

MODERN HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE UKRAINIAN EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

ENSINO SUPERIOR MODERNO NO SISTEMA EDUCACIONAL UCRÂNICO

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ABSTRACT

Higher education, as one of the most critical components of the education system, forms a certain level of knowledge, skills, and abilities that can be applied to relevant activities. The graded nature of higher education means obtaining different educational and qualification levels (characteristics that determine the degree of knowledge, skills, and abilities of a person that help to perform tasks and duties of a certain level of professional activity) at the appropriate stages (degrees) of higher education. Adopting such a branched scheme is of fundamental importance because it guarantees a person freedom of choice and provides an opportunity to receive education following mental and professional abilities. The education sector currently needs more solutions to such problems as instability and limited funding for educational institutions, social protection of teachers, the decline in material resources, and restrictions on textbook publishing. Rural schools face challenging conditions. There are 14.9 thousand schools in 28.9 thousand population centers, 2.8 thousand requiring significant repairs, and almost 800 schools are in disrepair. In rural areas, only a few thousand students study in new-type institutions, while a thousand urban lyceums, gymnasiums, and colleges have 200,000 students. The aim of the educational process is the overall development of a

person as a personality and the highest value of society, the disclosure of their talents and mental and physical abilities, and the formation of morality. Higher education should form a citizen capable of consciously making social decisions and, on this basis, enrich society's creative, intellectual, and cultural potential, thus producing qualified specialists for the national and global economy. This article aims at identifying the main tendencies in the formation and development of modern higher education in terms of its place in the educational system and the role played by higher education in the economic and social space of the country. Methodology. The research used the analytical and bibliographic methods to study the scientific literature on the development of the higher education system, as well as induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis of information, systemic and structural, comparative, logical and linguistic methods, abstraction, idealization for studying and processing data, and an online questionnaire survey conducted by the research authors to practically clarify the most critical issues related to the peculiarities of the higher education system development in Ukraine. Results. Based on the study results, we identified the central, most important theoretical aspects of the work of higher education institutions. We also studied the opinion of scientists, heads of departments, and faculties of HEIs on crucial elements of this issue.

Keywords: Higher education. Educational system. Higher education institutions. Peculiarities of the scientific and educational environment. Modernization methods of higher education.

RESUMO

O ensino superior, como um dos componentes mais críticos do sistema educacional, forma um certo nível de conhecimento, habilidades e habilidades que podem ser aplicados a atividades relevantes. O caráter escalonado do ensino superior significa a obtenção de diferentes níveis de escolaridade e qualificação (características que determinam o grau de conhecimentos, habilidades e habilidades de uma pessoa que ajudam a desempenhar tarefas e funções de um determinado nível de atividade profissional) em etapas apropriadas (graus) do ensino superior. A adoção desse esquema ramificado é de fundamental importância porque garante a liberdade de escolha da pessoa e oferece uma oportunidade de receber educação de acordo com suas habilidades mentais e profissionais. O setor educacional precisa atualmente de mais soluções para problemas como instabilidade e financiamento limitado para instituições educacionais, proteção social de professores, declínio de recursos materiais e restrições à publicação de livros didáticos. As escolas rurais enfrentam condições desafiadoras. São 14,9 mil escolas em 28,9 mil núcleos populacionais, 2,8 mil necessitando de reparos significativos e quase 800 escolas em péssimo estado de conservação. Nas áreas rurais, apenas alguns milhares de alunos estudam em instituições de novo tipo, enquanto mil liceus, ginásios e colégios urbanos têm 200.000 alunos. O objetivo do processo educacional é o desenvolvimento global de uma pessoa como personalidade e o valor mais alto da sociedade, a divulgação de seus talentos e habilidades mentais e físicas e a formação da moralidade. A educação superior deve formar um cidadão capaz de tomar decisões sociais de forma consciente e, a partir disso, enriquecer o potencial criativo, intelectual e cultural da sociedade, produzindo assim especialistas qualificados para a economia nacional e mundial. Este artigo tem como objetivo identificar as principais tendências na formação e desenvolvimento da educação superior moderna em relação ao seu lugar no sistema educacional e ao papel desempenhado pela educação superior no espaço econômico e social do país. Metodologia. A pesquisa utilizou os métodos analítico e bibliográfico para estudar a produção científica sobre o desenvolvimento do sistema de ensino superior, bem como indução, dedução, análise, síntese de informações, métodos sistêmicos e estruturais, comparativos, lógicos e linguísticos, abstração, idealização para estudar e processar dados, e uma pesquisa de questionário on-line realizada pelos autores da pesquisa para esclarecer praticamente as questões mais críticas relacionadas às peculiaridades do desenvolvimento do sistema de ensino superior na Ucrânia. Resultados. Com base nos resultados do estudo, identificamos os aspectos teóricos centrais e mais importantes do trabalho das instituições de ensino superior. Também estudamos a opinião de cientistas, chefes de departamentos e docentes de IES sobre elementos cruciais dessa questão.

