# INTEGRATION OF UKRAINIAN INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION INTO THE GLOBAL EDUCATIONAL SPACE: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

## *INTEGRAÇÃO DAS INSTITUIÇÕES UCRANIANAS DE ENSINO SUPERIOR NO ESPAÇO EDUCATIVO MUNDIAL: DESAFIOS E OPORTUNIDADES*

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**Abstract.** The integration of Ukrainian institutions of higher education into the global educational space presents both challenges and opportunities. This study aims to characterize the integration process, identify challenges, and explore opportunities for overcoming them. Statistical data from Quacquarelli Symonds educational institution rankings for 2022 and global rankings, including the Education Index and Education Expenditure as a percentage of GDP for 2022, were utilized. Qualitative data were collected through a search in scholarly databases such as Ebsco, Google Scholar, PubMed, and WoS. The results showed that the integration of Ukrainian Higher Education Institutions into the global education space faces several challenges, including limited experience in international cooperation and participation in European educational programs, as well as inadequate preparation for project proposal submissions and a low level of proficiency in foreign languages, particularly English. Additionally, insufficient financial support for international projects hinders the modernization of Ukraine's higher education system and the enhancement of workforce training quality. Despite these challenges, Ukrainian HEIs have significant potential for development and competitiveness enhancement through cooperation with European and international partners. In conclusion it is shown that to ensure successful integration, Ukraine should increase the state's role in stimulating international cooperation among HEIs and provide necessary support.

**Keywords:** integration of Ukrainian institutions of higher education; global educational space; challenges. opportunities.

**Resumo.** Integração das instituições de ensino superior ucranianas no espaço educativo mundial apresenta desafios e oportunidades. Este estudo tem por objetivo caraterizar o processo de integração, identificar desafios e explorar oportunidades para os ultrapassar. Foram utilizados dados estatísticos das classificações das instituições de ensino da Quacquarelli Symonds para 2022 e das classificações globais, incluindo o Índice de Educação e as despesas com a educação em percentagem do PIB para 2022. Os dados qualitativos foram recolhidos através de uma pesquisa em bases de dados académicas como a Ebsco, Google Scholar, PubMed e WoS. Os resultados mostraram que a integração das instituições de ensino superior ucranianas no espaço educativo global enfrenta vários desafios, incluindo uma experiência limitada na cooperação internacional e na participação em programas educativos europeus, bem como uma preparação inadequada para a apresentação de propostas de projectos e um baixo nível de proficiência em línguas estrangeiras, em particular o inglês. Além disso, o insuficiente apoio financeiro a projectos internacionais dificulta a modernização do sistema de ensino superior da Ucrânia e a melhoria da qualidade da formação da mão de obra. Apesar destes desafios, as IES ucranianas têm um potencial significativo de desenvolvimento e de aumento da competitividade através da cooperação com parceiros europeus e internacionais. Em conclusão, é demonstrado que, para assegurar uma integração bem sucedida, a Ucrânia deve aumentar o papel do Estado no estímulo à cooperação internacional entre as IES e fornecer o apoio necessário.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In an era marked by increasing globalization and interconnectedness, the integration of Ukrainian institutions of higher education into the global educational space stands as a critical and timely endeavor. As nations across the globe strive to foster collaborative learning environments, enhance academic mobility, and embrace diverse perspectives, the role of higher education institutions in Ukraine becomes pivotal (Kornytska et al., 2023). The global landscape of higher education is evolving rapidly, propelled by advancements in technology, international collaborations, and the pursuit of knowledge without borders. For Ukraine, a country with a rich academic tradition, integrating its institutions of higher education into the global educational space is not merely an option but a necessity. Such integration promises to foster academic excellence, cultural exchange, and innovation, positioning Ukrainian universities as active contributors to the global knowledge economy.

Numerous studies have investigated the dynamics of internationalization in higher education, exploring the impacts, challenges, and best practices (Kalashnikova, 2019; Melnyk, 2022). However, there exists a paucity of comprehensive research specifically focused on the integration of Ukrainian institutions into the global educational space. Existing literature highlights the potential benefits of international collaboration, such as enhanced research opportunities, cross-cultural understanding, and improved academic quality (Morze and Vasylenko, 2020). Simultaneously, it underscores the obstacles, including language barriers, institutional resistance, and the need for strategic planning (Krymets, 2022). While there is a growing recognition of the importance of global integration for Ukrainian higher education, there is a gap in understanding the specific challenges and opportunities faced by these institutions. The research problem lies in unpacking the complexities surrounding the integration process, identifying barriers that impede progress, and uncovering the unique opportunities that could propel Ukrainian universities onto the global stage.

