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External quality assurance system of higher legal education in Ukraine

Система зовнішнього забезпечення якості вищої юридичної освіти в Україні

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Abstract

The relevance of the topic is due to a significant increase in the importance of law as a social controller of public life. The basis for the development of the legal system in Ukraine is the quality of higher legal education. The aim of the study is to analyze the current state of the external quality system of higher legal education in Ukraine. The following methods of scientific knowledge were used in the article: analysis of legislative and regulatory documents in the field of education, analysis of statistical data, interpretative and analytical method, comparison of different views on the problem under study, induction, deduction, systematization. The dynamic of changes in the results of such procedures of external quality assurance of higher legal education as licensing, accreditation of educational programs, independent external assessment is analyzed. The analysis confirms the persistence of negative trends in the development of the system of higher legal education which results, in particular, in a decrease in the quality of legal training, which was stipulated by a decrease in the volume of lawyers' training on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of an unreasonably large number of the universities that train lawyers, which leads to reducing the requirements for applicants, and,

Анотація

Актуальність теми обумовлена значним підвищенням значення права як соціального регулятора суспільного життя. Підґрунтям розвитку правової системи в Україні є якість вищої юридичної освіти. Метою дослідження є аналіз сучасного стану системи зовнішнього забезпечення якості вищої юридичної освіти України. Для написання статті використані такі методи наукового пізнання: аналіз законодавчо-нормативних документів у галузі освіти, аналіз статистичних даних, інтерпретаційно-аналітичний, зіставлення різних поглядів на досліджувану проблему, індукція, дедукція, систематизація. Проаналізовано динаміку змін результатів таких процедур зовнішнього забезпечення якості вищої юридичної освіти як ліцензування, акредитація освітніх програм, незалежне зовнішнє оцінювання. Проведений аналіз підтверджує збереження негативних тенденцій у розвитку системи вищої юридичної освіти, зокрема, зниження якості юридичної підготовки як результат, з одного боку, зменшення обсягу підготовки правників, а з іншого – необґрунтовано великої кількості закладів вищої освіти, що готують правників, що призводить до зниження вимог до вступників, а й отже, якості юридичної освіти.

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consequently, the quality of legal education. Comparison of the results of these external assessment procedures allows us to state that the highest quality training of lawyers is carried out by the leading state classical universities and higher legal educational institutions. The impact of external quality assurance procedures in higher legal education should be supported by the development of an internal quality assurance system at the universities.

Key words: accreditation, higher legal education, assurance of the quality of education, independent external assessment, rating.

Introduction

The development of democracy in Ukraine is inextricably linked with the further improvement and reform of the education system, including the legal one. According to O. Rogach (2014), law is a social controller of social life, which is formed and functions thanks to the consciousness and will of people. Therefore, the level of development of any legal system is largely determined by the legal consciousness of the people who create it professionally. The main basic source of professional legal consciousness in a modern civilized society is a higher legal education.

Therefore, research on the problems of quality assurance in higher legal education is extremely relevant and timely. Our analysis of scientific research devoted to the study of the problem of the quality of higher legal education indicates that this problem is relevant both in Ukraine.

Analysis of scientific sources has shown a growing interest in the problems of quality assurance in higher education. In particular, the European experience in creating quality systems of higher education, general and specific procedures of external and internal quality in the countries of Southern Europe were studied by I. Sokolova (2020). L. Stolyarchuk (2019) provides a classification of universities that train lawyers and examines the level of quality and problems of professional training of bachelors of law at the universities in the present conditions.

The role and place of universities with specific training conditions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in the system of legal education are highlighted in the works of V. Abroskin & S. Albula, (2021), E. Muzychuk (2020). The impact of globalization on the development of legal education in Ukraine and

Зіставлення результатів зазначених процедур зовнішнього оцінювання дозволяє констатувати, що найбільш якісну підготовку правників здійснюють провідні державні класичні університети та заклади вищої освіти правничого спрямування. Вплив процедур зовнішнього забезпечення якості вищої юридичної освіти має підкріплюватися розвитком системи внутрішнього забезпечення якості у закладах вищої освіти.