Palavras-chave: Ensino superior. Sistema educacional. Instituições de ensino superior. Peculiaridades do ambiente científico e educacional. Métodos de modernização do ensino superior.

Introduction

Higher education in Ukraine, as well as in the rest of the world, is actively acquiring the features of internationalization, which requires using the experience of different countries to improve the quality of the educational process.

The theoretical part of this study substantiates the relevance of higher education development and reveals the main trends and features of HEIs in Ukraine.

The practical part of the study includes the following:

- an assessment of the importance of competitive performance indicators of higher education institutions, which have received the most attention in recent years in Ukraine;
- the main manifestations of the insufficient level of training in HEIs;
- the degree of general negative trends development in higher education that require scientific and methodological improvement;
- the tasks of higher education in Ukraine are actively applied to the use of foreign experience in managing HEIs worldwide.

In this research, we also found the respondents' points of view on the central issues of HEI management.

We have drawn certain conclusions regarding the issues raised based on the study results. Thus, we have found that in recent years, the heads of higher education institutions have paid the greatest attention to strengthening such competitive indicators of institutions as the marketing policy of HEIs, as well as improving the teachers' professional level, increasing the level of curriculum adaptation to the present-day requirements and increasing the information and communication level of higher education institutions development. At the same time, the survey has shown that among the indicators that show the insufficient level of specialists' training by higher education institutions, the growth dynamics are observed in such aspects as the deterioration of the teaching staff quality and their lack of sufficient motivation to improve the education quality. The most striking tendencies that require scientific and methodological improvement in the higher education sector, according to the survey participants, include the increasing

dependence of teachers on the university administration, custom writing, and problems related to the upbringing of the student's personality. According to the survey, the most important areas of using foreign experience to solve specific problems of higher education in Ukraine today are:

- the autonomy of higher education institutions;
- the expansion of academic freedom for teachers and students;
- the introduction of independent assessment of the higher education quality.

At the same time, the main directions for further development of higher education as a critical component of Ukraine's educational system are to increase the teacher's role as an expert in knowledge management and a leader of the educational process, as well as to strengthen partnerships between higher education institutions, labor authorities, and trade unions. Furthermore, according to the survey, the following areas of higher education development require scientific and methodological improvement today: adaptation of university management standards to European requirements, integration of Ukrainian higher education into the scientific and educational environment, and introduction of effective information-oriented management of higher education.

Literature review

Higher education plays a vital role in ensuring the competitiveness of the country's economy and other sectors. Ensuring the stability, competitiveness, and efficiency of HEIs requires continuous improvement of the quality of the educational process (Haleem et al., 2022), (Verde & Valero, 2021).

Today, higher education in Ukraine is undergoing a complex development and transformation process. However, the prospects for developing higher education and Ukraine as a whole depend on how quickly the gap in higher education quality will be eliminated between Ukraine and developed countries (Heilporn, Lakhal & Bélisle, 2021), (Hod & Katz, 2020).

At the same time, it is worth noting that higher education is one of the areas of economic activity that fills the national and local budgets. It is mainly ensured by preparing highly qualified, competitive specialists (López Catalán, López Catalán & Prieto Jiménez, 2018).

The competitiveness of higher education is its ability to adapt to changing competitive conditions in a particular market segment by increasing the efficiency of its operations and the high level of satisfaction of consumer demand for graduates. To increase the competitiveness of Ukrainian HEIs, the government has established international cooperation in education, adapted study programs to the innovative economy, intensified foreign language learning, organized internships for students and teachers abroad, etc. At the same time, this issue is particularly relevant for Ukraine today, where not all higher education institutions prepare specialists whose knowledge is in demand in global labor markets. It means there is a mismatch between labor demand and supply in HEIs, and there is a so-called "overproduction" of specialists with a university degree (Mumford & Dikilitaş, 2020), (Salikhova, Lynch & Salikhova, 2020), (Cheung et al., 2021).

Today, the main problems of higher education relate to the need for more modern facilities for students practical training. In comparison, higher education institutions' educational and laboratory equipment and the scientific libraries' and teaching rooms' funds need to be updated better, which means that higher education in Ukraine needs to be transformed and modernized (Zhao, Wang & Sun, 2020), (Tait, 2018).