Hence, the primary aim of this research is to comprehensively explore the integration of Ukrainian institutions of higher education into the global educational space, examining the challenges and opportunities that emerge in this transformative journey. To achieve this aim, the following research tasks will guide the investigation:

1. Explore and identify the key challenges faced by Ukrainian institutions of higher education in their efforts to integrate into the global educational space.
2. Investigate and document potential opportunities that exist for Ukrainian universities to successfully integrate into the global academic community.
3. Delineate the role of Ukrainian educational institutions in the global context, considering both historical perspectives and future aspirations.

By breaking down the research questions into specific tasks, the study aims to systematically address the complexities of the integration process, providing a nuanced understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by Ukrainian institutions in their journey towards global academic integration.

By addressing these research questions, this study seeks to contribute valuable insights to the ongoing discourse on internationalization in higher education and provide evidence-based recommendations for policymakers and institutions in Ukraine.

## 2. METHODS AND MATERIALS

### 2.1. Research design

The research aims to characterize the process of integration of Ukrainian higher education institutions into the global educational space, identify challenges, and explore opportunities to overcome these challenges. Therefore, the type of this work is mixed, involving the processing and analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data.

## 2.2. Data collection

### 2.2.1. Statistical data

1. Statistical data from Quacquarelli Symonds educational institution rankings for 2022 were utilized.
2. Global rankings, including the Education Index and Education Expenditure as a percentage of GDP for 2022, were considered.

### 2.2.2. Qualitative data

1. A search was conducted in scholarly databases such as Ebsco, Google Scholar, PubMed, and WoS.
2. Specialized scientific online archives and libraries, including ResearchGate, Jstor, and Sage, were also used.
3. The search range was defined from 2009 to 2023 to demonstrate Ukraine's integration aspirations and outline the most relevant trends.

### 2.2.3 Regional limitations,

The study examines the experience of integrating Ukrainian universities while also considering the global context. Regional features and context were taken into account for a better understanding of the situation.

## 2.3. Data analysis

### 2.3.1. Quantitative Analysis
1. A comprehensive analysis of university rankings, including the processing of Ukrainian university rankings for 2022 from Quacquarelli Symonds, was conducted.
2. Positions and distribution of rankings among selected universities were determined.

Analysis of Education Index and Education Expenditure: information on the Education Index and Education Expenditure as a percentage of GDP for 2022 was collected. Dynamics were identified, and a comparison with global indicators was made.

After that, the group analysis was used, universities were grouped by rankings, and characteristics of each group were analyzed.

## 2.4. Qualitative Analysis

Thematic analysis was employed to process scientific articles and publications on the integration of Ukrainian universities into the global educational space. Key themes, approaches, and conclusions were identified through coding.

## 2.5. Comprehensive Approach

The integration of quantitative and qualitative analyses was applied to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the integration of Ukrainian universities into the global space. Key trends, challenges, and opportunities were identified. Following this, a comparative analysis of the obtained data with publications from other scholars was conducted. Such an

approach allows for obtaining objective and detailed research results on the integration of Ukrainian universities into the global educational space.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The integration of Ukrainian higher education into the global educational landscape is a multifaceted challenge that requires a nuanced exploration of various dimensions. A series of studies shed light on this topic, offering insights into different aspects of integration, its challenges, and potential opportunities. Antoniuk (2021) delves into the integration of Ukrainian higher education into the European Higher Education Area, emphasizing its role in developing human capital. The study underscores the significance of aligning Ukrainian education with European standards and practices, contributing to the broader goal of enhancing the nation's human capital. Bader, Oleksiienko and Mereniuk (2022) focus on the digitalization of future education in Ukraine. Their analysis evaluates the risks associated with this transition and proposes mechanisms to overcome barriers. The study contributes to the understanding of how digitalization can be harnessed to facilitate educational advancements, aligning with global trends in technology-driven learning.

The research by Kistersky (2022) addresses education for European integration, emphasizing its role in addressing contemporary challenges in international relations. The study contributes to the discourse on the role of education in fostering European integration and collaboration. Tsekhmister, Malatsai, Nechitaylo, Yemelyanova, Korol and Statsenko (2022) contribute to the discourse on the training of education managers. Their exploration of current trends and problems in education management provides a contemporary perspective on the challenges and developments in preparing professionals for leadership roles in the educational sector.