Ключові слова: акредитація, вища юридична освіта, забезпечення якості освіти, незалежне зовнішнє оцінювання, рейтинг.

the formation of the efficiency of the future lawyer is described in the study by V. Tkachenko (2021). I. Khokhlova (2019) analyzed the results of reforms and the current state of higher legal education, identified the factors affecting its quality.

The analysis of scientific sources and the study of the experience in external assurance of the quality of higher legal education in Ukraine allows us to state that, despite a wide range of studies on the quality of legal education, there is still no holistic study of the state, problems and prospects for the development of the system of external quality assurance of higher legal education.

The purpose of the article is to analyze the current state of the system of external quality assurance of higher legal education in Ukraine. To achieve the set goals, it is necessary to solve the following tasks: determination of the structure of the external quality assurance system for higher legal education in Ukraine; analysis of the dynamics of the results of the unified professional entrance exam; analysis of the results of accreditation of educational programs in the branch of knowledge 08 Law.

Methods

To solve the problems, the following methods were used: analysis of legislative and regulatory documents in the field of education, interpretative-analytical method of comparison of different views on the problem under study, induction, deduction, systematization. In particular, the analysis of legislative and regulatory documents in the field of education as well as an interpretive and analytical method for comparing different views on the problem under

study were used to study scientific sources and clarify the state of the problem under study. Induction, deduction, systematization made it possible to make conclusions. The study used data obtained from open sources of the State Statistics Service, the Ukrainian Center for Educational Quality Assessment, the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Education (NAQA), higher educational institutions of Ukraine, the results of the research "State of Legal Education in Ukraine" (Mudruk, 2018), Standardized Educational Measurements in Law Graduate Education (Mudruk, 2019), NAQA Annual Reports (Kvit, 2020a; Kvit, & Yeremenko, 2021).

Results and Discussion

The structure and functioning of internal and external quality assurance systems in education in general and higher education, in particular, is determined by the legislative acts of Ukraine: The Law of Ukraine "On Education" (Law of Ukraine 2145-VIII, 2017), the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" (Law of Ukraine 1556-VII, 2014).

According to clause 1 of Article 41 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" (Law of Ukraine 2145-VIII, 2017), the purpose of the development and functioning of the system for ensuring the quality of education in Ukraine is to guarantee the quality of education; to shape public confidence in the system and educational institutions and authorities; to constantly and consistently improve the quality of education; to assist educational institutions and other subjects of educational activity in improving the quality of education.

Article 16 of the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" (Law of Ukraine 1556-VII, 2014) determines that the components of the quality assurance system for higher education in Ukraine are: 1) the system for ensuring higher educational institutions of the quality of educational activities and the quality of higher education (internal quality assurance system); 2) the system of external assurance of the quality of educational activities of higher educational institutions and the quality of higher education; 3) a quality assurance system for the activities of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and independent institutions for

assessing and ensuring the quality of higher education.

According to clause 4 of Article 41 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" (Law of Ukraine 2145-VIII, 2017), the procedures for external assurance of the quality of education include standardization, licensing of educational activities, accreditation of educational programs, institutional accreditation, public accreditation of educational institutions, external independent assessment of learning outcomes, institutional audit, monitoring of the quality of education, certification of teaching staff, public observation, other tools, procedures and activities determined by special laws.

Let us analyze the impact of such procedures as licensing of educational activities, accreditation of educational programs, external independent assessment of learning outcomes, monitoring of the quality of education.

Licensing

Licensing of educational activities is a procedure of recognizing the ability of a legal entity or an individual to provide educational services at a certain level of education in accordance with licensing conditions (Law 2145-VIII, 2017). Licensing of educational activities at the level of higher education is carried out by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine in accordance with the licensing conditions for the implementation of educational activities.