If we look at the educational systems of some leading countries, they have similar management practices in implementing subject-object relations. At the same time, we can see a well-organized functioning mechanism of all educational levels in European HEIs, the availability of the latest information and communication approaches, effective systems of power distribution, and competence areas. Considering the above, the analysis of international experience in education management is the basis for integration processes and for strengthening Ukraine's position in the global education market (Wang et al., 2020), (Akour & Alenezi, 2022).

Aims

This study aims to identify the main tendencies in developing modern higher education in the Ukrainian educational system among scientists and leaders of HEIs' departments and faculties.

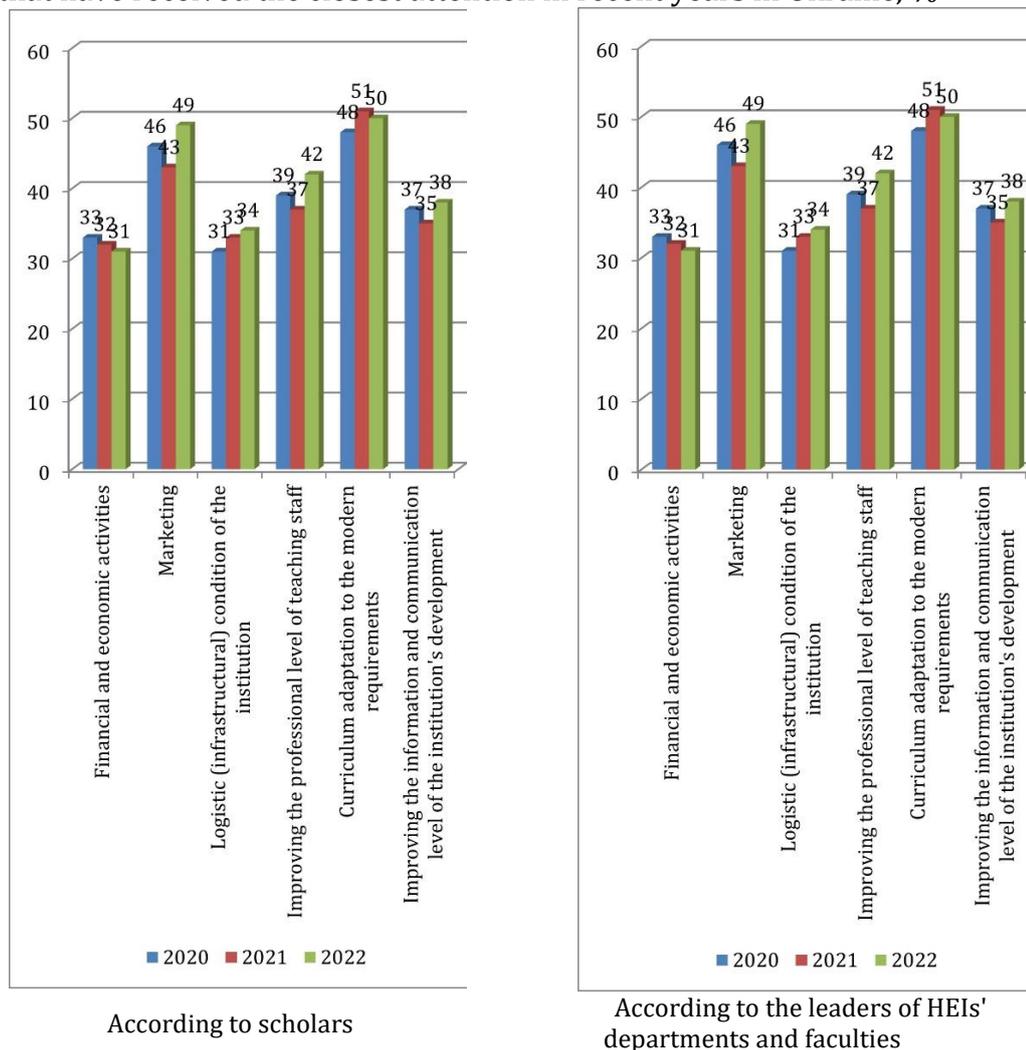
Materials and methods

A practical study of modern tendencies in higher education development was conducted by interviewing scholars and heads of departments and faculties of HEIs engaged in professional activities in 22 higher education institutions in the Odesa, Poltava, Khmelnytskyi, and Chernihiv regions of Ukraine. The study was conducted in 2020-2022 using the Survey Planet service.

