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**HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM IN UKRAINE (2014 – 2022)
IN THE RECEPTION OF DOMESTIC SOCIAL MEDIA**

Abstract. The Purpose of the Research. It is important to elucidate the content of the media discourse on the higher education reform in Ukraine, to single out the main topics covered by the Ukrainian mass media, and also to indicate an analytical and evaluative component of the materials on the reforms in higher education. The chronological framework of the study (2014 – 2022) is determined by: a) the end of the Revolution of Dignity and the coming to power of pro-European governments in Ukraine, b) the beginning of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, which suspended the reform process temporarily. **The research methodology** is based on the principles of scientificity, systematicity, as well as the use of discourse analysis as an interdisciplinary approach to the study on mass media space. **The scientific novelty** consists in the fact that the directions and substantive aspects of the issues on higher education reform of Ukraine have been elucidated in the discourse of social media (2014 – 2022) for the first time. **The Conclusions.** Therefore, the reception of the reforms in the field of higher education by the Ukrainian media was concentrated around several aspects that formed the basis of the

media discourse in this direction. Firstly, the content of the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”, adopted in July of 2014, was covered in detail. In general, the approval of the law was called “the first real reform after the Maidan”, although there were opposing opinions about the creation of “corruption risks”. Secondly, the media discussed the success and failures of the reform, noted such achievements as autonomy of universities, formation of a system for ensuring the quality of higher education, growth of the role of student self-government, and activation of international activities of universities. On the other hand, the mass media noted the failure to solve the problem of scholarship payments and outdated approaches to the state order for the training of specialists with a higher education diploma. Thirdly, the changes introduced in 2016 to the requirements for scientific and pedagogical staff to obtain the scientific titles of Professor and Associate Professor were highlighted. Fourthly, reforms in the field of higher medical education were described, which were related to the strengthening of requirements for the level of training of applicants and students (introduction of a high passing score at admission, testing of students’ knowledge using American tests). Fifthly, for some time the mass media discussed the issue of a formulaic principle introduction of funding distribution among universities, introduced by the government resolution at the end of 2019, giving both positive and critical opinions. Sixthly, the Ukrainian media were not sufficiently interested in the work of National Agency for Quality Assurance of Higher Education, focusing only on a number of scandals regarding the formation of its composition.

Keywords: social media, Russo-Ukrainian War, reforms, higher education.

РЕФОРМУВАННЯ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ УКРАЇНИ (2014 – 2022) У РЕЦЕПЦІЇ ВІТЧИЗНЯНИХ СОЦІАЛЬНИХ МЕДІА

Анотація. **Мета дослідження** – з’ясувати зміст медійного дискурсу щодо реформування вищої освіти в Україні, виокремити основні теми, які висвітлювалися українськими ЗМІ, а також вказати на аналітичну й оцінювальну складову матеріалів, присвячених реформам у вищій освіті. Хронологічні рамки дослідження (2014 – 2022) зумовлені: а) завершенням Революції Гідності та приходом до влади проєвропейських урядів в Україні, б) початком повномасштабної війни Росії проти України, яка на деякий час призупинила процес реформ. **Методологія дослідження** ґрунтується на принципах науковості, системності, а також використанні дискурс-аналізу як міждисциплінарного підходу до студіювання мас-медійного простору. **Наукова новизна** полягає у тому, що вперше розкрито напрями і змістові аспекти проблематики реформи вищої освіти України в дискурсі соціальних медіа (2014 – 2022). **Висновки.** Отже, реценція українськими ЗМІ реформ у сфері вищої освіти концентрувалася навколо декількох аспектів, які склали основу медійного дискурсу у цьому напрямі. По-перше, детально висвітлювалися зміст Закону України “Про вищу освіту”, прийнятого у липні 2014 р. Загалом схвалення закону називали “першою реальною реформою після Майдану”, хоча й звучали протилежні думки про створення “корупційних ризиків”. По-друге, в медіа дискутувалися успіхи і невдачі запровадження реформи, відзначалися такі досягнення, як автономія університетів, формування системи забезпечення якості вищої освіти, зростання ролі студентського самоврядування, активізація міжнародної діяльності університетів. З іншого боку, у ЗМІ констатувалося нерозв’язання проблеми виплат стипендій та застарілі підходи до державного замовлення на підготовку фахівців з вищою освітою. По-третє, висвітлювалися запроваджені у 2016 р. зміни вимог до отримання науково-педагогічними працівниками вчених звань професора та доцента. По-четверте, описувалися реформи у сфері вищої медичної освіти, які стосувалися посилення вимог до рівня підготовки абітурієнтів і студентів (запровадження високого проходного балу при вступі, перевірку знань студентів за допомогою американських тестів). По-п’яте, деякий час ЗМІ обговорювали питання запровадження формульного принципу розподілу фінансування між університетами, запровадженого Постановою уряду наприкінці 2019 р., наводили як позитивні, так і критичні думки. По-шосте, українські медіа недостатньо цікавилися роботою НАЗЯВО, приділяючи увагу цій структурі лише з огляду на низку скандалів щодо формування її складу.

