

## Higher Legal Education in Ukraine in the 21st Century: Current Situation and Development Issues

### Вища юридична освіта в Україні на початку XXI століття: стан та проблеми розвитку

Received: November 12, 2019

Accepted: January 9, 2020

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#### Abstract

Importance of the given topic is explained not only by international cooperation, globalization, informatization, changes of priorities in social, economic and educational policies, but also various transformations in higher legal education in the international context. The purpose of the given study is to examine the current condition of Ukrainian higher legal education and to analyze its statistical indicators, actual features and development issues. The following methods of scientific research were used in the present study: interpretative and comparative-historical analysis, methods of chronology, comparison, research and historical retrospection. As a result thereof, some peculiarities of Ukrainian higher legal education were determined. Firstly legal studies degree programs are offered by classic universities, legal higher education establishments and non-dedicated higher education establishments. Secondly there is an uneven regional distribution of higher education establishments and licensed number of future students in legal studies degree programs. Thirdly higher legal education has been commercialized. Moreover the legal studies degree programs are chosen most often by future students, although the majority of graduates is not employed in the obtained occupation. Furthermore the European

#### Анотація

Актуальність теми даного дослідження зумовлена процесами розширення міжнародної співпраці, глобалізації та інформатизації, зміною пріоритетів у соціально-економічній та освітній політиці, масштабністю та різноманітністю перетворень у галузі вищої юридичної освіти в інтернаціональному контексті. Мета даного дослідження полягає у вивченні сучасного стану вищої юридичної освіти України та аналізі не тільки її основних статистичних показників, але також актуальних особливостей та проблем розвитку. Для написання статті були використані наступні методи наукових досліджень та наукового пізнання, такі як – інтерпретаційний та порівняльно-історичний аналіз, методи хронології, порівняння, дослідження та історичної ретроспекції. У результаті цього дослідження були визначені деякі особливості української вищої юридичної освіти. По-перше, програми студій у вищій юридичній освіті пропонуються різними за формою закладами вищої освіти: класичними університетами, профільними юридичними закладами вищої освіти та

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and national approaches to the legal higher education are combined. Additionally learning standards in higher legal education are defined by state and self-governing professional establishments. Lastly, it can be concluded that not only a dynamic pattern analysis in higher legal education quality, but also anticipation and definition of development tendencies in higher legal education are affected by constant changes in the procedure of the unified proficiency admission test for the legal studies degree programs.

**Keywords:** development, higher education, higher education establishments, higher legal education, issues.

## Introduction

Nowadays, the higher legal education system should be characterized not only by theoretical and practical acquirements of legal professionals, but also by the diversity of legal specializations caused by needs of different public life's spheres in the contemporary world. It should be emphasized that prediction of development tendencies in higher legal education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is required by different factors, such as globalization, informatization, participation of Ukraine in the Bologna process with further integration into the European Higher Education Area, changes not only of priorities in educational policy, but also of the vocational process. Thus, the given circumstances necessitate research in the national trends, identification of affecting factors and their causes in Ukrainian higher legal education. That is why the purpose of the given article is to determine the current condition of Ukrainian higher legal education. In order to achieve it, the following tasks must be solved: to analyze the statistical indicators of Ukrainian higher legal education; to

непрофільними закладами вищої освіти. По-друге, спостерігається певна нерівномірність розподілу обсягів підготовки юридичних кадрів за регіонами та ліцензованої кількості майбутніх здобувачів вищої освіти у юридичних закладів вищої освіти. По-третє, відзначається комерціалізація у галузі вищої юридичної освіти. По-четверте, варто наголосити на високій популярності правничих спеціальностей серед майбутніх здобувачів вищої освіти попри низький рівень працевлаштування випускників юридичних закладів вищої освіти. По-п'яте, в українській вищій юридичній освіті поєднуються європейський та національний підходи щодо навчання та викладання. Пошосте, під час визначення стандартів вищої юридичної освіти поєднують свої зусилля державні та самоврядні професійні органи. Нарешті, можна зробити висновок, що постійні зміни формату та змісту єдиного фахового вступного випробування для юридичних спеціальностей у закладах вищої освіти негативно впливають на передбачення та визначення тенденцій розвитку у галузі вищої юридичної освіти, а також на динамічний структурний аналіз якості вітчизняної вищої юридичної освіти.