Data on the dynamics of the number of applicants for education in the branch of knowledge 08 Law and the number of universities that train them are presented in Table 1. These data identified by N. Kostova, I. Annienkova, N. Nahorna, & P. Hushcha (2020) confirm the trends in the development of higher legal education and show a significant increase in the number of universities that train lawyers at both bachelor's and master's higher education levels. If in 2010 their number was 111, then in 2019 there were already 129: of which 88 and 41 were state and private universities correspondingly. The number of universities (both public and private), which can train applicants for higher education in the specialty "Law" at the master's level of education, also gradually increased, from 70 universities in 2010 to 103 in 2019.

Table 1.

The dynamics of admission, the number of students and universities that train applicants for higher education in the specialty "Law"

	Accepted		The total number of students who pursue studies	The number of universities that train specialists in the specialty "Law"	
	Total	at the expense of state budget		Total	private
Bachelor students (first level undergraduate students)					
2010	30920	10311	127582	111	38
2015	18673	6450	86927	103	32
2017 *	-	-	38968	101	32
**	17867	5457	39269	118	38
2018 *	-	-	19694	98	31
**	17158	3587	54228	124	35
2019	16906	3499	69764	129	41
2020	15959	2138	60360	-	-
Master students					
2010	8533	3241	11368	70	21
2015	9832	3116	13520	85	25
2017 *	-	-	220	11	3
**	12264	3683	24591	99	31
2018	9842	2290	21897	78	42
2019	6223	2016	17076	103	32
2020	8550	1239	14142	-	-

* according to the list of specialties 2001

** according to the list of specialties 2015

Compiled by the authors based on data Statistical bulletin (Key indicators of higher education in Ukraine, n/d), Statistical digest, (State Statistics Service of Ukraine, 2017)

Analysis of the dynamics of changes in the number of applicants for higher education studying in the branch of knowledge 08 Law from 2010 to 2020 suggests a trend towards a decrease in the total number of applicants for higher education in the specialty "Law", despite a significant increase in

the number of universities (both state and private), carrying out their training. It should be noted that in 2020 there is an increase in the number of people who undertook master's degree (the increase is 2327 people or 37.4%), but the general trend remains unchanged.

Table 2.

Dynamics of the number of applications submitted by applicants for admission for a bachelor's degree in the specialty "Law"

Year	The number of applications submitted for a bachelor's degree in the specialty "Law"	Growth rate, %
2017	74 055	
2018	72 965	-1,5%
2019	65 077	-10,8%
2020	116 689	+79,3%
2021	68 124	-41,6%

Compiled by authors using open sourced data by Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021).

Data on the dynamics of changes in the number of applications submitted by applicants for admission to a bachelor's degree in the specialty 081 "Law" presented in Table2 indicate a gradual movement towards a decrease in the number of applications from 2017 to 2019, the peak number of 116 689 applications was in 2020, and a significant 1.7 times decrease occurred in 2021. The sharp increase in the number of applications

submitted for admission to a bachelor's degree at the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (2020) is explained by the general increase in the number of school graduates and the expansion of the list of categories of applicants who have switched to the online submission of applications. In our opinion, this was also facilitated by the opportunity to submit an unlimited number of applications for a contract

and certain difficulties in entering foreign universities associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. In general, the analysis of the data in Table 2 allows us to speak about the persistence of a downward trend in the number of applicants for higher education in the specialty “Law” (Kostova et al., 2020).

However, it should be noted that despite this trend, the specialty 081 “Law” is one of the most popular among applicants, despite the fact that most of the graduates in the future do not work in their specialty. According to the official data of the State Employment Service, the highest percentage of unemployed is among those holding degrees in law and economics (Mudruk, 2019, p. 107).