Results

According to the survey participants, in recent years, in the context of special attention to the quality of educational services in Ukrainian HEIs, the heads of higher education institutions have paid the most attention to strengthening the following competitive indicators of their institutions (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Competitive performance indicators of higher education institutions that have received the closest attention in recent years in Ukraine, %

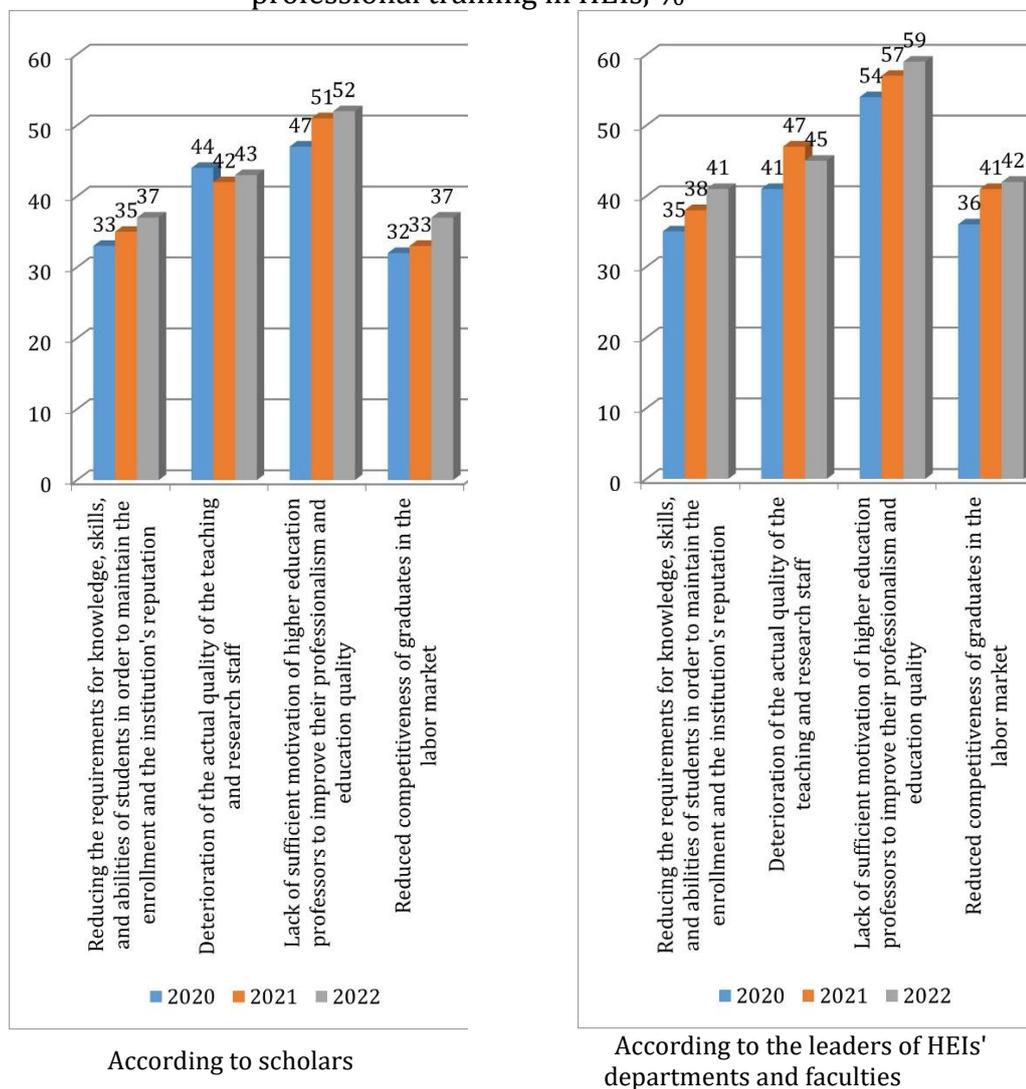


Source: compiled by the authors.

Based on the survey, the marketing activities of HEIs have become the most widespread, as well as the increase in the teachers' professional level, the level of curriculum adaptation to the present-day requirements, and the increase in the information and communication level of higher education institutions.

While surveying, respondents identified the severity of the following manifestations of insufficient professional training in HEIs (Figure 2).