The study by Bakhov (2019) explores the international academic mobility of Ukrainian youth, providing insights into the contemporary conditions and challenges. The study highlights the importance of fostering global mobility as a means to broaden perspectives, enhance educational experiences, and prepare students for the interconnected global landscape. Vasylyuk-Zaitseva, Kosenyuk, Tanasiichuk, and Boyko (2023) delve into the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Ukrainian education. Their work addresses the futuristic aspect of education, exploring how AI can be leveraged to enhance learning experiences. This aligns with the global trend of incorporating advanced technologies in education to prepare students for the demands of the future workforce.

Fastovets (2021) offers a reality check on higher education in Ukraine, providing perspectives on its current state and future possibilities. The study critically examines the challenges and prospects, contributing to a comprehensive understanding of the Ukrainian higher education landscape. In addition, Haidabrus (2022) explores the intersection of information technology and management in higher education and science. The study investigates the role of information technology in shaping modern educational and managerial practices, aligning with global trends in the digitization of education. The work by Kalashnikova (2019) focuses on the perspectives and needs of Ukrainian universities in the context of European integration. The study provides valuable insights into the aspirations and challenges faced by Ukrainian universities as they strive to align with European educational standards. Khudaverdiyeva (2022) assesses the integration of Ukrainian education into the European light space, offering a nuanced understanding of achievements, problems, and prospects. The study contributes to the broader dialogue on Ukraine's integration into European educational frameworks. Moreover, Kornynska, Alforof, and Honcharuk (2023) forecast the future of Ukrainian higher education by examining aspects of adapting the educational process to global challenges. The study offers insights into the proactive measures needed to align Ukrainian education with the dynamic demands of the 21st century.

The modern literature also presented encompasses a range of topics related to education, technology, and management, offering valuable insights into the current trends and challenges within the Ukrainian educational landscape. Tsekhmister et al.'s work (2009) focuses on the teaching and learning in Ukrainian medical universities. This publication provides a snapshot of the educational practices shedding light on the historical evolution of teaching methodologies and content in this specialized domain. The study by Tsekhmister, Kotyk, Matviienko, Rudenko and Ilchuk (2021) evaluates the effectiveness of augmented reality technology in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM) education. This research adds to the growing body of literature exploring the integration of technology, particularly augmented reality, in educational settings and its impact on learning outcomes. Zinchenko, Dorosheva and Mosiy (2023) focus on innovative and cultural transformations in the educational environment, particularly the impact of digitalization and the barriers faced by traditional learning methods. This study contributes to the ongoing conversation about the intersection of technology, culture, and pedagogy, reflecting the dynamic shifts occurring in educational environments worldwide.

In conclusion, these studies collectively provide a comprehensive analysis of various facets of Ukrainian higher education's integration into the global educational space. The diversity of perspectives covered in these studies contributes to a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with this transformative process.

## 4. RESULTS

The world has entered a new stage of technological development characterized by the proliferation of digital technologies, the transition to Industry 4.0, and the rapid growth of creative sectors in the economy. This has placed new demands on higher education, which is the sphere for shaping human capital with high levels of knowledge, creativity, mobility, modern professional skills, and the ability to engage in innovative activities (Tsekhmister et al., 2022). In most countries, the higher education system is evolving in line with advances in science, new technologies, and the needs of economic modernization, which tend to accelerate. Therefore, the past decades have been a period of radical changes in education, which are expected to continue to grow in the future. Ukraine has a diverse higher education system that was formed back in Soviet times within the framework of an industrial technological system. Since gaining independence, there have been some changes in Ukrainian higher education (Khudaverdiyeva, 2022). However, the inertia of modernization processes in the content of education, teaching technologies, organizational forms, and the weak link between higher education institutions (HEIs) and the business sector have resulted in a weak alignment of university training with the modern needs of the economy and society. Therefore, in Ukraine, despite the high level of education, the role of human capital as a factor of production remains insignificant.