Ключові слова: соціальні медіа, російсько-українська війна, реформи, вища освіта.

The Problem Statement. The educational policy of Ukraine during the period under analysis was determined due to several issues, on the one hand, by the conditions of russia’s

unconventional aggression, on the other hand, by the political course for joining the European Union (EU), and, hence, by a drastic need to meet the European requirements regarding educational field. The Ukrainian mass media covered meticulously and analysed the key components of the educational policy of numerous Ukrainian governments that worked under the conditions of the Russo-Ukrainian War. A significant part of the educational discourse in the media concerned the issues of reforming higher education. It is explained by the fact that the higher education reform was one of the first after the victory of the Revolution of Dignity in Ukraine. Taking the above-mentioned into account, we consider that it is important to study the reception of the higher education reform in Ukraine in the Ukrainian mass media, primarily in social media, which are the most popular among the population.

The Review Analysis of Recent Researches. The Ukrainian scholars studied the role, meaning and discursive practices of the mass media under the conditions of the Russo-Ukrainian War, in particular, Marian Zhytariuk (Zhytariuk, 2023), Tetiana Rohova and Kateryna Kasimova (Rohova & Kasimova, 2023), Valeriya Yarzhevska (2023). Mykola Filonov outlined the achievements and prospects in the Ukrainian mass media transformation during the war (Filonov, 2023). The American researcher K. J. Boyte (Boyte, 2017) and the Ukrainian scholars Mykola Makhortykh and Maryna Sydorova (Makhortykh & Sydorova, 2017) did the analysis on the technologies and narratives of social media in the context of propaganda during the war in Ukraine. The British scholar Piers Robinson (Robinson, 2014), Oxford University Professor Marta Dyczok (Dyczok, 2015), and the Ukrainian researcher Oleksiy Izhak (Izhak, 2016) found out the theoretical principles of the media activity under the conditions of war at the beginning of the 21st century. There were borrowed some methodological aspects of the research from the works written by Mykola Haliv and Vasyl Ilnytskyi (Haliv & Ilnytskyi, 2021; Haliv & Ilnytskyi, 2023). It should be noted that the reception of the issues on the higher education reform in Ukraine by the Ukrainian mass media has not been studied in the scientific field yet.

The Purpose of the Research. It is important to elucidate the content of the media discourse on the higher education reform in Ukraine, to single out the main topics covered by the Ukrainian mass media, and also to indicate an analytical and evaluative component of the materials on the reforms in higher education. The chronological framework of the study (2014 – 2022) is determined by: a) the end of the Revolution of Dignity and the coming to power of pro-European governments in Ukraine, b) the beginning of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, which suspended the reform process temporarily.

The Results of the Research. Serhii Kvit, Rector of the National University “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy”, headed the Ministry for Education and Science of Ukraine (MON) at the beginning of 2014, as a result of the victory of the Revolution of Dignity, changed the management staff of the Ministry. It is obvious that the mass media tried to find out the tasks and priorities of a new team of the Ministry for Education and Science. Yevhen Solonyna, the correspondent of Radio Svoboda (Radio Liberty) based on S. Kvit's press conference, made an attempt to outline the priority areas of the reformers' team activity at the beginning of March of 2014. First of all, Yevhen noted the limited financial resources of the Ministry for Education and Science of Ukraine and the educational sphere in general, stating that it serves as a deterrent to educational reforms. According to Yevhen, there were among the priorities of the team reformers the following ones: the desire to make transparent the influx of money in the field of education, streamline the licensing procedure for higher education institutions, to improve the system of external examinations, to promote the development of science

at Universities and turn scientific achievements into a key criterion for evaluating their activities, improve the legislation on higher education. Furthermore, to Ye. Solonyna's mind, due to a lack of finances, the Ministry for Education and Science of Ukraine will be forced to develop reform projects "for later" in the near future and their implementation is possible only with the achievement of a political and economic stability of the state (Solonyna, 2014).