**Ключові слова:** розвиток, вища освіта, заклади вищої освіти, юридична вища освіта, проблеми.

identify its actual features and development problems; to examine dynamics of results in the unified proficiency admission test.

## Theoretical Framework

The conducted analysis of scientific research in quality of higher legal education indicates that the given topic is relevant not only in Ukraine, but also abroad. On the one hand, there is a discussion about the crisis in American higher legal education provoked by actions of law schools, such as high fixed costs, lack of innovations and false representation of graduates' employment (McEntee, Lynch & Tokaz, 2012). On the other hand, the current issues in British higher legal education according to the LETR report are affordability, variety, quality and high fees (*The final report of the details Legal Education and Training Review independent research team*, 2013). Moreover, the affordability of higher legal education is specially discussed, because

mostly only privileged social groups can afford it. Therefore, there is an appeal to support and to accept students from unprivileged social groups. However, this may provoke a quality deviation in higher legal education, which is unacceptable in the context of fierce competition and globalization (Lord Neuberger of Abbotsbury, 2013). Another important issue in British higher legal education sector is Brexit's influence on it. On the one hand, the given problem is discussed in the regional context of the UK. Gaymer & Potter (2013), Clear, Cahill & Clifford (2019) researched Brexit's influence on higher legal education in Wales, Flear & McSithigh (2019) in Northern Ireland and Da Lomba, Fletcher & Zahn (2019) in Scotland. On the other hand, Guth & Hervey (2018) studied Brexit's influence on the teaching EU law in the UK and the internationalization of British higher legal education.

Corresponding issues of Ukrainian higher legal education are analyzed by Venedyktov (2004), Halionkina (2016), Humeniuk (2018), Opryshko (2013), Tatsii (2009). Moreover, there are some important studies dedicated to the given problem, which were organized by state and international establishments. Firstly, The Expert Group on Legal Education of the Directorate for Human Rights, Access to Justice and Legal Awareness of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine conducted a study in order to identify employers' requirements for knowledge, skills and competences of law graduates' from law faculties and higher education establishments (Ministry of Justice of Ukraine 2018). Secondly, the OSCE Project Coordinator in Ukraine in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and international civil organization "Uenet" realized a project under the title "Improving Legal and Human Rights Education" in order to research the Ukrainian higher legal education system, to estimate the quality of graduates' obtained competences, based on the results of standard evaluation, and the quality of services provided by higher education establishments. The results of the

given project are described by Mudruk (2018; 2019).

Nevertheless, any research in dynamics development of higher legal education based on the main statistical indicators have been conducted recently and described in scientific literature.

## Materials and Methods

The methods of interpretative analysis, chronology, comparison, research, historical retrospection, comparative-historical analysis were used in the present study. It should be noted that the interpretative-analytical method was used to explore the scientific sources and to clarify the status of the researched problem. The chronological method enabled to analyse the development of higher legal education in time sequence. The usage of the comparative method made it possible to identify development features of Ukrainian higher legal education. The development tendencies of Ukrainian higher legal education were determined using the method of comparative-historical analysis. The study uses data from open sources of the State Statistics Service, the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Center for Educational Quality Assessment, the results of research "Condition of Ukrainian Higher Legal Education" (Mudruk, 2018), "Standardized Educational Measurements in Higher Legal Education in 2018" (Mudruk, 2019).

## Results and Discussion

*Dynamic pattern analysis of statistical indicators in Ukrainian higher legal education.*

Table 1 illustrates the dynamic pattern of statistical indicators in Ukrainian higher legal education, such as number of not only students, divided into groups according to the cycle of studies and presence of tuition fees, but also of higher education establishments presented by state and private ones.

