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INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION IN UKRAINE:

TRADITIONS, OPPORTUNITIES, AND CHALLENGES

The training of qualified international students is a key priority for the development of the Ukrainian higher education system. The history of teaching foreigners in independent Ukraine dates back to the early 1990s. For decades, the country has confidently maintained its status as an attractive educational hub. A unique combination of high academic standards, financial accessibility, and a multifaceted cultural heritage facilitates it. Leading university centers, Kyiv, Kharkiv, Lviv, and Odesa, offer foreign applicants modern English-language programs that are fully integrated into the global educational space. The key factors determining the competitiveness of Ukrainian higher

education in the international market are the optimal balance of price and quality of educational services. Additional investment appeal is created by the international recognition of domestic diplomas and by the admissions campaign's flexibility, which allows foreign applicants to start their studies twice a year.

The work aims to analyze the state and prospects of professional training for international students in Ukraine and to identify the key advantages and disadvantages of the education system.

About one-third of international students in Ukraine are citizens of post-Soviet countries. For a long time, Azerbaijan was the leader in the number of students, but in 2017, India took the lead. Currently, the list of countries with the largest representation includes India (almost 11,000 people), Azerbaijan (7,500), Morocco (5,800), Turkmenistan (4,500), and Nigeria (3,500). A significant number of students also come from Georgia, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey, and Uzbekistan (4).

Medicine remains the leader in the structure of Ukraine's educational services exports: almost 45% of foreign applicants choose medical specialties. This is due to the high level of training, the recognition of Ukrainian diplomas abroad (in particular by the WHO and UNESCO), and the competitive cost of education compared to the EU or the US.

Among the opportunities for training international students in Ukrainian higher education institutions, it is worth noting the process of joining the European Education Area and the European Research Area; expanding access to international sources of funding for educational and scientific activities; and experience in international educational and scientific cooperation.

In addition to medicine, there is consistently high demand for the following fields:

- ✓ *Management and economics*, which attract future entrepreneurs thanks to adapted English-language programmes;
- ✓ *Law* – popular among students from countries with similar legal systems;
- ✓ *Construction and civil engineering*. Ukraine's technical schools are traditionally considered among the strongest in Eastern Europe.

Among the most popular in terms of the number of international students are Kharkiv National Medical University (5,500 international students), V. N. Karazin Kharkiv National University (4,300), Odesa National Medical University, Zaporizhzhia State Medical and Pharmaceutical University, and Bogomolets National Medical University. 39% of international students are attracted to Ukraine's moderate education costs, which are sometimes several times lower than those at universities in Asia and Europe.

Students note the optimal balance between cost and quality of education at Ukrainian universities. Students from other countries are provided with virtually the same study conditions as Ukrainians themselves. It ensures the full integration of foreigners into the educational process and equal access to academic resources. They have access to the following higher education levels: bachelor's, master's, doctor of philosophy, and doctor of science. The same study options are available: part-time, full-time, and distance learning. An important feature is the choice of language of instruction: Ukrainian or English. For those who do not have a sufficient command of the language of instruction, preparatory faculties (departments) operate at universities. Throughout the year, foreigners intensively study the language and specialised disciplines, which becomes a solid foundation for further admission to the main course (Боднар & Яценко, 2021, 22).

Spiritual culture is a complex, multi-layered system that combines cognitive culture (science, education, philosophy), moral culture, artistic culture, and religious culture, among others. Since culture permeates all spheres of life, it is the key to successful adaptation for foreigners. With this in mind, for the effective adaptation of international students to a new socio-cultural space, it is advisable to highlight the functional block of etiquette and traditions. It should include studying customs, established restrictions, and social taboos that ensure tolerant communication and

psychological comfort within the walls of the higher education institution (Богиня & Горбенко, 2022).

Despite the advantages, several significant drawbacks prevent attracting more students. Our universities are poorly represented in well-known global rankings (such as QS or Times Higher Education). Because of this, foreigners often do not know about the quality of education in Ukraine. Also, by law, international students cannot officially work part-time while studying. It is a big disadvantage, as in many other countries, students can work part-time to support themselves (Кричківська & Зварич, 2023, 78).

Thus, foreigners choose to study in Ukraine for various reasons. For some, it is an opportunity to learn the language or visit the homeland of their ancestors. In contrast, for others, it is a chance to pursue a profession and build a successful career. Ukraine continues to develop international educational cooperation actively, attracting international students and providing them with opportunities for study and professional development.

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