Consequently, in mid-March of 2014, the media revealed that S. Kvit had determined the Ministry for Education and Science the goal as "the quality of secondary and higher education". However, he admitted that at this stage it was necessary to work mainly with complaints about the work of the predecessors. At the same time, he stressed out that the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" was being prepared, which, according to the Minister, would be adopted within a few weeks, as well as the development of a new concept on licensing of higher education institutions and the concept of reforming the procedure for nostrification of diplomas (Stelmakh, 2014). At that time, the undeclared Russo-Ukrainian War had already begun, the adoption of the new law had to be postponed, so the media somewhat focused less on the government's initiatives in the field of education.

The activities of the post-revolutionary government in the field of education were quite often reactive, related to the solution of current issues, which arose due to the occupation of the Crimea and parts of Donbas, as well as the fulfillment of annual objectives defined by law. However, the main feature of the activity of the Ministry for Education and Science under the leadership of S. Kvit was the growing attention to the higher education issues, which was also marked by the adoption of the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" on July 1 of 2014.

The higher education reform was developed even before the Revolution of Dignity, but owing to the revolutionaries, who came to power, it was finalized and started with the adoption of the law mentioned above. The mass media put emphasize on the innovations provided for by the law on higher education: 1) the National Agency for Quality Assurance of Higher Education (the Ukrainian abbreviation –NAZIAVO) emergence; 2) the anti-plagiarism norms strengthening and responsibility for them (it was about a mandatory publication of scientific papers); 3) a new mechanism formation for the election of higher education institutions Rectors; 4) the term limit of office for senior higher education employees (Rectors, Deans, Heads of Departments) to two five-year terms; 5) granting the right of higher education institutions to award academic degrees; 6) granting the right to state universities to place their own funds, obtained as a result of educational and scientific activities, in state banks accounts; 7) reduction of educational workload of scientific and pedagogical workers to 600 hours; 8) introduction of an electronic admission mechanism to higher education from 2016; 9) creation of conditions for increased mobility of students and teachers; 10) a gradual abandonment of the junior Specialist level and the introduction of the junior Bachelor's Degree. It was highlighted that the law expands the autonomy of higher education institutions (HEI), obliges HEI to implement an internal monitoring regarding the quality of education and publish it on the official websites (Rada ukhvalyla zakon, 2014).

There was a sublimated message about "the first real reform after the Maidan", which appeared on the website of the "Ukrayinska Pravda" after the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" was signed by President Petro Poroshenko (July 31, 2014) (Persha realna reforma, 2014). In general, such ideas, which were borrowed from S. Kvit's post on social networks, were also shared by other Ukrainian mass media. Taras Shamaida, the journalist, published on the "Osvita.ua" portal a description of the new law that had just entered into force in September of 2014. The journalist singled out not 10, but 16 innovations in higher education

if to compare to the previous posts. In particular, Taras Shamaida highlighted a growing role and influence of student self-government, which would receive a permanent funding (0,5% of the financial income of higher education institutions). There were also mentioned: the emergence of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), the reduction of the work load on students (because the amount of credit will be 30 hours instead of 36), the establishment of scholarships not lower than the living wage, the introduction of a competitive system of state procurement. The author emphasized that from now on, teaching would be carried out exclusively in the state language, and a new classification of higher education institutions would be introduced: universities; institutes and academies (branch educational institutions); colleges (with the right to train specialists at the junior Bachelor's and Bachelor's Degree). T. Shamaida also stressed out there was the "war against plagiarism", the possibility for students to choose at least 25% of academic disciplines, the prohibition of combining administrative positions in educational institutions, and also emphasized: "there will be no eternal Rectors and Deans" (Shamaida, 2014).

The critical opinions about the new law appeared in the mass media in a short time. Hence, the Vice-Rector of Kherson State University, Oleksandr Spivakovsky, published an article "How to Reform Education" on the website of "Ukrayinska Pravda" at the end of December of 2014. To his mind, the new law on higher education will not solve the current issues of this education sector, but, on the contrary, will create prerequisites for the development of "a local corruption". He brought in several further steps on the way to reforming higher education, which would be of a "systemic nature". First of all, O. Spivakovsky emphasized the need to "create balance in management" of higher education institutions. The author of the article made the following suggestion, while criticizing the concentration of power in the hands of one person – the Rector: 1) to introduce the position of chancellor in HEI, who will be responsible for the financial side of the institution's activities (hence, to deprive rectors of the "right to sign" financial documents); 2) all decisions regarding the development of higher educational institutions should be made by the Academic Council, which should not be headed by Rector, Vice-Rector or Dean; 3) to return the norm according to which Dean is elected by a faculty's staff, not Academic Council of the University. According to the author, the separation of the functions of Rector, Academic Council, Chancellor, the dependence of Dean on the staff, and not on Rector, will make it possible to "decentralize education from top to bottom" (Spivakovskyi, 2014).

