

Regional Context of Implementation the Institutional Evaluation Programme of European University Association

O. V. Datsko

Sumy state pedagogical university named after A.S. Makarenko, Sumy, Ukraine

*Corresponding author. E-mail: ydatskosumy@mail.ru

Paper received 18.07.15; Accepted for publication 28.07.15.

Abstract. This article grounds the importance of studying the experience of European University Association (EUA) in the process of ensuring the quality of higher education. Natural connection between the modernization of higher education and internal quality culture evaluation of higher education institutions is explained. The peculiarities of implementation the Institutional evaluation programme (IEP) of European University Association on the basis of comparative characteristics of the results of quality evaluation of the University El Bosque (Colombia) and Ternopil national economic University (Ukraine) in the context of such aspects as governance and management, teaching, research, internationalization, funding and quality culture are described.

Keywords: *Institutional Evaluation Programme, European University Association, strategic management, internal quality culture, internationalisation, quality assurance*

Introduction. The process of Ukraine's integration into European educational space requires from our country the modernization of higher education according to the European standards. High priority direction of higher education modernisation is its quality assurance. Under conditions of increasing requirements to higher education quality the question of education quality evaluation becomes extremely important. Therefore, it is necessary to study the experience of European University Association (EUA) in the process of ensuring the quality of higher education.

One of the long-term projects of European University Association is the Institutional Evaluation Programme (IEP), which aims at strengthening the universities by means of their development. This program has been existing for 20 years (1994–2014), which allows the EUA to carry out 308 institutional evaluations in 45 countries during this period.

The issues of higher education quality have been investigated by such scientists as: M. Avsheniuk, V. Bilokopytov, M. Boichenko, N. Lavrychenko, O. Lokshyna, A. Sbruieva, A. Economou, J.K. Verhoeven, L. Harvey, S. Tepper and others.

One of the examples of participation in the Institutional Evaluation Programme in Ukraine is Ternopil national economic University (TNEU). However, to clear up the specificity of the programme, we consider it appropriate to highlight the experience of the University El Bosque (Colombia).

The purpose of this article is on the basis of comparative characteristics of the results of quality evaluation of the University El Bosque and Ternopil national economic University to find out the specifics of implementation the Institutional Evaluation Programme of European University Association.

Results and their discussion. Thanks to IEP European University Association provides the universities with the focused on improvement evaluation, which may become an instrument of their strategic development. Performing evaluation in different countries, EUA is trying to disseminate best practices, to ground the concept of strategic thinking that will help the universities-members of the organization to develop in the direction of creating European quality culture.

The universities have the possibility to get from independent higher education specialists of different countries (the evaluation team) the advice on their strengths and weaknesses, threats and opportunities. IEP envisages the improvement of such aspects of higher education institu-

tions activity as governance and management, strategic management, funding, research, internationalisation, teaching and learning, quality culture, facilities and resources, the recruitment of students, service to society [1].

In this article, within the framework of the above-mentioned aspects, we offer you to consider the recommendations from the qualified evaluation team of the Institutional Evaluation Programme of EUA for the improvement of the activities of above-mentioned universities. The evaluations took place in 2009 (TNEU) and 2010 (El Bosque).

We propose to consider the aspect of *governance and management*. In this aspect the common phenomenon that drew the attention of team members in both universities was the organisational structure.

The University El Bosque got the advice to define exactly the roles, responsibilities and relationship of all actors and units within the University structure. Also the team recommends to involve the representatives from stakeholders outside to certain decision-making processes and thus to strengthen the relationship with the University environment. In the evaluation report of the University it is noted that with the change of leadership and through the process of self-evaluation of the University, students have a more interactive relationship with the rector and deans. However, whereas the students traditionally cooperate with the staff at programme level there is no any formal students structure. It would be good for the students to be organized and to be able to influence the development of the University. That's why the team members advise the University to consider the possibilities of institutionalising the student participation in statutes [6].

Regarding the governance and management, the time during which the leadership has to carry out its plans and the existence of the organizational structures must be productive and effective. At El Bosque University the rector's term is 2 years. The term of Directive Board is a year. Despite the fact that it is a tradition of the University, the team recommends that these limits should be expanded to encourage the Rector and Directive Board to fulfill the mission they are entrusted.

As to TNEU the question is whether the existing cumbersome organizational structure within the specialized institution with a focus on particular and precise fields of activity, with 11 faculties, 68 departments, several branch campuses and other distance units is rational. Some faculties, for example, the faculty of law and the faculty of computer and information technologies have characteristic profiles, while others seem to do the similar things.

Therefore, the team recommends the University to think over its structure and to decide, if it is the most effective system for a modern higher educational institution [7].

Both Universities are also recommended to have clear priorities of the development. Only a distinct view of the future that takes into account regional, national and global challenges will form a solid basis for a qualified development.

