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## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT AS A KEY CRITERION FOR HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY

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*Abstract:* Purpose. The study focuses on revealing the significance of personal development as a criterion of higher education quality in order to improve higher education quality and individual self-realization and social development. Theoretical basis. The theoretical and conceptual basis of the study is a set of works in a number of interrelated thematic areas by A. Gehlen, M. Scheler, E. Spranger, V. Kremen, V. Luhovyi, Y. X. Ye, J. Chen, E. Bajramovic, B. Islamović, G. Saglamer, L. Bhandari, S. Kale, S. Cadena, I. Garcia-Serrano, T. Gualli, J. Ortiz, P. Pradeep, M. Taylor, K. Bintan, D. Annamali, M. Muftahu, A. Naji and others. Originality. The authors substantiate the priority of importance of personal development to improve higher education quality. The inconsistency of modern stratagems for the development of higher education and its quality improvement with the needs and requirements of personal development has been revealed, and the significance of personal development as a criterion of higher education quality for improving higher education quality and individual self-realization and social development has been determined. Conclusions. Personal development is imperative to improve higher education quality. The competency paradigm reflects needs for personal development only in part, so it needs to be either supplemented or replaced by an adequate criterion tool.

*Keywords:* higher education quality, personal development, quality criterion, competence.

### Introduction

In the last decade, a significant number of publications in the field of educational sciences have been devoted to quality education in general and

higher education quality in particular. For the most part, various thematic features and methodological priorities on education quality have been highlighted, but problematic aspects of cause and effect dependence and logic of conceptual ap-

proaches to education quality have not been given research attention.

This is not due to a lack of problematic gaps in education quality, and not even due to misunderstanding or ignoring the significance of these issues by research environment, but because subject operation by quality parameters of education by using scientometric tools is extremely complicated because quality and content are usually not amenable to measurement by only quantitative markers. Therefore, one can realistically count on a posteriori measurement of educational process outcomes by scientometric tools, which in this case, are subject to correct ranking according to the scale of measuring higher education quality.

A set of works in a number of interdependent thematic directions serves as the theoretical and conceptual basis of the study. First of all, it is a wide range of literature on educational sciences philosophy of education dedicated to various aspects and issues of personal development and higher education quality. In the chronological range, it goes back to Greek antiquity through neoclassicism (O. Bollnow, A. Gehlen, I. Kasavin, J. Ortega y Gasset, H. Plessner, M. Scheler, E. Spranger) and to the works of modern Ukrainian scientists (V. Andrushchenko, M. Boryshevskiy, L. Huberskiy, S. Kalashnikova, V. Kremen, A. Kryvokon, S. Krylov, V. Luhoviy, T. Lukina, M. Mykhalchenko).

The education quality issues are being actively studied by foreign scientists, namely: Y. X. Ye, J. Chen (2021) illustrate the definition of quality in higher education by using literature research on four different aspects, including quality learner, quality environment, quality content, and academic quality. B. Islamović and E. Vajramovic (2021) indicate possible improvements in order to achieve continuous quality enhancement and a path to excellence; G. Saglamer (2013) traces the development of the quality system and quality culture in Turkish higher education; L. Bhandari and S. Kale (2019) provide indicators to measure the quality of higher education in India; S. Cadena, I. Garcia-Serrano, T. Gualli, and J. Ortiz (2020) present aspects to be considered within a system of quality management in Ecuador higher education, in order to create an environment of quality culture.

The strategic flaws of the “market model” as a reference point for the modernization of educa-

tion and society are clearly outlined in the works of D. Acemoglu, D. Wootton, D. Landis, G. Lukianoff, and N. Chomsky. Studying key challenges of modernity, namely, that the information age does not guarantee the development and expansion of worldview, makes up an important theoretical starting point (Machlup, 1966), and globalism often turns an individual into “the man without properties” (R. Musil).

The issues of interaction between personal development and higher education are considered in the works by P. Pradeep (2011); K. Bintani (2020), M. Taylor (2000); D. Annamali and M. Muftahu (2022).

The thematic poly aspect additionally highlights the relevance of the issue concerning higher education quality, in particular connection of quality with personal development.

## Purpose

To reveal the significance of personal development as a criterion of higher education quality in order to improve higher education quality and individual self-realization and social development.