In addition, O. Spivakovsky suggested creating the National Agency for the Management of the Scholarship Fund, which would eliminate Higher Education Institutions from managing student scholarships, and would enable financing of students with the help of three mechanisms: without refund, with refund without interest, with refund with interest. It would make it possible to personalize a scholarship, to adapt it more to the needs of each specific student by taking the above-mentioned steps. There was the introduction of salary payments directly by the State Treasury, the formation of the National Agency for the Management of Grants for Scientific Research among other suggestions made by O. Spivakovsky. The author focused on the functions of the Ministry for Education and Science, which, to his mind, should consist in the development of standards and measurements in the education system, creation of a mechanism for licensing professional activities, development of a toolkit for interaction with the labour market, coordination of national agencies work, financing of material and technical needs of higher education institutions, proportional financing of utility services of the HEI, approval of staff lists of the HEI and their control (Spivakovskyi, 2014).

The article written by S. Kvit was published on the website of the “Ukrayinska Pravda” immediately, in which there were explained the principles of reform in the field of higher education. First of all, S. Kvit pointed out the shortcomings that had accumulated in higher education: a low quality of education, the Ukrainian universities uncompetitiveness that are not included in the first hundred world rankings, deterioration of basic funds, aging of scientific and pedagogical personnel, inefficient use of funds. Despite the fact that 7% of GDP was spent on education in Ukraine in general. S. Kvit stated that the most important achievement of the reform was the introduction of University autonomy and the formation of modern mechanisms for ensuring the quality of higher education. He considered the autonomy of higher education institutions as a tool that would strengthen responsibility of University management in the decentralization process of forming the content of education. The control over this would be carried out by the universities themselves and by NAZIAVO. According to the Minister, the labour market and competition among graduates will force higher education institutions to take care of the quality of education and efficient organization of the educational process. He also emphasized that universities should offer a different level from school curriculum (and not catch up the school curriculum), not consider humanitarian disciplines as an educational, ideological means of influencing students, emphasized the need for Bachelors to master the English language (Kvit, 2015).

There were several ideas in S. Kvit’s article about the need to reduce the number of higher education institutions in Ukraine, unprofessionalism and irresponsibility of higher education institutions management (he interpreted the latter as a consequence of the post-colonial reality), the need for students to form their own educational trajectory. The Minister also focused on student scholarships, as there are allocated significant funds every year – about 5 billion hryvnias by the state. In his opinion, the academic scholarship covers 2/3 of the “students who are financed by the state” and it turned into a kind of a social payment. Instead, there should be an individual approach, taking into account first of all a student’s academic success, a student’s need for a dormitory, travel and food expenses. At the same time, S. Kvit gave examples of the European countries with regard to scholarship payments, when an individual approach was applied. He also emphasized the change in the principles of financing universities (Kvit, 2015). The Minister tried to highlight the need to reveal the educational potential of our country fully.

There were rumors about S. Kvit’s dismissal from the post of Minister, which appeared in the mass media at the end of 2015. Hence, the press and online media started discussing the success and failures of the Minister’s team.

Yehor Stadnyi, the Executive Director of the CEDOS analytical centre, mentioned the following achievements of S. Kvit and his staff: emergence of a new list of fields of knowledge and specialties, the right to manage universities’ own funds outside of the State Treasury, simplifying academic mobility procedures, and introducing a new format of admissions campaign, which involved selection of priorities by applicants. Ye. Stadnyi also dwelled on the shortcomings of the Minister’s work, among which there was a problematic nature of the Unified State Database on Education (YEDEBO), which still performs authorization functions, instead of becoming a tool for registering processes in education, collecting relevant data, etc. The formation of the NAZIAVO team was another issue. There were people, who got into NAZIAVO with the help of University quota, with whom “nobody would shake hands in an ordinary academic environment” (Rozmovy pro vazhlyve, 2015). At the same time, Ye. Stadnyi expressed his fear that the removal of the MON team would

block the progress of reforms, which had been already hampered by the bureaucratic system.