**Table 1.** Changes in Number of Students and Legal Higher Education Establishments

	Accepted			Studying total	Number of higher education establishments providing legal degree programs	
	total	fee sources state budget	local budgets		total	private
Bachelor students (first level undergraduate students)						
2010	30920	10311	31	127582	111	38

2011	22984	8855	30	128478	106	38
2012	26043	9636	42	122107	109	37
2013	27717	9267	35	113944	108	35
2014	22880	8299	35	93469	99	33
2015	18673	6450	35	86927	103	32
2016*	132	-	-	61827	101	33
**	18308	6653	34	20779	102	32
2017*	-	-	-	38968	101	32
**	17867	5457	36	39269	118	38
2018	20692	3290	-	64783	1 16	77
Specialist students (second level undergraduate students)						
2010	21790	5919	27	30564	93	30
2011	18282	4153	36	18804	87	29
2012	16879	2802	45	20753	90	30
2013	15801	2189	51	19901	89	30
2014	11666	1802	16	15098	80	26
2015	10555	1131	15	12856	81	25
2016*	-	-	-	1938	20	7
**	11666	1237	15	11671	75	23
2017*	-	-	-	350	10	5
**	-	-	-	2199	20	5
2018	-	-	-	1635	-	-
Master students						
2010	8533	3241	5	11368	70	21
2011	8963	3600	2	12733	68	22
2012	10120	3818	1	13991	74	24
2013	10580	3360	-	14877	76	23
2014	9803	3572	5	13718	72	23
2015	9832	3116	20	13520	85	25
2016*	-	-	-	8957	80	26
**	12544	4358	20	13128	92	29
2017*	-	-	-	220	11	3
**	12264	3683	37	24591	99	31
2018	9925	2 342	-	19195	78	42

\* – according to the list of specialties in 2010.

\*\* – according to the list of specialties in 2015.

*Compiled by authors using open sourced data (Statystychnyi biuletyn), (Statystychnyi zbirnyk, 2017), (Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, 2019).*

Table 1 shows that number of students at all higher education levels (bachelors and masters) has been gradually decreasing since 2012. Firstly, there were almost two times less bachelor students in 2017 compared to 2012, i.e. 57324 persons. However, for the first time since 2012 the number of enrolled bachelor students of legal programs has increased in 2018 by 15.81% (2825 persons) compared to the previous year. At the same time, there is a significant increase within higher education establishments providing legal studies bachelor's degree programs, mostly because of the number of the private ones. Thus, there were 149 higher education establishments providing legal studies bachelor's degree programs in 2010, but in 2018 there were already 193 of them: including 116 state establishments and 77 private ones. Moreover, the number of tuition-freed students, whose studies were

funded by state, has been decreasing constantly since 2010 from 10311 to 3290 people (Ministry of Justice, 2019), or, in other words, 3,1 times less. Secondly, in the period from 2010 to 2018 there was a decrease, despite all the fluctuations, in the total amount of master students of legal studies degree programs, including enrolled master students and tuition-freed master students, whose studies were funded by state. The interesting fact is that in this period the number of higher education establishments providing legal master's degree was gradually increasing from 91 establishments in 2010 to 120 in 2017.

Considering the results of dynamic pattern analysis dedicated to the statistical indicators of Ukrainian higher legal education from 2010 to 2018, shown in Table 1, the following can be concluded: there is a tendency to decrease in the total amount of students in bachelor's and master's degree legal programs, despite the significant increase in the number of state and private higher education institutions

providing the same degree program of studies. It should be noted that the given feature is not unusual in the Ukrainian context, thus the number of students in higher education establishments in Ukraine has been decreasing constantly. The given phenomena can be explained in various ways. On the one hand, Raskola & Annienkova (2017) suggest that demographic crisis, insufficient financing in higher educational sector and increasing number of students studying abroad could cause this problem. On the other hand, Antoniuk (2019) believes that poor financial support violates economic basis for higher education establishments' operation. For its part, the government faces challenges in the whole education system and pays attention mostly to the secondary education sector by strongly financing it, therefore the higher educational sector is still at a severe disadvantage.

The next important fact is that the number of applicants, who were registered to the bachelor's in legal studies degree programs, decreased. According to the data published by Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, there were 74055 of them in 2017, whereas in 2018 their number was 72965 and finally it amounted 65077 in 2019, i.e. 12.12% less than in 2017. However, it should be noted that, despite this tendency, the legal studies degree programs are chosen most often by future students, although the majority of graduates are not employed in the obtained occupation, profession or vocation. According to official data presented by the State Employment Service, there is the highest level of unemployment among graduates with degrees in legal or economic studies (Mudruk, 2019). According to the results of a statistical survey "Condition of Ukrainian Higher Legal Education" conducted by the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, "data analysis presented by the State Employment Service and review of job-searching specialized resources enable a conclusion that the ratio between job openings and persons looking for jobs is approximately 1 to 7" (2018; 5).