The low level of financial support for higher educational institutions leads to an exaggerated use of the contract form of financing education in some, in particular, legal specialties, for the sake of supporting other specialties, which in turn leads, firstly, to a decrease in the level of requirements for enrollment, which negatively affects the quality of education, and secondly, the overproduction of personnel in legal specialties (Mudruk, 2019).

Accreditation of educational programs

Accreditation of the educational program is also an important component of the external quality assurance system. According to the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” (Law of Ukraine 1556-VII, 2014) “accreditation of an educational program is an assessment of the educational program and / or educational activities of the University under this program for compliance with the higher education standard; the ability to meet the requirements of the standard and achieve the educational outcomes declared in the program”.

The purpose of accreditation is: 1) to establish the conformity of the quality of the educational program and educational activities for this program with the criteria determined by this Regulation; 2) assistance to institutions of higher education in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the educational program and educational activities for this program; 3) providing all interested parties with information about the quality of the educational program and educational activities for the educational program; 4) strengthening confidence in higher education in Ukraine; 5) promoting the integration of Ukrainian higher

education institutions into the European Higher Education Area (Regulation on Accreditation).

The accreditation of educational programs for training applicants for higher education is carried out by the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (Ukraine). NAQA was created to fulfill the provisions of the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated April 15, 2015 No. 244 as a permanent collegial body for the implementation of state policy in the field of quality assurance in higher education. But it was able to start working fully at the end of February 2019. NAQA considers its mission in being an “agent of change” in higher education” (Kvit, 2020b, p.171).

NAQA Chairman S. Kvit (2020b), notes that in the accreditation process, NAQA performs, first of all, not a punishing, but a service function, helping universities in their pursuit of excellence. This means that the accreditation process will now focus not on the results of the educational process, but on the process itself. That is, NAQA studies and evaluates the ability of a university to organize a high-quality educational process based on the principle of university autonomy.

The “Regulations on the accreditation of educational programs for which the training of applicants for higher education is carried out” (Order № 977, 2019) defines ten criteria for assessing the quality of an educational program. Nine of them relate to bachelor’s and master’s programs and one includes a set of requirements for educational and scientific programs of a Ph.D. The criteria for assessing the quality of an educational program are developed taking into account the standards and recommendations for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area (European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, 2015).

In developing the criteria, NAQA proceeded from the premise that they should be suitable for flexible application. The criteria are a set of general statements about the educational program and the practice of its implementation; they do not have the character of formal and clearly defined rules for the content of education and the educational process. This approach is not accidental and is stipulated by three principles: 1) respect for the autonomy of the Western Military District; 2) taking into account the context; 3) taking into account the positions of stakeholders (NAQA, 2020).

Table. 3. shows how fully the proposed list of criteria meets the requirements of ESG-2015.

Table 3.

Compliance of the criteria for assessing the quality of the educational program with the content of ESG-2015 standards regarding internal support quality of higher education.

	Criteria for assessing the quality of the educational program	ESG-2015 standards (regarding internal quality assurance)
1	Design and objectives of the educational program	1.1. Quality assurance policy
2	The structure and content of the educational program	1.2. Development and approval of programs
3	Access to curriculum and recognition of educational outcomes	1.2. Development and approval of programs
4	Learning and teaching in the educational program	1.4. Enrollment, training, recognition of qualifications and certification of students
5	Assessment Activities, Graduate Applicant Evaluation and Academic Integrity	1.3. Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment
6	Human resources	1.3. Student-centered learning, teaching and assessment
7	Educational environment and material resources	1.5. Teaching Staff
8	Internal quality assurance of the educational program	1.6. Learning Resources and Student Support
9	Transparency and publicity	1.9. Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programs
10	Learning through research	1.7. Information management
		1.8. Public information
		1.2. Development and approval of programs
		1.5. Teaching Staff
		1.6. Learning Resources and Student Support
11		1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance

Compiled by the authors

Comparison of the criteria for assessing the quality of the educational program with the requirements of the internal quality assurance system of the ESG-2015 standards indicates that the criteria for assessing the quality of the educational program make it possible to form an idea of ensuring the quality of the educational program in all parameters

provided for in the first section of the Standards and Recommendations for Quality Assurance in the European Space higher education.