One of the current issues is the need for reform in higher education and increasing the attractiveness of European education internationally. The Bologna Process aims to create coordination links that will integrate education systems into a unified whole. In the 21st century, Ukraine considers its accession to the European higher education area, or the Bologna Process, as a key stage in the strategy of reforming national higher education systems, considering the modernization of the economy conducted by states (Kovalyov et al., 2023). The main goal is to increase the competitiveness of education systems and improve the quality of education to develop the export of educational services and provide countries with highly qualified personnel.

Ukraine is recognized by UNESCO, the UN, and other international organizations for its high level of education. Ukraine has a step-by-step education system that is similar to structures in most developed countries. Ukraine is also a participant in the Hague Convention on the

legalization of documents. According to the Lisbon Convention, Ukraine recognizes higher education qualifications related to most European countries, as well as some other countries such as the United States, Canada, Australia, Israel, Kazakhstan, and Belarus. Ukraine has joined the Bologna Declaration and is actively implementing Bologna reforms in the education system (Khudaverdiyeva, 2022). This reflects Ukraine's commitment to aligning with European education standards and integrating into the pan-European education space. Ukraine is a leader in international education and has internationally recognized diplomas. The number of foreign students choosing Ukraine for education is constantly increasing, indicating the high quality of education and trust in Ukrainian universities.

The Education Index, utilized as a composite measure within the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), indicates a notable upward trend in education levels across several Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) countries. This trend, however, is not directly tied to integration processes and provides solely a quantitative evaluation of educational coverage within the population. The Education Index serves as a crucial gauge reflecting a nation's populace well-being, assessing both its economic development and standard of living (Antoniuk, 2021). This index is pivotal in UN experts' evaluations for the global Human Development Index ranking of countries.

Additionally, it is a key criterion in categorizing countries as developed, developing, or third-world nations. Calculated annually by the United Nations, the Education Index was based on adult literacy rates (weighed at 2/3 of the index) and the overall enrollment ratio in primary, secondary, and tertiary education (1/3 of the index) until 2010. Subsequently, the Education Index transitioned to calculating the sum of average years of schooling for adults over 25 (1/2 of the index) and average years of schooling for children in schools (1/2 of the index). Ranging from 0 to 1, with values exceeding 0.800 being typical for developed countries, this index is often presented as a significant global education ranking indicator.

It measures achievements based on the education level of a population, focusing on two primary indicators: the adult literacy index and the enrollment ratio of students in primary, secondary, and tertiary education. Fluctuations in the Education Index are unlikely to be directly associated with a country's involvement in the Bologna Process (Antoniuk, 2021).

Additionally, there exists a ranking of countries based on education expenditure as a percentage of GDP, highlighting the emphasis placed by a country's government on education support and development (See Table 1).

**Table 1.** Worldwide Rankings: Education Index and Education Expenditure as Percentage of GDP, 2022

| Rank | Country | Education Index | Education Expenditure as Percentage of GDP, % |
|------|---------|-----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| 1 | Germany | 0,946 | 4,6 |
| 2 | Australia | 0,923 | 5,1 |
| 3 | New Zeeland | 0,923 | 7,2 |
| 4 | Denmark | 0,92 | 8,7 |
| 5 | Norway | 0,919 | 7,3 |
| 47 | Ukraine | 0,797 | 5,3 |

Source: World Development (2022).

From the table, it can be observed that countries ranking high in the global education index often allocate significant resources to education, spending a relatively large percentage of their GDP on this sector. For example, Germany, which has the highest Education Index (0.946) among the listed countries, allocates 4.6% of its GDP to education. In comparison, Ukraine, ranking 47th in the Education Index (0.797), allocates 5.3% of its GDP to education. This

suggests that Ukraine may have the potential to improve the quality of education by increasing investments in this field.

The Quacquarelli Symonds ranking of educational institutions demonstrates that Ukrainian educational establishments are successfully integrating into the global educational space. Among 1,300 universities worldwide, 8 of them turned out to be Ukrainian. According to Quacquarelli Symonds, the best among Ukrainian universities is V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, ranking between 511 and 520. Following it is Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, sharing positions between 601 and 650. National Technical University "Kharkiv Polytechnic Institute" holds the position between 651 and 700, and others. With almost identical indicators, Sumy State University and the National Technical University of Ukraine "Igor Sikorsky Kyiv Polytechnic Institute" are placed. Following them are Lviv Polytechnic National University and Ivan Franko National University of Lviv. Closing this ranking is Kyiv-Mohyla Academy with a position between 1001 and 1200.