Concerning TNEU the team emphasizes the problem of limited autonomy at all levels. First of all the team saw the higher education system of Ukraine too centralized, where the Minister of education and science has a significant influence on the whole system of higher education. The educational institutions have little control over the funding. The curriculum and the composition of the governance bodies are also highly controlled by the state. The Academic Board greatly influences different questions from strategic solutions to individual financial assistance and scholarships. There also exists a top-heavy distribution of power between the faculties and departments.

But it should be noted that the University is undergoing a transitional phase in several aspects. The imprint of the Bologna process has led to the radical changes in the educational process – from the teaching-oriented education to the student-centered and learning-oriented one. The University is in a difficult situation: on the one hand the national control and the competing international labour markets on the other. The positive thing is that in such a difficult period the University has ambitious plans to change and move forward.

Let's look at the next aspect that needs to be improved in both universities. This is *teaching*.

It should be noted that at the University El Bosque there is a high degree of satisfaction with education among both students and employers. The academics staff is very well aware of the need to change the paradigm of teaching: from the teacher-centred teaching to the student-centred learning. The team encourages the University to continue the work in this direction and to increase autonomous students work into study programmes. But this requires specially trained teaching staff so that it could make full use of new teaching methods. For the successful implementation of the programmes they should be well explored, taking into account the needs of students and labour market. To ensure the relevance of the programme at the labor market it is necessary to have the dialogue with the parties from outside, especially with employers [6].

Ternopil national economic university also has a strong national reputation. The University does a lot of good work for the improvement of teaching. To attract the students it suggests 2 big advantages: it has improved the quality of the education and it has a large social protection programme which aims at fostering students' well-being. But the team notes that the University does not take full advantage of these improvements. None of the students interviewed by the team heard about the programme of social protection at the time of application. All of them mentioned that they had decided to enter this University because of its reputation and the recommendations of former and current students.

TNEU is one of the first universities in Ukraine that introduces changes according to the Bologna process. As well as in El Bosque it concerns the transition from education focused on teaching to student-centered education and the transition from classroom lectures to individual study. But, if such transition process is implemented top-down it

may cause uncertainty and confusion among students and staff and lead to tension and resistance to change. Therefore a systematic pedagogical development in accordance with the Bologna process and support of staff in implementing the changes is emphasized. University students claim that it is not difficult for them to raise any important question about the curriculum or the quality of teaching. There is also a procedure to file a formal complaint with the Dean regarding the quality of teaching or if their rights, in their opinion, are violated. However the experts did not notice the existence at the University a systematic anonymous evaluation of teaching by students. The University has created a student feedback questionnaire, but this is not enough to evaluate different teaching practices, methods and education level. If the University does not still have systematic information about the quality of education, it is too early to talk about the feedback cycle of quality improvement. In addition the IEP team stresses that curriculum at TNEU is largely determined by the government that leaves little space for innovation in it. But, there is a step forward in the direction of individualized study. However the norm is a great number of compulsory lectures with compulsory class attendance. The University has also made some steps towards introducing the elements of e-learning in its curriculum. Despite a difficult economic situation TNEU offers electronic resources which are extremely important for students. Especially it can be useful for a large number of part-time students (over 18 000). But it is necessary to admit that study with the help of the Internet in the institution is still on the long way of its development. The introduction of E-learning is important but a special pedagogical training is also necessary in this process. The staff needs specific pedagogical training to support the implementing of student-centred learning and e-learning [7].

For the University El Bosque a very important task is to pay attention to the continuous training of staff at the doctoral level. Of course it's not possible to do all things simultaneously. This case requires great investment and good planning. All staff cannot aim at a higher degree at the same time, but it is possible to define concrete targets for the number of PhDs in a certain period of time according to the priorities defined for research. To reach these targets the team members recommend to offer internal incentives and to use collaborative processes with other universities such as jointly offered programmes.

Another aspect that was studied during the independent evaluation at the above-mentioned universities was *the research*.

As for the University El Bosque it was already noted previously that the first recommendation is to set a goal to increase the number of lecturers with PhD degree, as well as to define the areas of research activity in which the University would like to develop, to send the staff to other universities for the exchange of experience and to have joint projects with these universities. It must be emphasized that the University cannot be highly developed in all fields of science. It is therefore necessary to determine the priorities of development and to invest in these areas. New teachers must be recruited not only to meet the needs of teaching, but also to fill in the gaps in certain fields of research. Experts also recommend the University to diversify sources of income and to contact with external partners [6].