The expert Volodymyr Bakhrushyn considered among the achievements of the Ministry for Education and Science, headed by S. Kvit, the following: cancellation of numerous unnecessary outdated normative documents, a dynamic activity under war conditions, preservation of social guarantees for educators, courage to conduct unpopular measures. The project manager of the National Reform Council, Olena Zaplotynska, noted the “titanic work” of the Ministry for Education regarding development and implementation of dozens of regulatory documents aimed at implementing the Law “On Higher Education” (Rozmovy pro vazhlyve, 2015). The mass media also characterized positively the provision of the opportunity for the Ukrainian higher education institutions to participate in the European Union’s “Horizon 2020 Programmes”. It is known that the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine ratified the relevant agreement with the EU on July 15 of 2015 on the initiative of the Ministry for Education and Science, while Ukraine received a 95% discount on the membership fee, and payments for year of 2015 were transferred to the following years in the amount of more than 5 million euros (2016 – 2020) (Rada ratyfikovala uhodu, 2015). The correspondents of the RBK-Ukraine noted a crucial role of the agreement in bringing the Ukrainian higher education closer to European standards.

Inna Sovsun, People’s Deputy published an article in the form of a “progress report” on the “Ukrayinska Pravda” website in order to sum up the reforms in higher education two years after the Revolution of Dignity. In the article it was emphasized that, in general, changes in the field of higher education occurred slowly, sometimes almost imperceptibly, but since the adoption of the Law “On Higher Education” it became possible to change the procedure for admission to higher education institutions, making it automated, eliminating the possibility of non-transparent enrollment of students after completing the promotion procedures rating lists.

There was approved a new list of fields of knowledge and specialties, which was brought closer to international classifications, which facilitated the procedures for recognition of qualifications, and also gave the opportunity to universities to form new interdisciplinary educational programmes. In order to implement the principle of the universities’ autonomy, typical staff lists were abolished, the universities were allowed to place funds in bank accounts, as well as to create educational programmes without approval by the Ministry for Education and Science, and the requirements regarding a mandatory nature of certain mass disciplines were abolished. I. Sovsun noted the growing opportunities for more intensive international cooperation for the Ukrainian higher education institutions, in particular through joining the “Horizon 2020 Programme”. Among the positive achievements I. Sovsun singled out the holding of a series of trainings for student activists aimed at clarifying the rights and opportunities of students under modern conditions (Sovsun, 2016).

At the same time, I. Sovsun, who supported Minister S. Kvit unconditionally, listed the key objectives regarding changes in higher education for 2016. First of all, she emphasized the need to update the content of education, for which Scientific and Methodical Council should be formed at MON, and competitions for scientific and methodical commissions that would develop new standards of higher education. In addition, it is necessary to reform state procurement, as well as financing of higher education in general, moving from the “traditional Soviet scheme for the distribution of state procurement” to a modern European system based on indicators of higher education institution success. The changes provide that the distribution of funds for higher education institutions will be carried out according to a formula that will

take into account both the number of students and scientific results, internationalization, the internal system of ensuring the quality of education, the level of employment of graduates, etc. Performance indicators should be collected through monitoring systems that will ensure the objectivity and reliability of the information obtained. According to I. Sovsun, the number of universities should be further reduced, creating an optimal network of higher education institutions that would meet the needs of society. In addition, the People's Deputy announced a pilot project for conducting external examinations (ZNO) for admission to Master's Degrees, which will concern lawyers primarily (Sovsun, 2016).

The Ministry for Education and Science of Ukraine brought out changes to the requirements for the scientific and the pedagogical workers to obtain the academic titles of Professor and Associate Professor in 2016. It was required to certify their knowledge of a foreign language at a level not lower than B2, complete an international internship, and publish a certain number of articles in publications that are indexed in the scientific-metric databases Scopus, Web of Science. Mostly, only the media paid attention to this news, which specialize in covering educational information (Vcheni zvan'nia, 2015). These innovations were also called "reforms" in the media discourse. Despite the fact that the teachers of higher education institutions in the majority of cases reacted negatively to such a decision, opinions in support of the changes appeared in the media. Hence, Yuriy Khalavka, Associate Professor of Chernivtsi National University published an article on the website of the "Ukrayinska Pravda" in which he justified the need for changes. He emphasized the importance of the English language proficiency for the scientific and scientific pedagogical workers, emphasized that most of the implemented criteria are objective, although not always easily accessible. Yu. Khalavka predicted competition between universities for teachers, who would strive to form a high-quality teaching staff (Khalavka, 2016). Tetiana Tyshchuk, the editor-in-chief of "Vox Ukraine" supported the changes in the requirements for Professors and Associate Professors, calling them a "Ukrainian filter". She criticized those Rectors and lecturers, who were against the innovations, as well as the Ministry for Education and Science, which, under pressure, backed down from the requirements and offered to change a new provision, removing the requirement for knowledge of a foreign language. Hence, the journalist called such a step "anti-reform". According to T. Tyshchuk, the previous system of requirements, which was functioned until 2016, was extremely imperfect, because even Viktor Yanukovich was able to receive the academic title of "Professor" (Tyshchuk, 2016).