*The development of higher legal education: urgent features and issues.*

The Ukrainian higher legal education, as world higher education, has been influenced significantly by globalization that causes mass character and the commodification of it. Moreover, it indicates that the global education market was shaped. On the one hand, the higher legal education is more affordable than it used to be, therefore different social groups have an

opportunity to obtain degree in legal studies. On the other hand, the government has additional financial costs, though the graduates can be described as less qualified. The higher legal education in Ukraine nowadays does not belong only to elite anymore. In fact, it was devalued, because it had failed in fulfilling the basic purpose, i.e. to reproduce the intellectual elite of society in its classical version (Halonkin, 2016; 73).

First and foremost, it should be noted that commercialization is one of the most important features of Ukrainian higher legal education. Zhylynska & Voloshina (2013) point out some reasons of commercialization in higher education: firstly, the character of higher education was shifted from privileges to the mass one; secondly, with increasing demand for educational services, increases the number of the higher education establishments that have entrepreneurial character and whose budgets funded by private resources are bigger than the state ones. Moreover, the economic context of higher legal education is analyzed by Mudruk (2019). Thus, poor financial support for state higher education establishments causes an exaggerated usage of tuition fee obligated studies, whereas most common are the legal studies, in order to support another ones. Thereby, it decreases the admission requirements, the quality of education and increases too much the number of legal personnel. The second feature of Ukrainian higher legal education is described by Komarov (2009): there is an uneven regional distribution of higher education establishments and licensed number of future students in legal studies degree programs: North (39%), East (27%), South (11%), Centre (9%).

Another peculiarity of Ukrainian higher legal education is that the legal studies degree programs are offered by different types of higher education establishments, such as classic universities, law higher education establishments, non-dedicated higher education establishments (Opryshko, 2013, 10-12). It should be noted that such practice is not common in European countries. According to Opryshko (2013), this kind of practice is efficient, because some branches of economy and social sphere need legal personnel with field-specific qualifications. Only unspecialized higher education establishments, that offer other studies degree programs, can meet this demand. Vorontsova (2015) supports the described opinion and points out some factors that cast doubts on the efficiency of non-dedicated legal

studies degree programs, more specifically, on diversification of economic activities, coming into existence of new legal activities, increase of legislative base, etc. Moreover, students of non-dedicated legal studies degree programs could hardly become proficient in each legal field, thus the obtained competences of future legal professionals provoke sometimes doubt. Summing up the given features lead to constriction of legal studies degree programs.

Humeniuk (2018) suggests that further changes in Ukrainian higher legal education are as follows: combination of European and national approaches to the legal studies degree programs; learning standards in higher legal education which will be defined by state and self-governing professional establishments; coming into existence of unified-standards of higher legal education; humanization, assertion of moral and professional competencies of legal professionals; prioritizing the practical component in studies and further enhancing the

practical training of legal professionals. In our opinion, the last three features listed by Humeniuk (2018) are rather tasks for innovation in Ukrainian higher legal education system. It should also be noted that higher educational learning standards in the field 081 “Law” for undergraduate academic degree (bachelor) programs have already been approved and implemented in academic year 2018-2019 (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2018b). However, there are still neither higher educational learning standards for graduate academic degree programs, nor professional standards.

*Dynamic pattern analysis of results of the unified proficiency admission test.*

Tables 2, 3 and 4 present data dedicated to participants and the results of the unified proficiency admission test.