The ranking was based on criteria such as academic performance, student-to-faculty ratio, citation index, employer success, and the presence of foreigners among both students and faculty (See Figure 1).
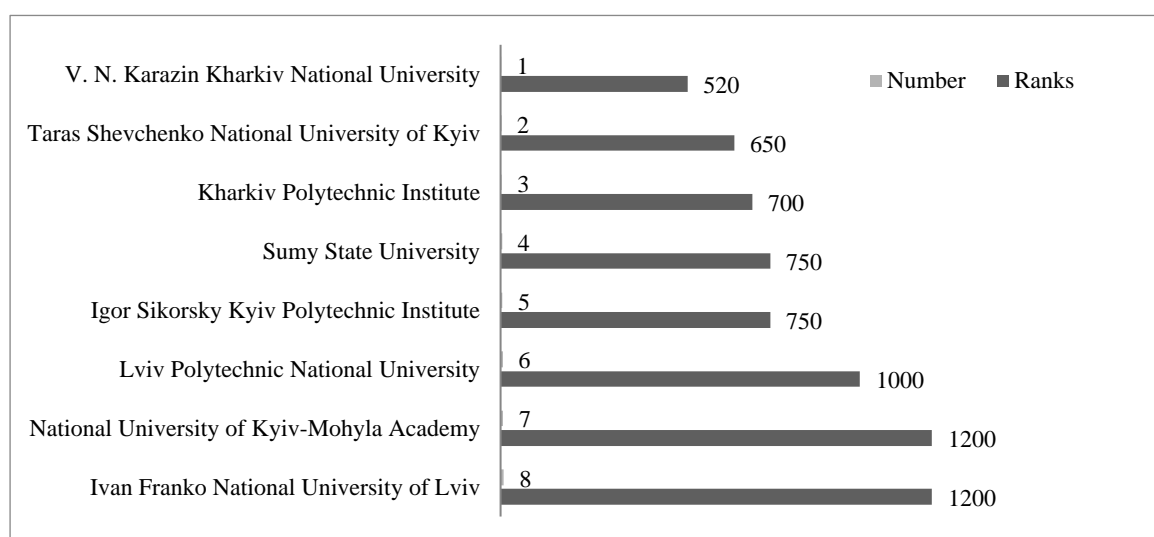


**Figure 1.** Rating of Ukrainian universities. Source: QS World University Rankings (2022)

European educational integration initially aims to enhance the competitiveness of European Union countries in the era of globalization, and therefore cannot be separated and considered apart from the processes of globalization, informatization, and virtualization of human society. These are parts not only of economic and political globalization but also of the processes of interpenetration of economic, political, and cultural globalization. At first glance, these tasks are expected to have a positive impact on Ukraine's competitiveness after its accession to the Bologna Process. However, in practice, everything is much more complex. European educational integration is part of the EU's integration strategy. Other countries joining the Bologna Process may become providers of professionals specifically for the European labor market without any national changes (if we do not consider such diplomas as a single model, a general education scheme, and a new national qualification framework) (Suárez-Ortega and Risquez, 2014; Kozlovskyi et al., 2024). As for the development of academic mobility, without adequate financial support at the national level, it remains insignificant, and the knowledge gained by students abroad may not always be applicable for various reasons.

Ukraine's attitude toward the Bologna Process reflects the contradiction between aspects of identity and aspects of unification. On the one hand, Ukraine is interested in using the opportunities and perspectives provided by the integration of higher education systems. On the

other hand, it is important for our country to preserve its cultural and educational uniqueness. At the same time, it should be recognized that neither ignoring the Bologna Process nor imposing external standards on domestic higher education has a future. An alternative to such scenarios may be a bilateral process of mutual consideration of interests, which will not only allow Ukraine to adapt its higher education system to European standards but also give it a chance to become an equal partner in the European higher education area and position its richest national traditions in this field through equal dialogue.

At present, the European Higher Education Area is actively developing in the EU in line with the needs of the knowledge economy, a development in which Ukraine has also participated (Pogrebnyak et al., 2023). While Ukraine possesses a robust higher education system, the majority of its institutions of higher learning, due to significant shortcomings, do not provide a high quality of university education and are not highly competitive in both domestic and international higher education markets. Collaboration with European countries in the field of education will facilitate the modernization of Ukraine's higher education system in accordance with the contemporary achievements of higher education, the needs of society, and the economy.