## Major Findings

The majority of scientists and practitioners studying education consider ongoing quality enhancement to be the main problem and, accordingly, to be a task for higher education modernization. In this context, developing consensus approaches to comprehend higher education quality, how it is determined and what it depends on, how it can be improved, and why this process progresses with significant difficulties becomes of key importance (Luhoviy & Talanova, 2020).

It should be noted that a correct understanding of higher education quality is significantly determined by ideas on the content of education, which includes a complex of competencies and learning outcomes, in particular knowledge, practical skills and psychological readiness for certain types and roles in professional activity. The content of higher education significantly affects personality development and determines professional effectiveness in future; therefore, the content of education affects the quality of higher

education outcomes. One of the problems regarding education quality is caused by inconsistency of education content with the present and future needs and timely updating of education content (Lukina, 2008, pp. 1017-1018). As A. Naji (2019) notes, the “overall aim of any education and training system is to prepare an individual for active integration into life by satisfying a certain number of cultural, socioeconomic, psychological, religious, etc. needs” (p. 1).

The content relief of education in general and higher education, in particular, remains a subject of debate. Not only individual researchers, analysts and experts, but educational paradigms as well interpret the essentiality of content elements of the educational system in different ways, and sometimes exactly the opposite. This state of affairs leads to the fact that “lack of consensus on the issue of the hierarchy of substantive priorities in the educational sphere according to the principle of symmetry almost a priori becomes an obstacle (or makes it impossible) to reach consensus on conceptual certainty in the issue of education quality. This position takes on obvious signs when we take into account that some researchers interpret education as, first and foremost, a management tool related to mechanisms and conditions of effective (optimal) functioning of higher education institutions; others suggest focusing on the quality of specialist training; the third – on quality of educational standards, curricula and textbooks for higher education institutions; the fourth – on problem of organizing educational process and quality of its scientific-methodical, material-technical, personnel, informational, etc. provision” (Samchuk, 2015, p. 5).

Higher education quality is closely related to fundamental tasks of the educational process. The list of these tasks and their structuring according to hierarchical principle is also subject to different interpretations in the expert-analytical environment. Such a circumstance cannot help but have a negative impact on the prospects of consensus regarding meaningful features and necessary prerequisites for higher education quality.

For example, Professor of Sociology at the Colorado State University-Pueblo T. McGettigan states that “in recent years, colleges and universities have encountered increasing pressure to operate like businesses”, and only the fittest businesses (for example, those that deliver the high-

est quality products at fair market value) will survive. At the same time, he continues, “while higher education can and must establish synergies with business in many ways, business and higher education are distinct pursuits. Business is a for-profit activity whereas higher education is a not”. Higher education must change to meet the needs of its 21<sup>st</sup>-century students, and it has undertaken a variety of initiatives to achieve that: flexible degree programmes to permit students with limited time and extensive non-academic responsibilities to progress toward college degrees at a pace that suits their lifestyles; the latest technologies can procure college degrees via online or virtual higher education opportunities (McGettigan, 2009).

Higher education in general, and high-quality higher education in particular and first of all, is not just a certain amount of knowledge and skills guaranteed to be acquired by everyone who wants it in case of compliance with a certain procedural and methodical sequence, it is peak to conquer which a seeker must possess a certain intellectual, self-organizing, moral and volitional level, and not all school graduates possess such educational options and virtues.

One more demonstrative aspect is worth drawing attention to despite the fact that in the absolute majority of cases, factors of globalization and information society are accompanied by comments about the importance of higher education and the need for permanent improvement of its quality, demonstrative facts about the most successful people on the planet contradict such stereotyped ideas, as a significant number of the most successful people made their fortunes without a college degree. In particular, most of them are in the IT industry. The youngest billionaire in the history of the planet, Mark Zuckerberg, attended Harvard University but never graduated. He dropped out after launching the original form of Facebook and seeing its success (The top 7 “undereducated” millionaires of the planet, 2011). As for such an iconic figure as Bill Gates, the most famous billionaire received his university diploma only 34 years after entering Harvard University. His fortune convincingly proves that money and a university degree are not as closely related as they might seem at first glance (The top 7 “undereducated” millionaires of the planet, 2011). Such facts indicate that focusing on one’s own self-development, and not only on a univer-

sity degree, is the key to professional success in conditions of globalization and information society.

