry (or business profitability), the level of specialist needs for the state and business (deficit or overproduction), as well as an independent testing point (and during the study – the score of success). The last one is due to the fact that, in our opinion, more successful ones have to pay less and vice versa. This is also true from an economic point of view: because less successful ones require more time and energy of teachers to provide additional advice, testing, checking controls at all levels, and so on.

Fourthly, again Polish education system includes a rule worth mentioning – a clear list of services for which universities cannot claim any fees should be clearly defined. It is clear that this also applies to all of the above FEM. In our opinion, the following should be included in this list: any services that have already been taken into account in determining the cost; using the library fund; access to the multimedia library; obtaining statements (references) from the university; getting consultations within the framework of paid studying schedule, etc.

Combined financing is an additional opportunity to improve the material conditions of education, if there is a need and there are appropriate grounds for doing so. Foreign experience proves the multiplicity of possible sources of Combined financing.

One of such sources is the presidential scholarship in Azerbaijan (Educations.com, 2021), which is appointed for special successes in studying at the submission of the rector, and the size of which is quite substantial – AZN 750 (\$ 850),

especially when compared to regular scholarships for students (from \$ 30 to \$ 75). There is a similar scholarship in Poland, a state scholarship or a grant in Canada (OSAP scholarship), in Germany, Cyprus, etc. We will emphasize that these scholarships are intended for students for special achievements, regardless of the initial financial conditions while applying to college.

Spanish experience may be of particular interest (Study in Spain, n.d.), where students who have completed term exams or finals (their share is 35–40% of those who want to make it) are paid compensation (about 5,000 euros) that is 2,5 times more than the obligatory initial contribution at the time of admission to the university. Successful students receive the same amount after passing term exams.

Another critical source used in virtually all studied countries is the university scholarship fund distributed by the rector and student and postgraduate government bodies according to the criteria for success in education and the level of provision (social scholarships).

Some countries (France, Iran, Czech Republic, etc.) practice partial compensation for the necessary amount for renting housing and scholarship for people with special needs.

CONCLUSIONS

Solution to the existing conflict in Ukraine between human rights for spiritual and physical development and inadequate opportunities for their implementation is possible under the condition of an educational system formation considering its being multi-vectored and multileveled. The processes of harmonization of EU and Ukrainian standards are a favorable factor for the implementation of the necessary reforms, including education. However, for this purpose, the standards of training specialists (outlining the content of educational services) should be developed in coordination with the standards of training and working conditions of teachers (which guarantee the quality and conditions for providing educational services to students). The necessary consistency between the two groups of standards will be ensured through the creation of an appropriate ideological (conceptual), marketing and legal basis which should consist of the following elements: 1 – strategy of innovative development of education; 2 – the procedure of forming the infrastructure for providing information support of decision-making; 3 – the criteria for determining the appropriateness of choosing one or another FEM for the providing/obtaining of educational services; 4 – a list and a sequence of amendments making to the legislative framework, the purpose of which is to ensure the effective functioning of each model, as well as obtaining additional opportunities for financing educational services.

In order to eliminate the barriers of the applicants' insolvency, it is advisable to implement a harmonized combination of several financial and economic models of providing/obtaining educational services. Public Funding is offered for the most talented entrants, for whom special training and motivational programs should be developed. Business Fi-

ancing is training specialists for business costs in close cooperation with sponsors. Credit Financing is quite widespread in the world model and a satisfactory one for Ukraine, provided that the state guarantees the financial security of both the lender and the borrower. Self-Financing is an advanced model of the current contract-based training. Combined Funding is a combination of the proposed models, considering the specific conditions for a particular recipient.

Given the differentiation of segments of educational services consumers, each of the listed models should be available for the relevant segment. In order to provide a reasonable choice of model, the criteria for the feasibility of their application are proposed. The authors consider the promising direction of research to be developing the necessary set of standards harmonized with EU ones for the effective implementation of the proposed financial and economic models.

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