Figure 2 – The severity of the main manifestations of insufficient level of professional training in HEIs, %

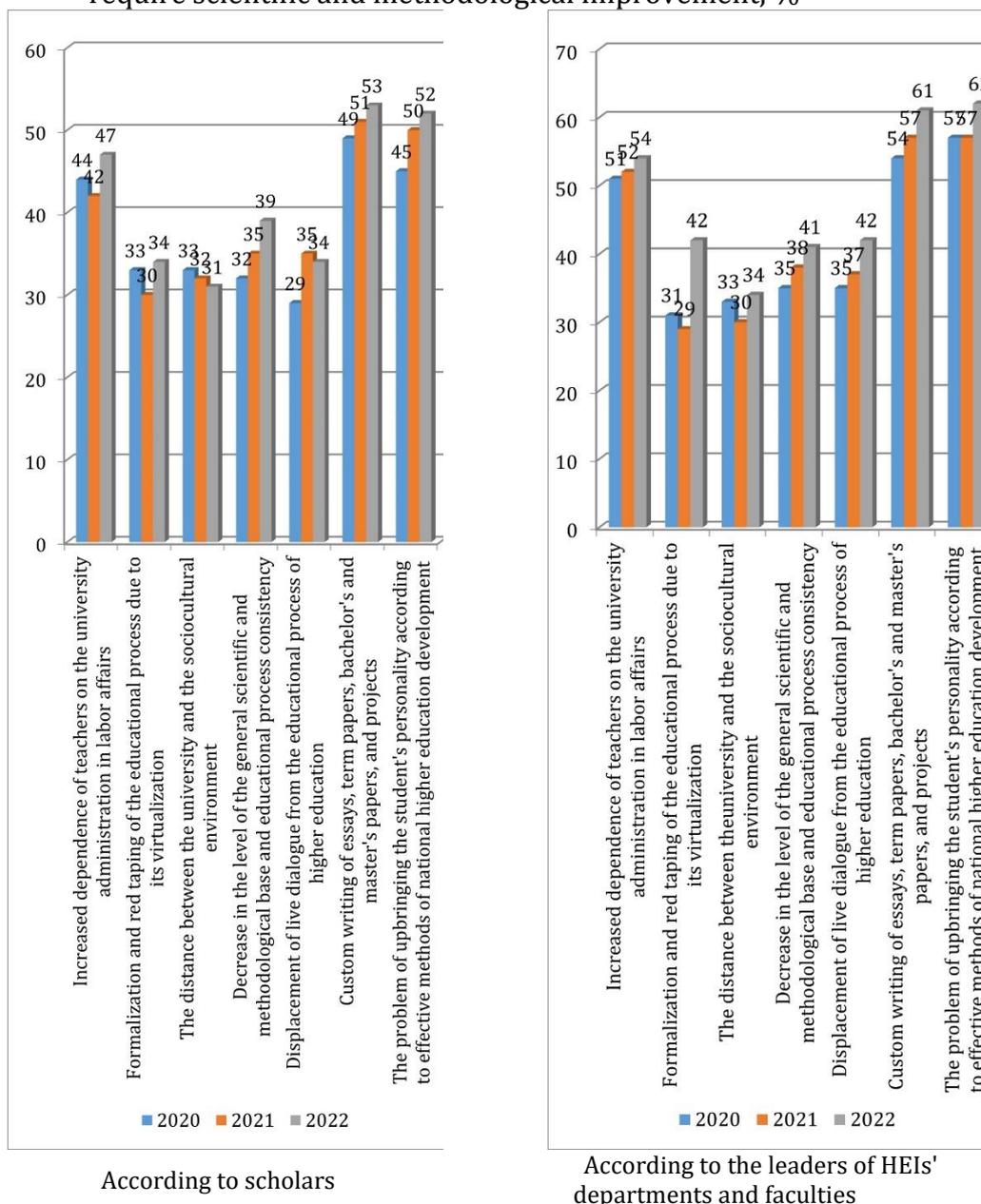


Source: compiled by the authors.

According to Figure 2, positive dynamics are observed in such aspects as the deterioration of the teaching staff quality and their lack of sufficient motivation to improve the education quality, among the indicators that indicate the insufficient level of professional training by higher education institutions.

The survey allowed us to find out the degree of general negative trends development that require scientific and methodological improvement in the sphere of higher education (Figure 3).

Figure 3 – The development of general negative trends in higher education that require scientific and methodological improvement, %



Source: compiled by the authors.