Obviously, the common conceptual construct of “key competencies” also needs clarification. It is applied to define competencies that enable an individual to effectively participate in many social spheres and contribute to developing the quality of society and personal success, which can be applied to many spheres of life. Key competencies constitute a basic set of the most general concepts, which must be detailed in a complex of knowledge, abilities, skills, values, and relationships by educational fields and life spheres of an individual.

Each competence is a complex phenomenon, a set of several structural and functional components, which are mostly identified with skills – “a combination of knowledge and skills acquired throughout life. That is, components of skills are knowledge (a set of information from any field, acquired in the process of learning, research, etc.) and skill (the ability to do something properly, acquired on the basis of experience and knowledge). The analysis of youth skills of the 21<sup>st</sup> century made it possible to form a matrix of skills, carry out their clustering and identify four main categories of skills that are necessary for young people in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: learning skills that help adapt to a working environment and improve one’s knowledge, skills and competences; literacy skills that help distinguish facts, publish information, create technology, determine the reliability of sources and information; social skills – ability to successfully and effectively interact with specific people or different groups, achieving set goals; personal skills are human qualities that characterize a personality in a certain way” (Tilikina, 2020).

In the report “The Future of Jobs” published by the World Economic Forum, the Top 10 competencies which employers see as rising in prominence in the lead in 2020 were tracked. In particular, the ability to solve complex problems (Complex Problem Solving) stays at the top. The second most important competence is Critical Thinking, which is also among the key ones that will be in great demand within 10-15 years. There is a growing need for the ability to select and correctly rethink a large amount of information. Creativity moved from the tenth position in 2015 to the third in 2020. The fourth most

prominent competence is People Management. The fifth competence is Coordinating with Others. The sixth place was taken by Emotional Intelligence, which is newly emerged (*Critical thinking is the second most in-demand competency in 2020*, 2016).

It should be mentioned these competencies are in the greatest demand among employers (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006). The question arises: to what extent this hierarchy of competencies correlates with needs for personal development? Undoubtedly, hierarchies of competencies for personal development and for the labour market are essentially compatible, but they are not identical since the needs and potential of an individual are not exhausted by his actual or probable status in the labour market and in society.

In addition, society and employers can constantly update the list of top competencies, and personal development cannot review target guidelines so often because, in this case, two fundamental conditions for personal development will be violated – the principle of continuity and the principle of cultivation, as it takes some time to implement each of these principles in practice.

It should also be taken into account that this list of top competencies, which employers see as rising in prominence in the lead, is formed in accordance with the demands of the labour market, since in different functional and production spheres, the set of top competences may not have anything in common. Under these circumstances, published hierarchies of top competencies relevant to the labour market are not correct in some cases.

Another factor of unconvincing exemplarity of the hierarchies of competencies given by the World Economic Forum is related to significant defects of the current global financial and economic system. If the economy operates in conditions of stock market manipulation and corporate conspiracies, which with regularity every 8-12 years cause unprecedented damage to the global economy (Acemoglu & Robinson, 2013; Chomsky, 1999; Landes, 1999; Lukianoff & Haidt, 2019; Shapiro, 2020; Wootton, 2018) and principles of crisis management, revision of top competences are expected.

In the World Economic Forum list of top competencies in 2020, Active Listening and Quality Control completely disappeared, Emo-

tional Intelligence and Cognitive Flexibility newly emerged, and Creativity moved from the tenth position in 2015 to the third position in 2020. This is a significant revision of the hierarchy in five years, which indicates a certain uncertainty in the labour market of the world's leading economies. Therefore, personal development cannot orient exclusively on such lists of competencies.

The World Economic Forum 2020 also presented a list of top competencies that will be in great demand in 2025 (Whiting, 2020) in the following order:

1. Analytical thinking and innovation.
2. Active learning and learning strategies.
3. Complex problem-solving.
4. Critical thinking and analysis.
5. Creativity, originality and initiative.
6. Leadership and social influence.
7. Technology use, monitoring and control.
8. Technology design and programming.
9. Resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility.
10. Reasoning, problem-solving and ideation.