Let's consider the recommendations in this area for Ternopil national economic university. The team notes that research activity of the University is somewhat modest for the institution that has big ambitions and which is to great

extent specialized. Most of the achievements consist of publications in Ukrainian language journals or TNEU-edited English-language journals with limited international audience. The amount of research is also different at different departments, although the strategy of the University insists on the responsibility of all staff for the research work. It should be also noted that the University took a few steps towards the development of applied research adapted to the needs of the region and its enterprises. This is an important step but it's not the area where the international recognition is possible. It is necessary to develop towards the international networks, European and international projects, publications in world-class journals, partnership with research-intensive universities around the world, the staff which is fluent in English and can present the work and material in English. At the same time the development of research and the implementation of its results are largely hampered by the lack of finance. International research of high quality requires, in fact, more time and resources. Although the research is one of the priority directions of the University development the institution hasn't still got a clear plan of its research strategy. Notable is the fact that the University research is entirely an individual thing, based on individual interest and is not joined by the entire University. Although the scientific output is taken into account when renewing employment contracts with the staff at issue is the degree of stimulation of this activity and the reflection of it in the terms of payment and work. Also as at the University El Bosque the team draws attention to a relatively small number of professors who should play a relative role in providing research leadership. So it is extremely important for the University to determine the main journals in which to publish the results of research of the University; to seek means of obtaining large grants for individuals and teams; to organize and participate in major conferences relating to their research topics and to ask the opinion of external specialists in the field of their research.

Regarding the aspect of *internationalisation* both Universities received similar recommendations.

The IEP evaluation team stresses that in a globalised world the University cannot exist in a vacuum, it necessarily becomes a part of the international academic community. Internationalisation is the key to survival. Therefore universities need to make efforts in this direction. It must be emphasized that the policy of internationalisation is a comprehensive policy that demonstrates the development in such areas as cooperation with strategically selected institutions (it's better than work with a greater number of universities), membership in international networks (in accordance to the priorities of the University) as well as seeking opportunities of cooperation with various organisations in the field of higher education. Also both universities received recommendations to make the question of language competence of the staff and students the part of their strategy.

The aspect of internationalisation is one of the biggest challenges for both universities. The development of the University El Bosque in this direction is so far limited by a few exchanges of students and teachers as well as participation in national and some international conferences and signing the cooperation agreements with several institutions. The IEP evaluation team advises the University to use internationalisation for the development of research activities through the cooperation in this area and the use of all opportunities to internationalize the curriculum. The evaluation team members also stress that the development of internationalisation is a matter that requires fund rais-

ing. There are different funding programmes in this area, but this takes time and effort to examine them in accordance with the needs and mission of the University.

The international activities of TNEU are also fairly limited. But despite this the University has a number of projects on international education and cooperation in the field of research with a number of international institutions. The University in this period, as was noted above the year 2009, has 34 international collaboration agreements with the universities in 18 countries. The greatest number of agreements, 11 of 34, was signed with the universities of Poland. International cooperation is mainly focused on mutual mobility of the staff and students, cooperation in developing new study programmes, textbooks and teaching materials, exchange of experience in the field of research and participation in collaborative research projects. To facilitate the process of internationalisation the University gets some of the characteristic features of the Bologna process, such as, for example, more individual study processes. Although, according to the evaluation team, the introduction of the Bologna process in all its comprehensive scope will require changes in national regulations. The University is trying to become a real international University with the international outlook in its education and research. But its desire is hampered, as at the University El Bosque, by the lack of funding and insufficient knowledge of the foreign language. These two aspects prevent from work in a network with international partners. The lack of finance is a barrier for the staff members of TNEU to participate in international conferences which are extremely important for creation the international networks. Also the University does not have enough money to invite international guests who could facilitate new perspectives in teaching and research. [7]

Within the framework of the Institutional Evaluation Programme of EUA very important aspect is *the quality culture and quality assurance*.

Within this context the evaluation team advises the University El Bosque to use the recommendations determined in the project of EUA Quality Culture and European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The team members emphasize that the first precondition of quality culture introducing is the example of the leadership. In the team's opinion the leadership of the University El Bosque is devoted to the idea of the development of the genuine quality culture. But it is necessary to stress that the concept of quality culture requires a space for bottom-up initiatives in addition to top-down approach. The team found that this is the aspect in which the University EL Bosque invests a lot and that is one of the strengths of this University. But formal assurance processes must be organised so as to monitor and enhance the achievement of University strategic goals. A follow-up to all quality assurance processes is of great importance. The information collected through the questionnaires of the students, information system on quality (SIQ) or other means should be also used for the further improvement too. The evaluation team lays stress on the importance of internal communication and reminds that very often in some universities the follow-up and implementation are forgotten. Also the University should have the appropriate structure to support the quality assurance processes. The team members found that the University El Bosque has most of the necessary traits for a well-functioning quality culture and is quite strong in many of them. There is no doubt that quality culture of the academic community of the University actually is a real

important achievement fully acquired by the majority of its members. Moreover in recent years the University has improved mentioned above information system on quality (SIQ), which includes an impressive amount of information on the priorities of the institution, its resources, activities etc. First institutional leadership gathered this information in one place and it can be used as a base for decision-making. But still the team thinks that quality assurance system is not fully developed yet. In this context «quality assurance system» should be understood as an organism, consisting of the quality assurance organisation, the division of responsibilities, procedures, processes and resources at the University, the purpose of which is the institutional activities quality assurance and their continuous enhancement.