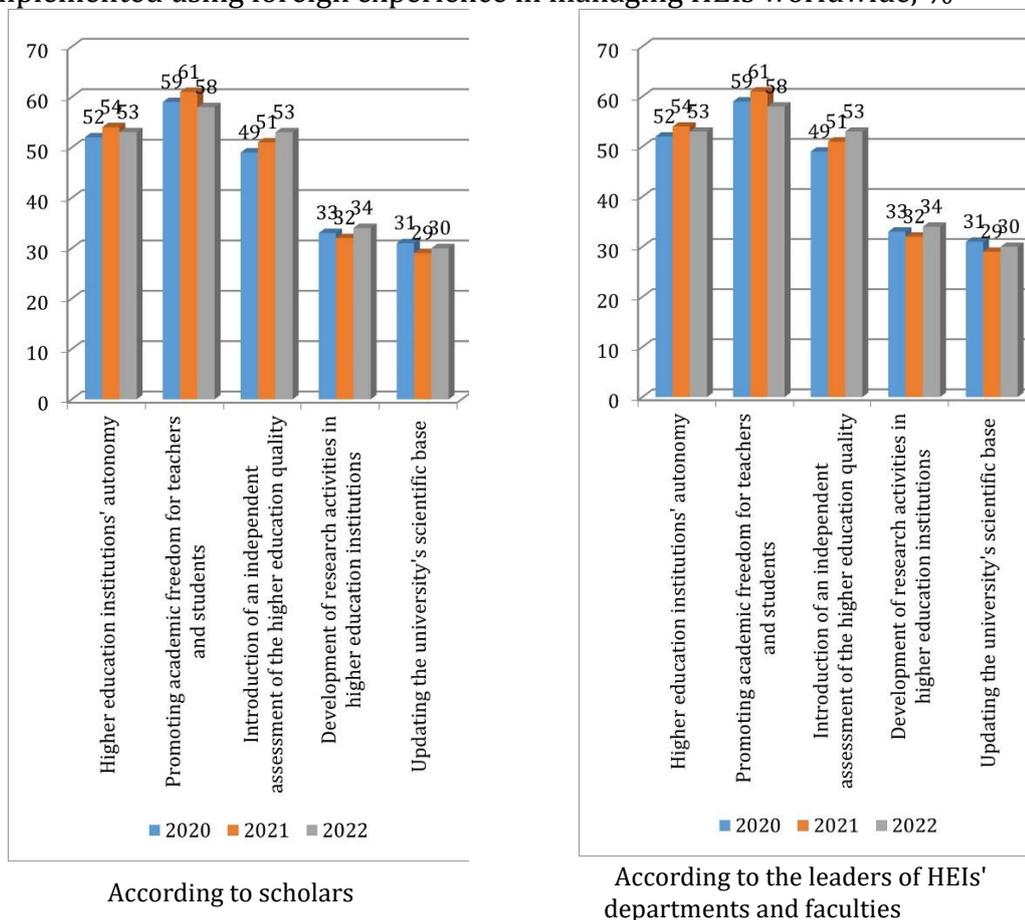
According to Figure 3, these tendencies include increased dependence of teachers on the university administration, custom writing, and problems related to the upbringing of students' personalities.

An essential result of the survey is the identification of areas for using foreign experience to solve specific problems of higher education in Ukraine (Figure 4):

- higher education institutions' autonomy;

- extending academic freedom of professors and students;
- introduction of independent assessment of higher education quality.

Figure 4 – The tasks of higher education in Ukraine, which are actively implemented using foreign experience in managing HEIs worldwide, %