The analysis of the results of accreditation of these programs is presented in tables 4, 5, 6.

Table 4.

NAQA decision on the accreditation of educational programs in the branch 08 "Law" in the context of higher education levels for the period from 01.09.2019 to 30.02.2021.

Accreditation decisions	Higher Education Level						Total	
	first (bachelor)		second (master's)		third (educational and scientific)			
	number	%	number	%	number	%	number	%
Exemplary	-	-	-	-	1	9,1	1	1,5
Accreditation	20	60,6	13	56,5	10	90,9	43	64,2
Conditional	9	27,3	10	43,5	-	-	19	28,3
Refusal	4	12,1	-	-	-	-	4	6,0
Total by branch 08 Law	33	100,0	23	100,0	11	100,0	67	100,0

Compiled by authors using open sourced data by minutes of NAQA meetings (2021).

Table 4 shows that for the period from September 1, 2019 to September 30, 2021, NAQA made 67 decisions on the accreditation of educational programs in the branch 08 "Law". 33 educational programs of the first (bachelor's) level of higher education, 23 of the second (master's) level and 11 educational and scientific programs of the PhD level have passed the accreditation process. All educational and scientific programs have received accreditation, one of them is exemplary.

The majority of educational programs that have received conditional (deferred) accreditation are implemented at the second (master's) level. 4 educational programs of the first (bachelor's) level have not been accredited and should be closed.

Training of future lawyers in Ukraine is carried out in higher educational institutions of various profiles: classical universities; specialized legal

higher educational institutions; non-core higher educational institutions (Oprishko, 2013, pp. 10-12). Table 5 shows the results of

accreditation in the context of the profile of higher educational institutions that train legal personnel.

Table 5.

Decision of NAQA on accreditation of educational programs in the branch 08 "Law" in the context of the profile of higher educational institutions for the period from 01.09.2019 - 30.02.2021.

Accreditation Decisions	Classic universities		Higher educational institutions of law and law enforcement		Higher education institutions of a professional direction other than law	
	number	%	number	%	number	%
Exemplary Accreditation	1	6,7	-	-	-	-
Conditional	11	73,3	15	75,0	17	53,1
Refusal	3	20,0	5	25,0	11	34,4
Total by branch 08 Law	-	-	-	-	4	12,5
	15	100,0	20	100,0	32	100,0

Compiled by authors using open sourced data by minutes of NAQA meetings (2021).

The data presented in Table 5 indicate that the largest share of educational programs that have passed the accreditation process are implemented in higher educational institutions of a profile other than law, of which a third of the programs are conditionally qualified. All educational programs which were denied accreditation are implemented in these institutions. In classical universities and higher educational institutions of law and law enforcement, the share of educational programs that have received conditional accreditation is much smaller. The best accreditation results are shown by classical universities.

The results of accreditation of educational programs in the context of the profile of higher educational institutions do not support the opinion regarding the advisability of training lawyers in a narrow specialized field (Oprishko, 2013; Vorontsova, 2015). For higher educational institutions of a profile other than law, the training of lawyers is a "by-product" in relation to the main area of professional training and a source of additional funding (Kotukha & Fedorov, 2018). It should be noted that out of 32 educational programs submitted for accreditation by non-major higher educational

institutions, only two programs provide for the training of lawyers in a certain type of legal activity corresponding to the profile of a higher educational institution. These are educational programs "Legal support of aviation activity" (Flight Academy of National Aviation University), "Maritime law" (Odesa National Maritime Academy).