**Table 2.** General information on the results of the unified proficiency admission test

	2017		2018		2019	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Checked in	16892		18186		16277	
Passed the exam	16081	95,20	15834	87,07	14259	87,60
Did not come	811	4,80	2352	12,93	2018	12,40
Passed the module “Law Theory”	14228	88,48	14009	88,49	10117	70,95
Did not pass the module “Law Theory”	1853	11,52	1822	11,51	4142	29,05
Passed the module “General Learning Legal Competences”	14820	92,29	14293	90,27	11686	81,96
Did not pass the module “General Learning Legal Competences”	1238	7,71	1541	9,73	2573	18,04

*Compiled by authors using open sourced data of the Ukrainian Center for Educational Quality Assessment (Mudruk, 2018; 2019).*

Table 2 shows that 16,892 persons were registered for the unified proficiency admission test in 2017, but in 2018 there were 18,186 of them, i.e. 7.66% more than in 2017. Nevertheless, in 2019 less people were registered than in previous years, there were only 16,277 of them. Failure to registered participants was 4.8% in 2017. The next year, however, this number was 2.5 as many as compared to 2017, i.e. 12.93%. Moreover, the percentage of absent participants in the unified proficiency admission test hardly changed in 2019. Let us put the light on the reasons of the given peculiarity. The second important thing is the numbers of participants who passed and failed the unified proficiency admission test. Thus, there were no changes between 2017 and 2018. In other words,

the percentage of the passed tests was almost the same, but in 2019 it was 2.5 as many by the meaning of 29.05%. Furthermore, there is another tendency in reference to results in the module “General Learning Legal Competences”, therefore the number of failed participants had been increasing constantly and had reached 18.04% in 2019. Considering the negative changes in results of the unified proficiency admission test’s results, it could be supposed, that quality education in legal studies bachelor’s degree programs was decreased.

Mudruk (2019) explains, why level of professionalism and skills of enrolled students for legal studies master’s degree programs has been decreasing since 2017 as follows: firstly, the demographic changes and declines in

admission standards of higher education establishments; secondly, the value of the results in the module “Law Theory” for the whole grade in the unified proficiency admission test was decreased. It could be explained by the increase of legal subjects and, at the same time, no changes in calculation of the whole grade in the unified proficiency admission test, by the decrease of the minimal required point score in the module “Law Theory” (from 31,14% in 2014 to 30% in 2018) and by the increase of the minimal required point scores in the modules “Foreign language” and “General Learning Legal Competence”.

It should be noted that one of the reasons, why level of professionalism and skills of enrolled students for legal studies master’s degree programs has been decreasing, is the number of Ukrainians studying abroad, which was presented by Stadnyi (2019). There was a significant increase in the number of Ukrainians at foreign universities in 2014. The number of Ukrainian students abroad in the 2013-14 academic year was 44,665 persons, in the 2014-15 academic year there were 59,612 of them, i.e. 14,947 persons more or 33.46%. The important thing is that the most well-prepared school graduates go to study abroad.

**Table 3.** Results of the unified proficiency admission test in the module “Law Theory”

Year	% of participants		
	below 150	150-180	more than 180
2017	74.74	23.17	2.09
2018	71.45	25.44	3.11
2019	77.42	20.56	2.02

*Compiled by authors using open sourced data by the Ukrainian Center for Educational Quality Assessment (<http://testportal.gov.ua/stat/>).*

The results in the module “Law Theory” of the unified proficiency admission test presented in the Table 3 do not allow to make a conclusion about positive or negative dynamics. There are some reasons of it. First and foremost, there is not enough statistically important data in the given question. Secondly, there are fluctuations in the percentage of participants who obtained less than 150 points, from 150 to 180 points, and more than 180 points in the module “Law Theory” of the unified proficiency admission test. Thirdly, the results are not comparable because of the changes in the format (100 tasks vs. 70 tasks), content (8 legal subjects vs. 6 legal subjects) and a minimal required point score (no restriction to 35 points of 100). However, a very high percentage of participants who obtained less than 150 points (77,42 % in 2019) indicates a low level of professionalism and skills of enrolled students for legal studies master’s degree programs.