The scale of reforms in higher education did not meet the needs of the public, which was also reflected in the mass media. For example, Maria Repko and Yulia Ruda, the members of the non-governmental research organization "Economic Strategy Center" published their conclusion on the state of higher education in Ukraine on the "Vox Ukraine" website at the beginning of 2017. They pointed at numerous of disparities. First of all, in Ukraine in 2000 – 2015, the number of youth aged 15 – 19 years benefited by 41%, while the number of students – by only 8%. The reduction in the number of people obtaining higher education took place, but slowly: in 2013, 4/5 of the Ukrainian youth studied at higher education institutions. In 2000, 50% of school graduates entered higher education institutions, and in 2016 – 80%. Second of all, in 2010 – 2015, the total number of higher education students decreased by 33,5%, and the number of those, who studied with state funds decreased by 19%. If in 2000, 38% of those seeking higher education studied with state funds, then in 2016 – 51%. Third of all, the number of teachers at higher education institutions almost did not decrease (for 2010 – 2015, it decreased by only 13%, while the number of students

decreased by 33,5%). In 2015, there were 11 students for one teacher of higher education in Ukraine, while in European countries this indicator was 15 people. Fourth of all, the level of public spending on higher education is 1,1-1,4% of GDP, while in developed countries it is 1%. Lecturers' salaries account for 60% of the total expenditure on higher education, and scholarship funding accounts for 32%. In European countries, this indicator is, respectively, as follows: 66 and 17%. Children from affluent families become students, and the state pays scholarships to them in the majority of cases. Fifth of all, due to the outdated system of financing and inflexible remuneration, the Ukrainian universities lose competition in the world. There are 6 universities per 1 million people in Ukraine, while there are 2 in Great Britain, 5 in Sweden and Germany. The Ukrainian universities are not included in the world rankings at the same time (in particular, in the TOP 800 Times Higher Education and ARWU TOP 500). Understanding this, the Ukrainian applicants and students show dissatisfaction with the quality of higher education in Ukraine, choosing to study abroad. If, there were 28,000 Ukrainians in 2010, who studied in foreign higher education institutions, then in 2015 – almost 60,000 Ukrainians. (Repko & Ruda, 2017).

In the article by M. Repko and Yu. Ruda it was emphasized that the development of higher education institutions was hindered by excessive bureaucracy, dependence on the Ministry for Education and Science in decision-making, lack of understanding of the interaction of education with the labour market, and lack of competition among universities regarding the quality of education. Hence, the authors stated the following: higher education needs a “radical and comprehensive reform”. In general, they made the following suggestions for reforming higher education: 1) to corporatize universities and create Supervisory Boards on the model of those operating at state-owned enterprises; 2) to grant higher education institutions broad financial autonomy by establishing strict control over the use of state funds; 3) to change the system of providing scholarships, giving the right to higher education institutions to pay scholarships at their own expense only to the most talented students, and therefore to build their own student motivation systems by providing dormitories, health care services, travel expenses, etc.; 4) to reform the state order by introducing a system of grants, which will create a situation of competition between state and private universities for the opportunity to educate a student (Repko & Ruda, 2017).

There was information on the initiative of Minister L. Hrynevych to revise the Law “On Higher Education”, which appeared in the mass media at the beginning of 2018. According to the Minister, granting a wide autonomy to universities strengthened a certain gap among the leading universities and the “other” higher education institutions. If the leading universities used autonomy for the development (introduced new educational programmes, intensified international activities, attracted grant funds, in particular for research), the “other” higher education institutions only increased the requirements for teachers to provide reports. L. Hrynevych highlighted the need to debureaucratize universities, and also invited representatives of higher education institutions to take part in the development of changes to the Law “On Higher Education” (Hrynevych planuie, 2018). The Minister expressed similar theses at the beginning of 2019 in her comments for the “Radio Svoboda”. However, this time L. Hrynevych also stressed out the bribery issues in higher education institutions, referring to the results of student surveys, according to which 30% admitted that it was more convenient for them to pay a teacher than to prepare for an exam. The Minister called the “corruption agreement” between teachers and students immoral (Ukrainsku shkolu reformuiemo, 2019). However, there were not taken any specific measures.