However, we do not agree with the opinion that the training of lawyers in higher educational institutions of law enforcement is a negative phenomenon (Kotukha & Fedorov, 2018) and we support the opinion that these institutions take an important place in the system of higher legal education, providing significant education in the knowledge branch 08 Law (Muzychuk, 2020; Abroskin & Albul, 2021). The results of accreditation of educational programs in the specialty 081 Law, which are implemented in departmental higher educational institutions of power structures, testify to the proper level of training of lawyers in the vast majority of programs.

The data given in Table 6 allow us to speak about a rather low quality of higher legal education in private higher educational institutions.

Table 6.

NAQA decision on accreditation of educational programs by industry 08 "Law" in the context of the type of ownership of higher educational institutions for the period from 01.09.2019 to 30.02.2021

Accreditation Decisions	State universities		Private universities	
	number of decisions	%	number of decisions	%
Exemplary Accreditation	1	1,7	-	-
Conditional	41	70,7	2	22,2
Refusal	15	25,9	4	44,5
Total by branch 08 Law	1	1,7	3	33,3
	58	100,0	9	100,0

Compiled by authors using open sourced data by minutes of NAQA meetings (2021).

It should be noted that the overwhelming majority of higher educational institutions that have received conditional accreditation of educational programs do not post relevant information on the official website. Out of 23 conditionally accredited or non-accredited programs, the corresponding information on the official website of the university is available for 7 educational programs.

Independent external assessment

Another important component of the external quality assurance system for higher legal education is independent external assessment.

A unified special entrance test (ESVI) and a unified entrance examination (UEE) for a master's degree admission in the technology of external independent assessment, prepared and carried out by the Ukrainian Center for Educational Quality Assessment, was introduced

in 2016. The ECVI involves a test in law and general educational legal competencies. UEE is a foreign language test (English, German, French or Spanish).

Already in 2017, everyone who wanted to get a master's degree in specialty 081 Law took a single special entrance test, which consisted of three blocks: testing for general educational legal competencies (TOUYUK): analytical, critical and logical thinking; testing in six basic legal disciplines; foreign language testing.

Since 2018, applicants for a master's degree in specialties 081 Law and 293 International Law must take a single special entrance test and a single entrance exam.

General information about the participants and the results of the unified special entrance test for the period from 2017 to 2021 is presented in tables 7, 8.

Table 7.

General information on the results of a single special admissions test.

	2017		2018		2019		2020		2021	
	Num-ber	%	Num-ber	%	Num-ber	%	Num-ber	%	Num-ber	%
Those who were registered	16892	100.0	18186	100.0	16277	100.0	17470	100.0	16300	100.0
Those who took the exam	16081	95.20	15834	87.07	14259	87.60	15243	87.25	14002	85.90
Those who did not show up for the exam	811	4.80	2352	12.93	2018	12.40	2227	12.75	2298	14.10
Those who passed the exam in law	14228	88.48	14009	88.49	10117	70.95	12535	82.23	9096	64.96
Those who didn't pass the exam in law	1853	11.52	1822	11.51	4142	29.05	2708	17.77	4906	35.04
Those who passed the exam TOUYUK	14820	92.29	14293	90.27	11686	81.96	12709	83.37	11098	79.26
Those who didn't pass the exam TOUYUK	1238	7.71	1541	9.73	2573	18.04	2534	16.63	2904	20.74

Compiled by authors using open sourced data of the Ukrainian Center for Educational Quality Assessment. (n/d).

