

BOLONGA PROCESS IN THE UKRAINIAN STUDENTS' OPINION

The process of European integration, its expansion to the east and to the Baltic countries is accompanied by the formation of a joint educational and scientific space and the development of common criteria and standards in this area across the entire continent. This process became known as the Bologna process after the name of the University in the Italian city of Bologna. The history of the Bologna process officially began with the signing of the Bologna Declaration in 1999, though its prehistory goes back to 1954, when was signed the European Cultural Convention, which stresses the need to encourage the citizens of all the states in the study of languages, history and culture of other countries and of their common culture [1]. Implementation of the provisions of that declaration will give our country the possibility to prepare skilled specialist, exchange experience with other countries, it will be the key to the future economic growth and, what is equally important, will form the citizens of Ukraine in the European mindset, overcome the difficulties of employment in other states. Signing the document is, certainly, an important step, but the transition to the Bologna system is a lengthy process that involves the reform of the educational system, that requires to combine the efforts of government, educators and students.

Our aim is to analyze a rather important step for our country, namely the signing of the Bologna agreement between the European Union and Ukraine, as well as to express an opinion on the new system of education, from the point of view of a student.

Bologna process is an intergovernmental European reform with its own background, achievements and future prospects.

The main goal of this process is consolidation of efforts and promoting scientific community and governments of Europe to raise the competitiveness of the European system of science and higher education in a global context.

The Bologna Process aims to unify an open European area of education, the introduction of technology-based credit transfer system, European credits, encouraging mobility and create conditions for free movement of students, teachers and researchers within the European region, simplifying the procedure of identification of qualifications that will help graduates and students to find employment in the European labor market. In connection with Ukraine's declaration of its intention to join the European Union its higher education system needs radical reform.

It should be noted that the Bologna process does not involve the creation of completely identical education systems in different countries; it is only intended to strengthen relationships and improve understanding between different educational systems [2, p. 18].

However, the Bologna Process in Ukraine has both its supporters and opponents. There is no consensus on this issue either among scientists or among universities staff or among students. The question naturally arises: why? Maybe the whole thing is in our ignorance or "habit" to the Soviet system, and, perhaps, in both.

Scientists believe that there are two options: either to maintain a high proportion of lack of specialists, or eliminate it by raising the quality of student's education and training qualified teachers. It is clear that the way for Ukraine is the second option. To ensure recognition of our diplomas in Europe, the Bologna Process is interested in high-quality Ukrainian education system that is not at such a high level as in many European countries. If this is achieved, the Ukraine's payoff of training hundreds of thousands of specialists many times will exceed losses even due to growing "brain-drain".

Those who support the new higher education system always say about such advantages:

- two stage training;
- credit system;
- the quality of education control;
- extension of mobility;
- graduate employment;
- ensuring the attractiveness of European education.

Among the disadvantages of the Bologna Process in Ukraine, I would mention:

- wrong and not always appropriate involvement of certain methods of seminars and lectures on the part of the teacher;
- in accordance with the Bologna process in the group should study up 12-14 students, and in our universities, usually 23-25 students are enrolled in the group, and even more. In this regard, teachers are not always able to interview and assess the level of knowledge of everyone;
- one of the important problems is the technological and financial support of universities, as Bologna process involves conducting a lesson in interactive class-rooms, bringing in new technology for processing visual material as well as the introduction of a large number of interactive exercises to help students better understand and use the theoretical material in practice;
- a problem associated with the evaluation of students, because not all teachers are using the correct ECTS scale, and as a result many students have problems with certain grades.

From March, 7 to March, 16, 2012 the Fund "Democratic Initiatives" named after Ilko Kucheriv and the firm "Ukrainian Sociology Service" conducted a nationwide public opinion survey of Ukrainian third, fourth and fifth year students and graduates about the Bologna Process in Ukraine. The main purpose of the study was to examine the implementation of the Bologna Convention in the educational process of public and private universities of the III-rd and IV-th levels of accreditation. Some 1,001 students were selectively interviewed in 51 high school in 20 cities of 15 regions of Ukraine, and also in Kyiv, Sevastopol and the Crimea.

The general level of the students' awareness of the principles of the Bologna system, in its self-esteem, is more or less satisfactory. As it was noted, 43% of those interviewed understand these principles well, 50% know the essence of this system. Only 7% said that they had heard the term, but had no idea of what it was.

Among the characteristic features of Bologna process students are mostly aware of the fact which they face directly in the learning process: the necessity of gaining grades during the semester (50%). But such an important feature of the educational process as an opportunity to form individual learning plan, choose courses of their own, were pointed out by less than a fifth of the respondents (18%).

Despite high self-esteem of understanding the principles of Bologna process only about a third of the respondents (32%) know about the opportunity to get an enclosure of the European standard together with a diploma of higher education. Obviously, the Bologna system is not taken by the majority of our students as a way to integrate into the European higher education area. At least a fundamental possibility of mutual recognition of study periods and separate study results of each student in the European area of higher education, as a sign of the Bologna system was pointed out by only 16.5% of the respondents.

Few students are familiar with the opportunities of mobility provided by the Bologna system. The possibility, after the Bachelor course, to enter the Master course of any high school within the country or abroad is mostly mentioned (28%), this possibility being pointed out by the best students.