The low-quality level of legal higher education is also proven by the results of UDAID’s project “Fair Justice” (Koziakov et al., 2015). In this study the main disadvantages of the current legal higher education system were identified. Firstly, graduates can hardly understand the professional values. Secondly, the former academic students can not use knowledge in the practice. Thirdly,

the graduates have not enough practical skills. All in all, the general assessment of Ukrainian higher legal education quality by employers and experts in Ukraine was “satisfactory”, whereas the theory was assessed as “good” and practical skills were assessed as “bad”. The given results correlate with the results of a survey conducted by The Expert Group on Legal Education of the Directorate for Human Rights, Access to Justice and Legal Awareness of the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine (Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, 2018). The assessment level of higher legal education quality remains rather low. About 40% of legal firms assess the level of professionalism and skills of graduates as “unsatisfactory”, i.e. 2 points from 5, where 5 is the highest grade. Another 25% of surveyed employers assess the level of professionalism and skills of graduates as “satisfactory”, i.e. 3 points from 5, where 5 is the highest grade. Furthermore, such notes as “excellent” or “good” were given only by 6,9% and 9,3% of surveyed employers. Another interesting fact is that legal firms do not want to employ the graduates from non-dedicated higher education establishments (for instance agricultural or cultural), private higher education establishments and departmental higher education establishments.

**Table 4.** TOP-10 higher education establishments according to the results of the unified proficiency admission test for legal studies master's degree programs

No.	2017		2018	
	Higher Education Establishment	Rating	Higher Education Establishment	Rating
1	Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University	461,8	Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University	485,1
2	Ivan Franko Lviv National University	445,3	Ivan Franko Lviv National University	460,3
3	Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University	435,6	Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University	450,2
4	Ostroh Academy	427,7	Oles Honchar Dnipro National University	439,6
5	Poltava Law Institute of Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University	421,7	V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University	437,5
6	The National Technical University of Ukraine "Ihor Sikorskyi Kyiv Polytechnic Institute"	421,5	Vadym Hetman Kyiv National Economic University	435,8
7	Ltd "Academy of Advocacy"	420,8	Poltava Law Institute of Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University	432,2
8	Khmelnytskyi Management and Law University	418,9	The National Technical University of Ukraine "Ihor Sikorskyi Kyiv Polytechnic Institute"	430,7
9	Vadym Hetman Kyiv National Economic University	416,5	National University "Odesa Law Academy"	429,2
10	National University "Odesa Law Academy"	415,6	Khmelnytskyi Management and Law University	425,7

*Compiled by authors using open sourced data by Mudruk (2018, 2019).*

As can be seen from Table 4 the list of the TOP-10 higher legal education establishments according to the results of the unified proficiency admission test for legal studies master's degree programs hardly changed from 2017 to 2018. Therefore, 4 classical higher education universities, 4 dedicated higher education establishments and 2 non-dedicated higher education establishments can be pointed out. It should be noted that graduates from 6 higher education establishments represented in the given list have been employed more often by legal firms (Ministry of Justice of Ukraine, 2018, 11). The given fact leads to the conclusion that these higher education establishments provide high quality higher legal education.

### Conclusions

Dynamic pattern analysis of statistical indicators in Ukrainian higher legal education system illustrates the following features: the number of enrolled students for legal studies degree programs is decreasing constantly; the number of higher education establishments providing legal studies degree programs is increasing without any specific reason; the quality of professionalism and quality skills obtained by graduates of legal studies degree programs is decreasing. The described peculiarities point to the critical times in the development of Ukrainian

higher legal education system. There are the following peculiarities of Ukrainian higher legal education: legal studies degree programs are offered by classic universities, legal higher education establishments and non-dedicated higher education establishments; uneven regional distribution of higher education establishments and licensed number of future students in legal studies degree programs; commercialization of higher legal education; the legal studies degree programs are chosen most often by future students, although the majority of graduates is not employed in the obtained occupation, profession or vocation; combination of European and national approaches to the legal higher education; learning standards in higher legal education are defined by state and self-governing professional establishments. The given features, except the last two, affect admission requirements to enrolling students and therefore the quality of higher legal education.

Not only a dynamic pattern analysis in higher legal education quality, but also anticipation and definition of development tendencies in higher legal education, i.e. the main functions of education management, are affected by constant changes in the procedure of the unified proficiency admission test for the legal studies degree programs (type and content changes of tasks in the module "Law Theory", increase of



minimal required point score, etc.). That is why the further research could be dedicated to the issue of creation and implementation of not only new assessment methodology, but also efficiency criteria in internal system for education quality providing in higher education establishments.

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