The data shown in table 7 indicate fluctuations in the number of participants in a single special entrance test. The largest number of participants was recorded in 2018 – 18 186 people, the smallest in 2019 – 16 277 people. The absence of persons registered for testing in 2017 was 4.8%. In 2018, 12.93% of registered persons did not

appear, which is more than 2.5 times compared to 2017. In 2019 - 2020, this indicator remained almost unchanged. In 2020, there was an increase in the proportion of people who did not show up for the exam, up to 14.1%. The reasons for such a failure to appear require additional clarification. The negative dynamics of the

number of persons who passed / did not pass the unified professional entrance test is worth considering. If in 2018 the percentage of participants who did not overcome the threshold score in the exam in Law did not change compared to 2017, then in 2019 it increased 2.5 times and amounted to 29.05%. In 2021, this figure rose further to 35.04%, that is, more than a third of ETF participants who did not pass the

exam. We can also talk about a gradual increase in the percentage of test participants who did not overcome the threshold score from the TOYUK block from 7.71 in 2017 to 20.74% in 2021, that is, almost 3 times. Such negative dynamics by all criteria allows us to speak of a decrease in the level of professional training of graduates of bachelor's degrees in legal specialties of the branch of knowledge 08 Law.

Table 8.
Distribution of participants in a single special entrance test by points from the "Law" test block.

Year	The number of participants who received points from the "Law" test block		
	below 150	150-180	above 180
2017	74,74	23,17	2,09
2018	71,45	25,44	3,11
2019	77,42	20,56	2,02
2020	74,18	24,32	1,50
2021	73,09	24,77	2,14

Compiled by the authors and based on data from the Ukrainian Center for Education Quality Assessment (<http://testportal.gov.ua/stat/>).

The data on the distribution of participants in the single special admissions test by points from the "Law" block, given in table 8, for the period from 2017 to 2021 do not yet allow us to state the established trend of improvement or deterioration in the quality of training of future lawyers, since:

- firstly, in the period from 2017 to 2019, there was a fluctuation in the percentage of participants who, according to the test results from the "Law" block, scored less than 150 points, from 150 to 180 points and more than 180 points. Since 2019, the percentage of participants with less than 150 points has been gradually decreasing, but this decrease is insignificant;
- secondly, it is impossible to directly compare the test results in different countries, since in 2018 the format (100 questions versus 70) and the content (8 subjects versus 6) of the test from the "Law" block changed, in 2019 the threshold score was increased to 35 points out of 100. In 2020, the content remained unchanged, the threshold score was lowered to 30. In 2021, the threshold score was again 35. However, a very high percentage of test participants who received less than 150 points (73.09% in 2021), testifies to the still low level of professional training of graduates of bachelor's degrees in legal specialties.

The accreditation of educational and scientific programs for the preparation of applicants for the

degree of Doctor of Philosophy revealed the problem of reconciling this process with the results of state certification of higher educational institutions in terms of their scientific (scientific and technical) activities. This applies to universities related to the management of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. State certification of universities in terms of scientific (scientific and technical) activities began in Ukraine in August 2020. This procedure is carried out by expert groups in scientific areas while the commission for state certification of universities makes the final decision on certification. In essence, this certification can be considered as a component of the external quality assurance system for higher education for the preparation of applicants for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Conclusions

The external quality assurance system for higher legal education is a component of the national quality assurance system for higher education in Ukraine. Important procedures of the system of external quality assurance of higher legal education are licensing, accreditation of educational programs, independent external assessment. Various government agencies take responsibility for the implementation of these procedures, they provide the information which is based on the results of these procedures and does not have a systemic generalizing nature, which makes it difficult to evaluate comprehensively and objectively the state of the

quality of higher legal education in general and in individual universities that train lawyers.

Analysis of the dynamics of changes in the results of these procedures over the past decade allows us to state the relevance of the trends identified in the previous research (Kostova et al., 2020), in particular: a steady decline in the number of applicants for higher education in the specialty 081 Law; an unjustified increase in the number of universities that train legal personnel. The negative impact of these trends on the quality of higher legal education can be manifested due to the lower requirements for admission by universities and the lack of a sufficient number of highly qualified scientific and teaching staff.

Comparison of the results of these external assessment procedures allows us to state that the highest level of professional training of lawyers is provided by the leading state classical universities and higher educational institutions of the legal direction.

The impact of external quality assurance procedures in higher legal education should be supported by the development of an internal quality assurance system at the universities.

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