Given the above, it is evident that Ukrainian universities do not demonstrate sufficient activity, persistence, and organizational capacity for integration into the European area of higher education (Mazurkevich et al., 2022). Many Ukrainian HEIs lack experience in establishing cooperation channels with potential European partners, lack skills in preparing project proposals that meet the requirements of competitions and address the most pressing societal issues, and face a challenge of low proficiency in foreign languages, primarily English (Byrko et al., 2022). Insufficient financial support for the participation of HEIs in European educational projects hinders the modernization of Ukraine's HEIs and the improvement of the quality of personnel training.

To ensure more active European integration processes in Ukraine's higher education, both a more active role of the state in creating optimal conditions and incentives for international cooperation of HEIs and university leadership are necessary. At the state level, it is necessary for the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine to more actively stimulate the participation of HEIs in European cooperation programs, provide organizational and methodological support to domestic HEIs in the process of concluding international agreements, and submitting requests to participate in international educational projects. At the level of HEIs, it is necessary to:

- Ensure the implementation of innovative models of organizing the educational process and teaching technologies widely used in the educational practices of European universities;
- Ensure a high level of teaching and learning of foreign languages by students, primarily English; promote the practice of teaching disciplines in a foreign language;
- Conduct training sessions for teachers and students on European integration issues and participation in European educational programs;
- Promote the practice of accrediting university educational programs by foreign agencies included in the European Quality Assurance Register, which will contribute to the improvement of the quality and internationalization of higher education in Ukraine;
- Expand the practice of implementing and implementing dual degree programs in universities, which contributes to the application of European experience and standards in higher education;
- Establish partnerships with European universities more actively, engage foreign lecturers more widely in teaching at domestic HEIs, expand the practice of student and teacher exchange.

Integration of Ukrainian higher education institutions into the global educational space presents both challenges and opportunities. This process involves not only improving the quality of education and scientific research but also opening up to international cooperation and exchange of experience.

One of the challenges of this integration is enhancing the competitiveness of Ukrainian higher education institutions in the global market. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to improve the quality of education, implement international standards of teaching and assessment, and develop international student and faculty exchange programs.

On the other hand, integration of Ukrainian higher education institutions into the global educational space offers wide opportunities for cooperation with other countries. This may include sharing experience in conducting scientific research, joint projects with international partners, and attracting foreign students to study in Ukraine.

Therefore, the integration of Ukrainian higher education institutions into the global educational space is an important step in improving the quality of education in Ukraine and fostering international cooperation in the field of education.

## 5. DISCUSSION

The article determined that an important direction for the further development of Ukrainian higher education is integration with the global, first of all, European educational space. It has been proven that as of 2023, the system of Ukrainian higher education institutions is still not sufficiently involved in international cooperation, although there are tangible successes on this path. In particular, it is concluded about the active implementation of the Bologna system in Ukraine and the implementation of the norms of the Lisbon Convention, which significantly contributes to the establishment of international cooperation for the university environment and, accordingly, integration processes in it. Such positive changes and further perspectives of cooperation were also emphasized by individual researchers, whose conclusions are also supported by the obtained results. For example, Taran (2020) noted the importance of exchanges and academic mobility for further integration of the global educational space. Likewise, Suchyk and Suchyk (2019) identified the aspects of establishing academic mobility as important. While Antoniuk (2021) emphasized other elements, in particular she emphasized the importance of integration with the world educational space as a separate element of the modern development of human capital in global dimensions. The obtained results confirm the following conclusions, determining the further direction of development of the Ukrainian educational environment.

The proposed results also confirm the conclusions of those scientists who emphasize the modern processes of digitization of education (Maltsev et al., 2022). Digitization makes it possible to include Ukrainian teachers and students of education in the global dimension of university environments. Against this background, the reasoning of scientists regarding the difficulties for the further use of digital reality, in particular the limitations regarding the financial capabilities of Ukrainian institutions of higher education in the introduction and purchase of new technologies, the insufficient level of acquisition of digital competence, etc., are justified (Salnyk et al., 2023). The results obtained in the proposed study confirm the thesis about the financial condition of Ukrainian universities, which is an urgent challenge for the further development of the education industry in general.