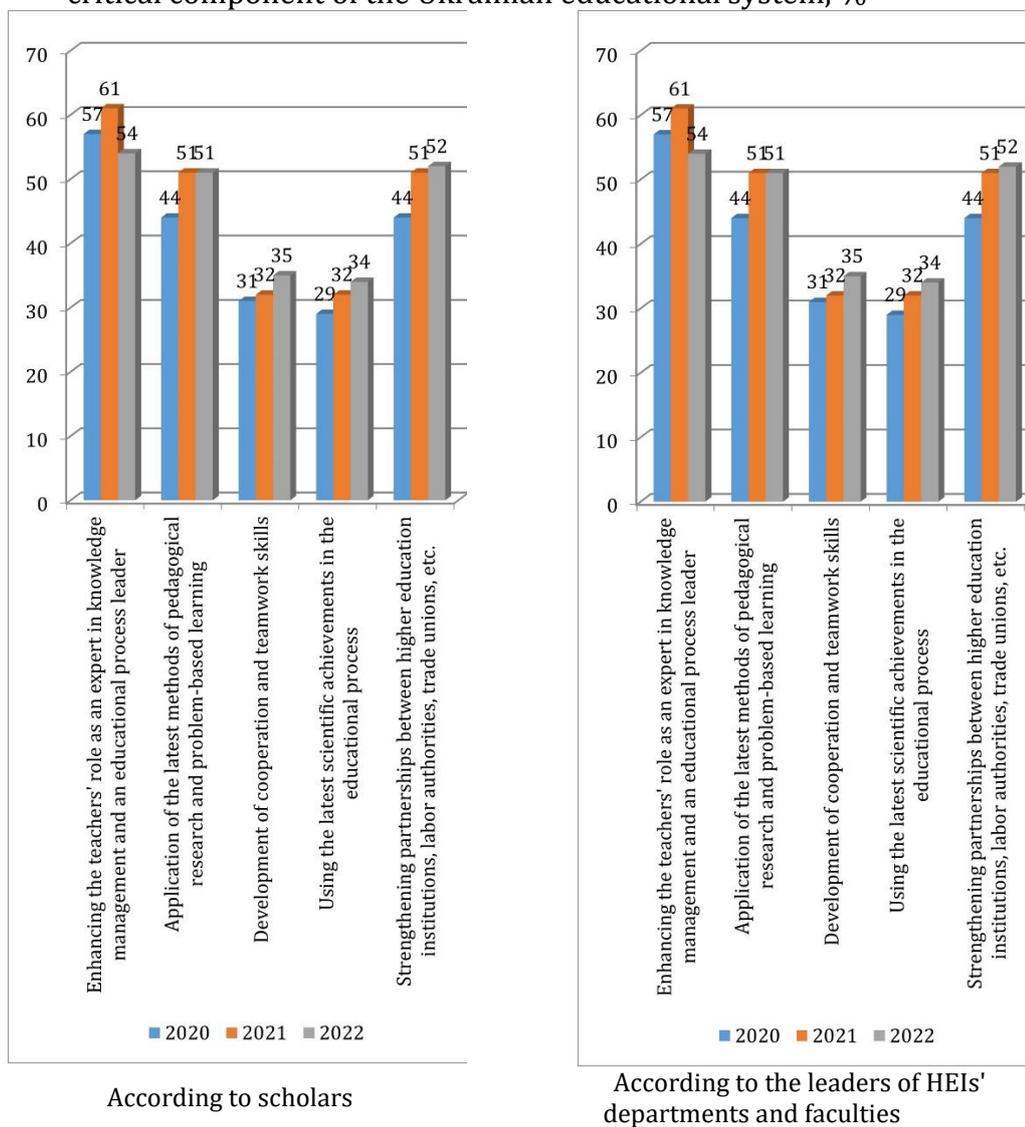


Source: compiled by the authors.

The respondents identified the main directions for further development of higher education as a critical component of the Ukrainian education system (Figure 5):

- enhancing the educators' role as an expert in knowledge management and educational process leader;
- strengthening partnerships between higher education institutions, labor authorities, and trade unions.

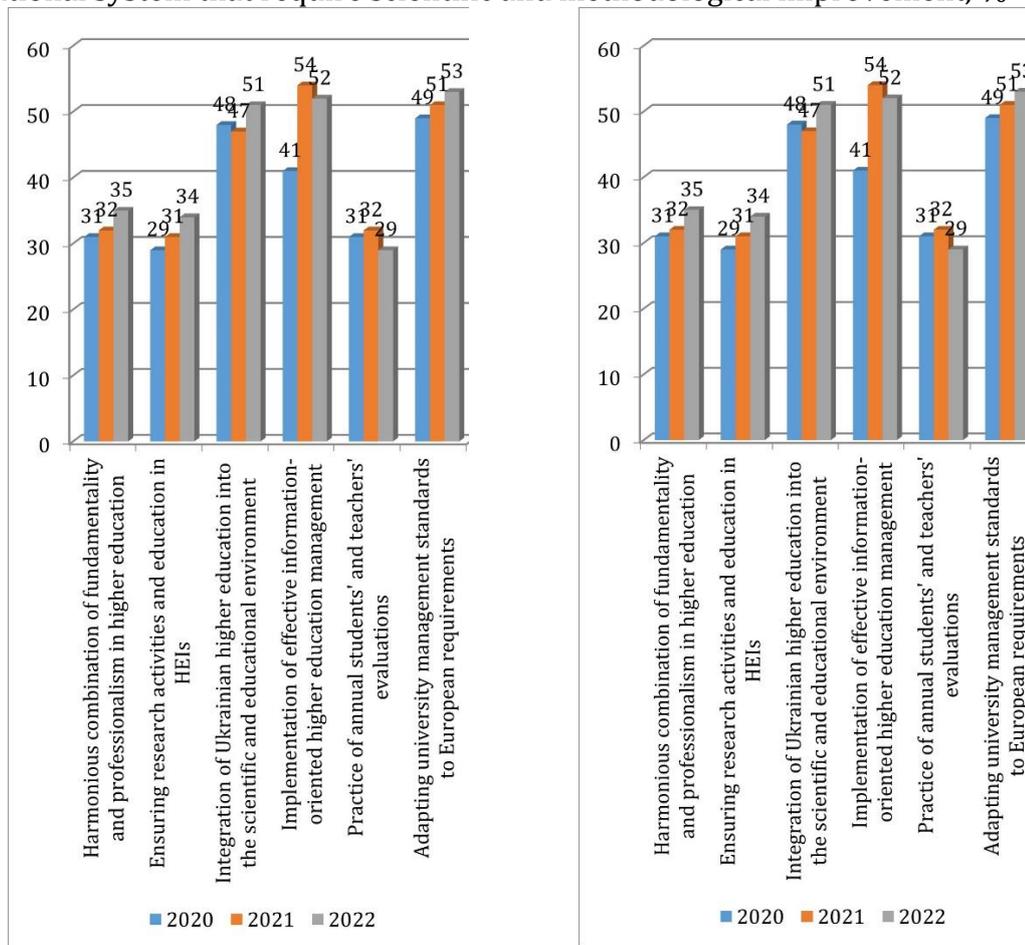
Figure 5 – The main directions of further higher education development as a critical component of the Ukrainian educational system, %