Having analyzed a list of top competencies, one can assume at least two observations: first, the ability to resilience, stress tolerance and flexibility is placed on a higher level than the ability to reasoning, problem-solving and ideation; secondly, the capacity for analytical thinking and innovation and ability to reasoning, problem-solving and ideation are at different poles of hierarchy, although ontologically and instrumentally they are very related and sometimes identical.

The fact that modernization of modern higher education is dominated by orientation towards the "market model" is indirectly evidenced by the fact that decision-making in the educational sphere regarding strategies for higher education development is primarily based on labour market needs and demands and not on fundamental developments in the field of personal development, the work of the classics of humanism and anthropology, conceptualism of human capital, because there, in addition to the economic component, considerable attention is paid to holistic interaction of many personal options, which for the labour market in its concrete-historical format are not of significant importance, and therefore are perceived as certain ballast.

One can agree with conceptual emphasis, according to which the transition from the paradigm of *Homo economicus*, based on primitive consumer choice, to the model of a creative per-

son – *Homo creativus* – "presupposes the creation of knowledge economy, innovation and science-intensive technologies. A regular feature of a new model of a creative person is creativity, the essential basis of which is an interaction of the following structural components: competence as a sum of knowledge and experience; ability to think creatively, flexibility and resourcefulness in solving problems; motivation as a complex process of formation of the subject's internal motivational forces under the influence of external stimuli and internal characteristics of consciousness. Today's categorical requirement is that society and state are called upon to create appropriate conditions and equal opportunities for self-realization of all and everyone by means of education" (Samchuk, 2015, p. 55).

What does it mean to be a sovereign individual in an environment of total dominance of convenient but harmful stereotypes? It is difficult not to agree with the statement that the universalism of an individual is not in the amount of knowledge that memory can hold, nor in the mass of information from various disciplinary fields, but in mastering the general system of orientation in the ocean of information, in the creation of rigid personal filters – clear methods of selecting valuable information, as well as in the formation of the ability to constantly replenish and complete one's personal knowledge system. The main thing is not to know but to know how to effectively find and apply knowledge (Machlup, 1966, pp. 370-371).

In general, "non-linear thinking is the semantic core of modern worldview. First and foremost, it presupposes refusal to think about everything that exists according to the logic of a certain predetermined cause and effect sequence" (Nesterenko, 1995, p. 322). On this path, one cannot do without the toolkit of critical thinking, comparative analysis and philosophical reflection able to build a correct model of worldview scaling to identify the significance of competing alternatives.

One of the modern megatrends is that globalism and postmodernism may not reveal the essential potential of an individual but, on the contrary, turn him into an obedient agent of external manipulations, into the man without features, without individual qualities perceived as something trivial. Instead, the fundamental vocation of each individual is the comprehensive develop-

ment of his abilities and implementation of his personal potential at the level of life practices. This is a prior sense of each individual's life, which is realized in the context of essential realities of society. The sense of society's existence basically coincides with such a target orientation because unrealized, unactualized individual potential significantly reduces the supra-individual social effect, narrows and sequesters development prospects, not only becomes an obstacle but also makes it impossible to achieve social optimum.

In Ukraine, attention has been focused on evaluating and ranking the quality of higher education outcomes according to a certain set of criteria indicators and not on factors, prerequisites and cause and effect relationships that underlie the quality of higher education, considering that these are, if not identical, then, at least, in very similar qualities. However, in the absolute majority of cases, modern educational realities do not correspond to the classical concept of a university with its clear mission and distinct priority in the form of maximum personal development of students in higher education (Ortega y Gasset, 2002).

As a target guide, the personal development of students is not among modern Ukrainian priorities of higher education in Ukraine; namely, the competence factor and competence paradigm are defined as those that fully reflect the level of personal development. But competence is not completely identical to personal development because ideas about it and norms related to it are formed not by an individual himself but by the external environment (stakeholders, social institutions and public consciousness in general), which approaches this aspect for pragmatic reasons of obtaining certain profit.

The competence paradigm associates the category of "competence" with readiness for professional and social activities and possession of key professional qualities that determine the effectiveness and productivity of activities, as well as ensure the achievement of certain educational and professional standards in a certain field.