There were certain reforms, which took place in the field of the medical education in 2017 – 2019. At that time, a series of scandals broke out related to Rectors of the medical universities in Kyiv and Odesa, which were covered in the mass media. The new leadership of the Ministry for Health of Ukraine (MHU), led by Uliana Suprun, set a course not only for the reforms in the system of training doctors. The Ministry for Health launched an assessment on the state of the medical education in Ukraine based on the international standards at the beginning of 2017. The mass media reported on the holding of the licensing exam “Krok 3. General Medical Training”, which is mandatory for the medical interns attestation. It was planned to conduct an international comparative study based on the “International Foundations of Medicine” (IFOM) test for the students of the sixth year of the “Medicine” field (Znannia studentiv-medykiv, 2017). The Deputy Minister of Health Oleksandr Linchevskiy and the Deputy Director of the Testing Centre at the Ministry for Health Lesia Voitenko revealed the purpose, content and organizational conditions of the testing to the journalists of the “Ukrainian Pravda” (Blyzko 10% maibutnikh likariv, 2017). In addition, at the initiative of the Ministry for Health, there was determined a passing score for applicants to medical universities (150 points), which strengthened the requirements for the level of training of applicants (150 baliv, 2017). However, there were scandals, which were related to the cancellation of the corresponding order that broke out almost immediately. Oleksandr Yabchanka, the Chief Expert of the medical group of the “Resuscitation Package of Reforms”, made some attempts to oppose the reform, hence, he argued against the cancellation of the order, criticized the state order system for medical higher education institutions, approving the initiative of the Ministry for Health to eliminate a “manual distribution” of the number of places at the medical universities in an article for the “Ukrayinska Pravda” (Yabchanka, 2017). Eduard Rubin, the founder of Kharkiv IT cluster, shared similar thoughts in the media (Rubin, 2017). In 2017, the representatives of the Ministry for Health continued to defend their position with the help of the media, proving the need for the “150 points” criterion and the KROK 1 Exam (general academic disciplines) and KROK 2 Exam (professionally oriented disciplines) (Linchevskiy, 2017).

The passing score (150) was still applied for the admission to medical universities in 2018. It led to the fact that 28% fewer applicants entered medical specialties than the previous year (Do medychnykh vyshiv, 2018). The student protests broke out against such changes in various cities of Ukraine, as well as against the international IFOM test developed in the USA, which became mandatory for the third-year students in 2019, and lawsuits were filed against the Ministry for Health. It is obvious that the mass media covered various vicissitudes of the above-mentioned struggle. Yevhen Solonyna, the journalist, wrote a thorough article on this issue and published it on the “Radio Svoboda” website. He collected the views of various participants in the process of reforming medical education. Hence, U. Suprun noted that the IFOM exam was not a “bullying” of students – it was an international exam on disciplines that every doctor must know. The students’ representatives highlighted their unpreparedness for the exam, because “the curricula are old, and the testing is new”. O. Linchevsky pointed at the sabotage actions by the management of the medical universities, who were interested in foreign students and contract students. An expert Zoriana Chernenko criticized the previous system of training specialists, but noted the following issue: the test tasks were based on the American model, and the training method in the USA was somewhat different: the application of an inductive method at first and then theory. Instead, the theory is taught first, and then examples are considered in Ukraine. Therefore, curricula should be improved,

so that, the implementation of the idea of the American testing would be more productive for the Ukrainian students. The article also emphasized that the IFOM exam would also be mandatory for the sixth-year students of the Ukrainian medical higher education institutions from 2022 (Solonyna, 2019).

It should be stated that less attention was paid to higher education issues in the Ukrainian media in 2019 – 2020, especially against the background of the adoption and implementation of the laws “On Education” and “On General Secondary Education”. However, for some time the mass media discussed the issue of the introduction of the formulaic principle of distribution of funds between educational institutions, introduced by a government decree at the end of 2019. On the website of the portal “Osvita.ua” a new approach was described at the beginning of 2020. It was stressed out that from then on, state higher education institutions would receive 80% of funds from their budget of the previous year, and the rest of the budget funds would be distributed among universities taking into account the following indicators: the scale of University, the regional coefficient, the number of students, employment of graduates, positions in international rankings, the amount of funds for research, which the university would earn from extrabudgetary sources. In addition, the requirement of the indicative cost of providing educational services was introduced for higher education institutions in order to stop massive dumping of the cost of education and to force universities to bring tuition prices in line with market prices (Kontseptsiiia reformy, 2020).