Source: compiled by the authors.

Instead, according to the survey, the following areas of higher education development require scientific and methodological improvement (Figure 6).

Figure 6 – The directions of higher education development in the Ukrainian educational system that require scientific and methodological improvement, %



According to scholars

According to the leaders of HEIs' departments and faculties

Source: compiled by the authors.

According to the survey participants, the priority areas for higher education development in the Ukrainian educational system that require scientific and methodological improvement are:

- the adaptation of university management standards to European requirements;
- the integration of Ukrainian higher education into the scientific and educational environment;
- the introduction of effective information-oriented management of higher education.

Discussion

Today, higher education aims to train specialists who are competitive in the labor market, possess up-to-date knowledge, can solve complex problems, can create high-quality, innovative intellectual products, and share the values of a free democratic society. For Ukrainian higher education to truly fulfill these crucial tasks, the system should consider current global trends in the development of higher education in the broader socio-economic context (Chen et al., 2021), (Arruabarrena et al., 2020).

In modern society, education is mainly carried out through particular institutions of the pedagogical system. Therefore, they are a central and very complex subject of pedagogy (Raffaghelli et al., 2020), (Widyasari, Nugroho & Permanasari, 2019).

The modernization of higher education in Ukraine generally aligns with European approaches. Today, the education of a highly qualified specialist is carried out as the most complete, consistent, holistic system of implementing modern educational standards, which in terms of content and organization, is implemented based on the independence and creative activity of the student (Martínez, Catasús & Fontanillas, 2020), (Bali & Caines, 2018).

At the same time, we should emphasize that the main content of a modern higher education institution should be the creation of an innovative educational environment, including the optimal choice of the organization method and quality content of educational programs necessary for integration into the global educational space, as well as optimization of staffing, comprehensive improvement of pedagogical skills through mastering innovation and research activities. Furthermore, the educational process at a modern university should be aimed at implementing higher education content based on state standards and qualification requirements for specialists, as well as considering the acquisition of skills that allow them to continue their studies at a foreign university or obtain a relevant qualification abroad. That is why it should be carried out considering modern information technologies' capabilities and focusing on forming an educated,

harmoniously developed personality capable of constantly updating scientific knowledge, ready for professional mobility and rapid adaptation to changes in the socio-cultural sphere (Xu, Wu & Ouyang, 2023), (Boya-Lara et al., 2022), (Filali, Benabdelkrim & Hassainate, 2018).

Nowadays, Ukraine has a powerful and extensive education system with a well-developed infrastructure, which, at the same time, needs to be modernized, as it does not always correspond to the European and global educational level in terms of quality and quantity due to outdated curriculum content, forms and methods of education. For modern Ukrainian higher education to be competitive, several obstacles and problems must be eliminated, and a comprehensive analysis of past experience in HEIs' development needs to be conducted. Only a thorough study of the negative and positive aspects of the current educational system will allow the modern higher education system to use the best opportunities for its development (Lim et al., 2022), (José et al., 2022), (Heinicke & Guenther, 2020).

Using the latest opportunities for innovative development of higher education institutions' methodological, academic, and research levels is currently the subject of intense discussion in modern pedagogy (Mialkovska, et al., 2022).

At this stage of education reform, the organization and implementation of pedagogical research in higher education is a very relevant and complex process based on activity-based, personal, systemic, and structural approaches (Kumar, Shukla & Passey, 2021), (Bobe & Kober, 2020).

Conclusions

The analysis of the scientific literature on the research topic and the results of the questionnaire survey showed that Ukrainian higher education currently requires significant modernization to meet the state's needs for specialists in all sectors of the economy, which requires improving the curricula of HEIs, expanding their funding, updating the material and technical base while maximizing the experience of other countries, especially those that have achieved significant success in providing quality education, that will contribute not only to the entry of

Ukrainian higher education into the European scientific and educational space but also to the internationalization of the economic environment.

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