In the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education", competence is defined as a dynamic combination of knowledge, abilities and practical skills, thinking patterns, professional, world-conceptualizing and civic qualities, and moral and ethical values that define an individual's ca-

pability to successfully engage in professional activity and further learning and is a result of learning at a particular level of higher education. According to Art. 1 of this Law, higher education is a set of systematized knowledge, abilities and practical skills, thinking patterns, professional, worldview and civic qualities, moral and ethical values, and other competencies acquired in a higher education institution (scientific institution) in the relevant field of knowledge within a particular qualification at the levels of higher education; and point 1 of Art. 47 reads that the educational process is intellectual, creative activity in the area of higher education and science that takes place at a higher education institution (research institution) through a system of scientific-methodical and pedagogical measures and is aimed at the transference, assimilation, multiplication and use of knowledge, skills and other competences of learners, as well as for the development of harmonious individuals (Law of Ukraine on Higher Education, 2014). Therefore, the Law gives instructions on personal development in higher education as an important characteristic of higher education, but the definition of the term "higher education quality" does not include the personal development of a learner as one of the quality criteria and is limited to compliance of learning outcomes with requirements of legislation and standards of higher education, professional and /or international standards, needs of stakeholders and society.

The needs of stakeholders and society regarding higher education outcomes are reflected in the Strategy for Development of Higher Education in Ukraine for 2022-2032, approved on February 23, 2022, on the eve of a full-scale war, coordinated with a number of national strategic documents 2019-2021, in particular with the Sustainable Development Goals of Ukraine for the period until 2030, the Human Development Strategy, the National Economic Strategy for the period until 2030, Priority areas and tasks (projects) of digital transformation for the period until 2023. The strategy defines the mission and vision of higher education and priorities for the development of the national higher education system. The purpose of higher education involves not only the professional but also the intellectual and cultural development of an individual. At the same time, the vision of higher education in Ukraine is focused, in particular, on

the formation of professional and scientific and educational potential of the country, and not of an individual, through the implementation of high-quality educational programs, research and social projects, so it is not about the personal development of a person as a result of high-quality higher education. The same approach is demonstrated by other mentioned strategic documents (*Strategy for the development of higher education of Ukraine for 2022-2032, 2022*).

Thus, in Ukraine, a trend towards greater presenting stakeholders and society's requirements as a whole as significant criteria for higher education quality in the context of social development is being tracked; personal development is declared as a strategic goal of higher education and educational process in higher education, rather than a criterion for measuring its quality. Therefore, strategic ways for improving higher education quality do not foresee a personal development of a student as a criterion of higher education quality, but individual self-realization as one of the results of higher education quality.

### Originality

The inconsistency of the modern stratagem for the development of higher education and its quality improvement with the needs and requirements of personal development has been revealed, and the significance of personal development as a criterion of higher education quality for improving higher education quality and individual self-realization and social development has been determined.

### Conclusion

Personal development is not just a theoretical construct reflecting ideals of humanism, it is a practical need for vital activity of each society striving to reach the top of functional efficiency and social harmony. Obstacles on the path of personal development or ignoring the needs of such goal-setting by social institutions and power-management vertical automatically mean a narrowing of the range of realized potential not only of an individual but also of society as a whole, as a holistic combination of individual potentials.

Modern stratagems for higher education advancement and its quality improvement do not meet the needs and requirements for personal development and do not recognize personal development as a significant criterion for higher education quality in order to improve higher education quality and individual self-realization and social development. Therefore, society's unwillingness to implement a policy for personal potential maximum realization leads to the leveling of the holistic principle of society's functioning, and instead, a simplified, reductionist version of society and state development is being implemented, which directs efforts primarily to meet the needs of the labour market.

Personal development is an important criterion of higher education quality as an integral element of the social system. Difficulties with awareness of this cause and effect dependence, with its consensus recognition and implementation at the level of social practices of various profiles, are due to at least two factors: first, the problematic of a correct and well-argued convincing definition of the level of personal development – in particular, by means of measurement, in most cases unsuitable for testing the essential status quo of personal development; secondly, the incoherence of perspectives of personal development and temporal goal-setting of higher education of modern format. On average, strategic development of higher education is designed for several years, and needs of personal development require the cultivation of certain priorities and their continuity over a much longer period of time.

The prerequisites and environment for personal development in higher education approaches to ensuring higher education quality, taking into account personal development as a quality criterion, measuring higher education outcomes in the context of personal development, synergistic processes in the development of professional competencies and personal development are important areas to be studied.

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