In this regard, a blogger Yevhen Nikolayev noted on his website that the distribution of funds for financing higher education would become more transparent, and also noted the following innovations: financing of training students in certain expensive and narrow professional specialties (musical arts, medicine, engineering specialties); elimination of correlation between the number of teachers and the number of students, which will enable higher education institutions to regulate the issue of the number of personnel independently; private higher education institutions will also be able to receive state orders for the training of specialists. At the same time, he noted that larger universities would receive more funding, and smaller ones would have an incentive to merge with larger institutions. However, according to Ye. Nikolayev, the formula does not eliminate the problem of irrationality of the state ordering system for the training of specialists: the state will continue to order the training of a certain number of specialists from various specialties at the higher education institutions every year, at a time when there are no objective indicators to determine this number among the majority of specialties (Nikolaiev, 2020).

Serhii Zakharin, the scholar-economist, criticized strongly the formulaic principle of distribution of state funds between HEI and pointed out two issues. First of all, the formula will apply only to those higher education institutions that are subordinate to the Ministry for Education and Science, which introduces a certain inequality in the funding of different departmental universities. Second of all, any model of budget financing must be based on the Budget Code, according to which the state is obliged to cover the wages of employees of budget institutions (and therefore, reducing the funding of higher education institutions according to the formula may violate the state’s obligations to employees) (Zakharin, 2020). The media discourse was dominated by positive assessments of this reform mostly despite everything.

It should be stated that, unfortunately, the mass media were not sufficiently interested in the work of NAZIAVO. There were reports about the scandalous composition of this body, which was formed back in 2015 from time to time in the press and online publications. It is known that at that time Serhiy Khrapaty, who previously worked in the team of the odious Minister

Dmytro Tabachnyk, was elected the head of the National Agency. In addition, NAZIAVO included people who fell under the lustration law, namely Volodymyr Bondarenko and Yuriy Dudnyk. By the way, back in November of 2016, S. Khrapaty gave an interview to the online publication “Left Bank”. In the preamble to the published interview, the journalists reminded readers that in 2011, the official scandalized himself during a speech at the Kyiv Polytechnic Institute, appealing to the “historians” with the demand to “understand and present Ukrainian history correctly” (Urubkov, 2016). In the end, the first NAZIAVO staff did not start working.

The government approved a new NAZIAVO staff headed by ex-minister S. Kvit at the end of 2018. In one of his first interviews in his new position (March of 2019), he emphasized that the primary objective of the new body would be accreditation of educational programmes (he compared them to “specializations”), which should be consolidated and combined. The official complained that unification of small educational programmes was still taking place slowly, although at Ukrainian universities even before 2015, the number of academic disciplines was three times numerous than in Western institutions of higher education. S. Kvit also recognized insufficient attention of the Ukrainian higher education institutions to the issues of education quality, an insignificant involvement of students in improving educational programmes (Shymkiv, 2019).

However, NAZIAVO’s activities took place in the context of several court processes. Some of them were related to the agency’s decisions regarding plagiarism in the scientific papers of top officials. Ultimately, in October of 2021, the Supreme Court of Ukraine ruled to cancel the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine to approve the composition of the agency in 2018, based on shortcomings in the legislation. The following month, the Ukrainian parliament unblocked the work of the institution, making the necessary changes to the law “On Higher Education”, which was reported by the media (Lysohor, 2021).

The Conclusions. Therefore, the reception of the reforms in the field of higher education by the Ukrainian media was concentrated around several aspects that formed the basis of the media discourse in this direction. Firstly, the content of the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”, adopted in July of 2014, was covered in detail. In general, the approval of the law was called “the first real reform after the Maidan”, although there were opposing opinions about the creation of “corruption risks”. Secondly, the media discussed the success and failures of the reform, noted such achievements as autonomy of universities, formation of a system for ensuring the quality of higher education, growth of the role of student self-government, and activation of international activities of universities. On the other hand, the mass media noted the failure to solve the problem of scholarship payments and outdated approaches to the state order for the training of specialists with a higher education diploma. Thirdly, the changes introduced in 2016 to the requirements for scientific and pedagogical staff to obtain the scientific titles of Professor and Associate Professor were highlighted. Fourthly, reforms in the field of higher medical education were described, which were related to the strengthening of requirements for the level of training of applicants and students (introduction of a high passing score at admission, testing of students’ knowledge using American tests). Fifthly, for some time the mass media discussed the issue of a formulaic principle introduction of funding distribution among universities, introduced by the government resolution at the end of 2019, giving both positive and critical opinions. Sixthly, the Ukrainian media were not sufficiently interested in the work of NAZIAVO, focusing only on a number of scandals regarding the formation of its composition.

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