On the other hand, it is difficult to agree with the conclusions of Ponomariov and Cheremsky (2023) regarding the presence of extremely large differences between the European and Ukrainian educational systems. According to these researchers, European pedagogy is often likened to art, as it enhances learning for students and fosters their creative abilities. Consequently, teachers are expected to be creative themselves. One of the most crucial artistic

methods for learning is play, which greatly engages students in the learning process. Despite this, Ukrainian education rarely uses play as a method of learning, even though it is the primary mode of learning for children. Through play, students develop both physically and spiritually, as well as socially. By incorporating creative learning methods, Ukrainian education can become more humanized, democratized, and integrated into the European framework (Ponomariov and Cheremsky, 2023). Nevertheless, Ukrainian higher education is sufficiently integrated with European and global spaces to argue that there are not such tangible differences. The proposed study indicates that the gradual implementation of the Bologna system and spending on higher education in Ukraine have brought positive results, particularly in the use of global teaching methodologies.

Considering certain aspects of implementing the Bologna Process in Ukraine, there is some disagreement with Khudaverdiyeva's (2022) assertion that neither ignoring the Bologna Process nor imposing external standards on domestic higher education has a future. In reality, many countries that have embraced the Bologna Process have noted improvements in the quality and international recognition of their higher education. External standards may lead to the standardization of the educational system, potentially compromising the uniqueness of Ukraine's cultural and educational aspects. However, experiences from European countries have demonstrated that it is possible to preserve one's identity and specificity within the framework of EU integration (Netz and Jaksztat, 2014).

In general, the discussion on Ukraine's role and relationship with the Bologna Process is complex, with both approaches—integration and preservation of uniqueness—having their pros and cons. Finding a balance that considers national interests and international opportunities is crucial. Khudaverdiyeva's (2022) observation that a conflict may arise between identity and standardization does not necessarily mean that both options are entirely unviable. The findings have demonstrated that there is potential for investigating adaptable solutions that consider local needs and distinctiveness in addition to the benefits of integration and interaction with the global educational community.

A number of targeted policy adjustments and tactical suggestions should be taken into consideration in order to support the ongoing integration of Ukrainian higher education institutions into the international educational environment:

1. Flexible accreditation standards that follow global norms should be adopted by Ukrainian HEIs. By working with international accrediting organizations, Ukrainian programs can be made to comply with international quality standards, which will increase their legitimacy and recognition.
2. Ukrainian universities should improve their language training programs, especially in English, to promote global collaboration and student exchange. This entails providing extensive language instruction and promoting faculty involvement in global teaching and research.
3. Ukrainian academics and students will be able to travel abroad with the establishment of more extensive academic mobility and exchange programs with European and other foreign institutions.
4. Increasing funding for research and development can assist Ukrainian Higher Education Institutions in producing high-caliber research that satisfies global standards. This may entail raising government spending on higher education, promoting public-private partnerships, and obtaining funds from foreign financing organizations.

In addition, Ukrainian HEIs can investigate the following international collaborations and programs in order to successfully integrate into the global educational landscape: For instance, the Erasmus+ program has been effective in promoting cooperation and academic exchange throughout Europe.

A greater number of Ukrainian staff members and students will be able to participate in Erasmus+ programs, which will improve academic quality and forge stronger international networks by offering chances for mobility, joint degrees, and cooperative research projects. Taking part in Horizon Europe system, the EU's key funding program for research and innovation, can provide Ukrainian universities with access to substantial research funding.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Ukrainian HEIs face several challenges in integrating into the global education space, but this also opens up significant opportunities for their development and competitiveness enhancement. One of the main challenges is the lack of experience in establishing cooperation with international partners and participating in European educational programs. HEIs also struggle with inadequate preparation for submitting project proposals and a low level of proficiency in foreign languages, especially English. Financial support for participation in international educational projects remains another important issue. This hinders the modernization of Ukraine's higher education system and the improvement of the quality of workforce training. To ensure more active Euro-integration, Ukraine needs to improve its higher education system.

However, in the integration process, Ukrainian HEIs have great potential. Cooperation with European and international partners can lead to the modernization of the educational process, the introduction of innovative teaching methods, and joint programs. Accreditation of HEI educational programs by foreign agencies can improve the quality and international recognition of Ukrainian higher education.

For successful integration, Ukraine must increase the state's role in stimulating international cooperation among HEIs and provide them with the necessary support. At the institutional level, it is necessary to implement innovative models of organizing the educational process and improve the level of teaching foreign languages. It is also important to conduct training for teachers and students on European integration and participation in international educational programs. All these measures will help Ukrainian HEIs successfully integrate into the global education space, leading to their development and increased competitiveness.

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