Not many students know about the opportunity of mobility during taking the Bachelor course: mobility within the country is known to 20%, at the same time about 44% of the respondents expressed their desire to study at some other higher education institution in Ukraine for a term or so. Only 17% of the students, who were asked, know about the possibility to study abroad during the Bachelor course.

Participation in student exchange programs for Ukrainian students today is actually a rare practice. Only 2% of the respondents were involved in such exchanges within this country; in exchange programs with foreign universities – less than 5% participated.

The main factor that stands in the way of the opportunities to study abroad students interviewed mentioned a financial factor: lack of funds to pay travel and stay during training (75%). A significant obstacle is insufficient level and knowledge of foreign languages (this reason, as an obstacle to take advantage of the opportunities to study abroad indicated 42%). The difficulty of obtaining visas was indicated by one of five students surveyed and almost the same number mentioned their own ignorance about the possibilities of the Bologna process. Only 10% of the students state that there is no need to go to study abroad, because the level of knowledge, which can be obtained in home universities satisfies them.

Some requirements of the Bologna system are being implemented in life rather slowly. Many students surveyed (37%) indicated that they do not have the possibility to choose independently certain parts of the course, and 24% expressed dissatisfaction with its implementation. Actually, only 21% independently selected courses for learning, and this choice was quite limited, as two-thirds of those who made the choice (68%) reported having had the chance to choose only 1-2 courses.

Controversial is the evaluation by the students of the system of gaining grades and its influence upon the results of students training. 37% of the respondents agree with the statement that the teachers' objectiveness of their evaluation of the students' knowledge has improved. The same number (37%) do not agree; 20% hesitated.

The assessment of the affect of activating the students' independent work upon the quality of their training also seems to be controversial: 42% assess this impact positively, while 46% believe that the quality of training lowered because of overloading and a great number of tasks for independent work, fulfilled by the students selectively or compulsorily.

The students' attitude towards objectivity of new assessment methods of knowledge also seems to be contradictory: 32% agree that it has not changed because the teachers don't use testing very often, and 42% see improvement. The vast majority of the respondents (59%) believe that the introduction of the Bologna system worsened the situation for those students who have to take part-time work. 20% do not agree with this idea. However, a noticeable proportion of students (42%) indicated that they are satisfied with the opportunities to have a time-table that allows them to combine study with work.

The overall level of loading in the learning process is quite high. The ratio of classes and time for self-training still does not meet the essence of learning by the Bologna system. Less than 10 "pairs" a week have only 13% of students, 10 to 15 pairs – 21%, from 15 to 20 – 42%, 20 or more "pairs" – 22%. Accordingly, on preparation of independent tasks more than half of students (55%) spend up to 10 hours a week and 58% work in the library at least 10 hours per week.

About half (49%) of the students who study on a budgetary basis receive a scholarship. In most universities there is interrelation between granting an allowance and the student's achievements. 66% of respondents indicated that it goes to those who have an average grade of "good", yet 11.5% reported receiving grant only by those who passed the session without "satisfactory grades" and only 5% reported that almost all of them get a scholarship because they have a satisfactory evaluation. In itself, the size of grants meets the students' vital needs rather symbolically, because its amount ranges mainly within the limits beginning from "sufficient for food and travel" (25%), to "sufficient for food" (7%), ending in "not even enough for food" (24%).

Many of the students earn additionally (15%) in the field related to the future speciality and another 26% – in the field not connected with their future profession). Most universities are not involved in the process of helping students with employment while their studying. The availability of appropriate assistance services was reported by only 20% of the students surveyed, the rest either did not know about the existence of such services (42%), or admitted their non-existence (38%). The situation with the graduates' employment is not much better. The existence of appropriate assistance in the form of university relations with enterprises and organizations, which subsequently employ some of the graduates was admitted by 16% of the students, 16% indicated that there is a service of distribution and employment for the students studying on budget terms, but 19.2% of them consider the existing system to be purely formal, and a significant proportion of students (27.9%) do not know anything about the universities' participation in their graduates' future employment.

The overall level of financial support for the educational process is evaluated by students as satisfactory. Anyway, while answering the question about the availability of facilities required for successful organization of the education process, vast majority of the students confirmed that such conditions are available at their universities: lecture rooms equipped with multimedia facilities (87%), computer classes (97%), up-to-date library (81%), sports facilities (87%), canteens and buffets (96%), students' hostels and halls of residence (95%), students' polyclinic, first medical aid post (95%).

However, the availability of special facilities at the university does not always guarantee its use in the classroom. Despite the fact, that 81% of the students confirmed that their university has a modern library and 66% indicated that they were satisfied with the opportunities to get the needed literature, a third of the respondents (32%) do not use the library in the learning process.

The same is true about computer classes: in spite of the fact that 97% of universities have them, only 58% of the students can use computers for their extracurricular independent work. A similar situation exists for the free internet access on the university campus: 54.6% are satisfied with such an opportunity; 20.9% are not satisfied; 12.5% haven't got such a possibility at all. Thus, the confirmation of high school having all the required facilities should be considered together with the methods of organization of the teaching process [3].

However, despite all the above said, I still think that the Bologna process is a good thing in the restructuring of higher education in Ukraine. However, to really appreciate its benefits takes time. I'm sure that Ukrainian society can adapt to this innovation, successfully "adjust" it to the peculiarities and needs of the students of our state to educate a new educated elite of European type.

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