With respect to Ternopil national economic university the evaluation team notes that it is in a difficult transition period of its development. Higher education of Ukraine continually changes in the direction of the Bologna process. But the University has a limited financial context. It also tries to transfer from a teaching-oriented to a research-intensive institution and become a University of the international level. The team members are very impressed by such aspirations of the University and its desire to improve the quality of the education and establish the relationship with the local community. At the same time the evaluation team understands that the University will have a lot of obstacles on this way such as financial problems and lack of autonomy, insufficient level of the knowledge of foreign languages as well as lack of resources and competence in curriculum planning [7].

The team also notes the strengths of the University. Among them are a wonderful national reputation, ability to attract good students not only of Ternopol region; wonderful staff who are motivated to development; enthusiastic students who appreciate the education that they receive at their University. The team also notes that the University has centralised but democratic decision-making structures. The University is devoted to the well-being of its staff and students; it offers them a wide range of services. TNEU is a pioneer in some matters. But the leadership demonstrates a desire to move forward. According to the evaluation team, the sincerity shown in the self-evaluation report is a good impetus to change. And all this provides the necessary and essential foundation for the capacity of the University to change.

But the evaluation team of IEP also underlines that the new development means culture changing and considerable effort and motivation will be needed before this new vision will be shared by the whole community of TNEU. And to achieve this goal the University needs a clearly

defined, structured and prioritised strategy of research, staff development and quality culture.

Ternopil national economic university also received the recommendations to take the advantage of a comprehensive quality culture that causes the possession of quality processes at the departmental level but not only the introduction of quality guidelines top-down. It is extremely important for the University to build a global concept of quality in accordance with Standards and guidelines of quality assurance in the European higher education area. It should be available on the University website. The University, according to the evaluation team, made a few steps in the direction of quality assurance in the various activities. However, there is still a lack of quality in various fields. Therefore the team encourages the University to prepare, in cooperation with relevant bodies, a global vision for the whole institution. The University should introduce a systematic quality processes and develop appropriate tools with full reference to the ESG. These processes must relate to monitoring and periodic review of the programmes, students assessment, quality assurance of teaching staff as well as learning resources, student support and the systems of internal and public information concerning the University activities which it makes available to the public. For the success, the team members also recommend to create a central quality unit to coordinate quality processes throughout the University and give the advice on quality to other members of staff and students. The staff of this office has to maintain the communication with the offices of quality in European universities and arrange visits to these universities.

The Conclusions. So, the Institutional Evaluation Programme is an independent service of the European University Association which has arisen for the sake of improving the internal quality culture of higher educational institutions. Its main goal is to outline the strategic development plan of the University that participates in the Programme. The universities through the Institutional Evaluation Programme of EUA have the opportunity to receive the recommendations from the independent evaluation team of specialists in higher education as to the improvement of such aspects of their activity as the governance and management, strategic management, funding, research, internationalisation, learning and teaching, quality culture. Thus, the University El Bosque (Colombia) and Ternopil national economic University (Ukraine) also got a unique opportunity to become strong universities with a strong organisational culture. They got practically similar recommendations though they are far from each other regionally. But of course there were some differences in the context of the above mentioned aspects.

REFERENCES

- [1] A twenty-year contribution to institutional change : EUA's institutional evaluation programme / URL : <http://www.eua.be/events/past/2014/IEP-20th-anniversary-event/Home.aspx>
- [2] European University Association (EUA). Quality culture in European universities: a bottom-up approach : Report on the three rounds of the Quality Culture project 2002 – 2006. – Brussels, EUA, 2006 / URL : <http://www.eua.be/publications>
- [3] European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area. – 2005 / URL : http://www.eqar.eu/uploads/media/050221_ENQA_report_01.pdf
- [4] EUA. Institutional Evaluation Programme (2014) : Guidelines for Institutions. – 2014 / URL : <http://www.eua.be/iep/about-iep/guidelines.aspx>
- [5] European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA). Report on the External Evaluation of the Institutional Evaluation Programme of the European University Association. – 2014 / URL : http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Report_IEP-review-by-ENQA-14012014.pdf
- [6] Institutional Evaluation Programme. University el Bosque final report. – September 2010 / URL : http://www.eua.be/.../IEP_report_Bosque_final.sflb.as
- [7] Institutional Evaluation Programme. Ternopil National Economic University. – July 2009 / URL : http://www.eua.be/ty-po3conf/ext/bzb_securelink/pushFile.php