STUDENT SURVEY AS A TOOL FOR QUALITY ASSURANCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE CASE OF UKRAINIAN UNIVERSITY

Purpose. To determine the level of students' interest in internal quality assurance, particularly in passing the survey and changing the teaching quality level and improving teachers' pedagogical skills.

Methodology. For the data collection, a questionnaire was used which included closed-end questions on the quality of teaching and open questions in terms of comments and recommendations of higher education students on the quality of teaching and several questions concerning the share of classes in the discipline attended by the students, ECTS scores, received by students from the relevant disciplines and the average score for the entire period of study.

Findings. Sumy State University (SSU) introduced an online survey of students as the main consumers of educational services regarding the quality of teaching disciplines. Over the last 3 academic years, there has been an increase in the number of teachers whose activities are evaluated by students. There has been an increase in the number of teachers who, according to students, show excellence in teaching, which is a positive trend. If in the 2017–2018 academic year the number of such teachers in SSU was 57 people, then in the 2019–2020 academic year, it increased by 35 % to 77 people. Quality level “Above average” was determined for 120 teachers in the 2017–2018 academic year, and in the 2019–2020 academic year, their number increased by 30 % and amounted to 156 people. It is noteworthy that in the 2019–2020 academic year compared to 2017–2018, there is a reduction in the number of teachers from 71 to 66 people (7 %), who demonstrated the level of teaching “Low”.

Originality. Survey of students on the quality of teaching educational components, on the one hand, allows monitoring students' satisfaction with methods used by the teacher in training and communicating with students, and on the other hand, it is a method to control the institution's authority over the educational service quality and the HEI's mission implementation. It also indicates an increase in students' interest in participating in higher education's internal quality assurance. An important factor influencing the positive dynamics of the teaching quality level is that each semester teachers receive a detailed analysis of students' answers with a visual display for each questionnaire, as well as their comments and suggestions for teaching the relevant discipline through the information service “Personal teacher's office” based on the results of the survey.

Practical value. According to the analysis results of the received information, managerial decisions can be developed and implemented to improve the content and practice of educational components' implementation, improving the professional skills of research and teaching staff, advancement of best pedagogical practices.

Keywords: quality of higher education, quality of teaching disciplines, HEIs, student survey

Introduction. Nowadays, the countries of the world face the task of ensuring a sustainable model of the country's development. Some scholars note that the SDG is based on five basic aspects: people, prosperity, planet, peace and partnership [1]. Attention is drawn to the fact that “people and prosperity” is directly related to the development of the educational sector, which has great influence on achieving sustainable development of the country, these first. Education is a core element of the Sustainable Development Concept. It is not only because of the declaration of SDG 4 within the 2030 Agenda but also its embeddedness in other goals, targets, and indicators [2]. Only a highly educated nation will be able to lead a lifestyle that will contribute to economic, environmental and social prosperity [3]. The Covid-19 pandemic, in turn, has caused new challenges to the higher education system. It is during periods of crisis that the goals and objectives of education and professionalization of people change radically, as the conditions of their work require new forms of thinking and behavior [4]. Therefore, the issue of improving the quality of higher education is in the focus of scientists and government officials and is one of the main goals of modern politics of any country.
of the educational process and promotes the formation of students’ knowledge that meets modern requirements of the labor market, the latest trends in the specialty and the formation of a competitive specialist is the professionalism of the university teaching staff. The practice of involving students as experts in assessing the quality of teaching is not fundamentally new. The history of its origin and spread in the world has been used for more than a century, which is considered in the works of scientists from different countries.

In the modern world it is undeniable that the whole history of human development and the evolution of education lead to the conclusion that learning is the main type of human activity, it is a lifestyle [5], therefore, the educational process and the quality of education need constant improvement, primarily through its evaluation by stakeholders [6].

Student assessment of the quality of teaching disciplines was first introduced in United States universities in the early 20th century. However, the understanding of the importance of this process and the growth of its importance occurred only in the 1970s. It has gradually become clear that student questionnaires are an important tool that can be actively used in the academic environment to assess the effectiveness of teaching.

Today, the vast majority of universities in the United States and Canada use the practice of student surveys. This is due to the fact that the universities of these countries have high demands on both the professionalism of teachers and the theoretical knowledge and practical skills acquired by graduates. Understanding that student surveys are a tool for achieving the university’s key goals, European higher education institutions have also begun to introduce student surveys to improve the quality of higher education. In addition, universities use not only surveys of students but also graduates in the context of their competencies acquired during their studies to assess the quality of training [6]. It should be noted that the use of student survey results in the context of ensuring a high level of their satisfaction with teaching and learning becomes a key factor influencing the competitiveness of the university in the market of educational services, an important element of advertising campaigns and increasing the number of students [7]. As for the management staff of the university, surveys allow making the necessary conclusions regarding the assessment of the qualifications of individual teachers, their communication with students, as well as to identify areas for improving the quality of teaching and, as a result, students’ knowledge. Surveys also aim to identify the reasons for the decline in student training [8] and to establish the attractiveness of the graduate in the labor market [9].

During the first years of surveys, they were used only as a feedback tool to improve the quality of teaching and had no consequences for teachers. L. Macfadyen, S. Dawson, S. Perst, D. Gašević [10] note that conducting a survey is extremely important directly for the teacher because it allows achieving the following goals: to obtain diagnostic feedback, to measure one’s own teaching effectiveness; take into account students’ comments on the architecture of the future course.

However, over the years, respondents’ responses have been used not only as an opportunity for feedback and recommendations for improvement, but more as a tool whose results are essential for academic career decisions, including tenure, promotion, and appointment [11]. S. Benton and W. Cashin [12] note that the results of the student survey do not so much help teachers to improve their skills and content of disciplines but note that the results of the student survey do not so much help teachers to improve their skills and content of disciplines but note that the reliability of the survey, as well as any study, depends on the completeness of the sample. This allows you to reduce subjectivity, highlight existing trends and develop the necessary management decisions. Despite differing views, researchers note the importance of conducting such surveys because they contribute to “effective learning”, reduce the number of students who do not graduate, and improve the quality of teaching in general.

The Ukrainian system of expert evaluation of the quality of higher education, unlike the American or European ones, does not have a stable tradition of conducting student surveys, and therefore has relatively limited potential to use survey results to goals. European policy in higher education and improve content and practice, mechanisms of public administration of the education sector [14].

However, the introduction of a new procedure for accreditation of educational programs by the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education in accordance with the requirements of ESG 2015 has set Ukrainian universities the task of introducing procedures to survey higher education as a necessary tool to improve the quality of teaching, educational components and educational program [15]. This approach requires an analysis of quality assurance systems in terms of student satisfaction, their role in ensuring the quality of education and prospects for their career growth.

**Purpose.** The purpose of the article is to make conclusions about students’ interest in internal quality assurance, particularly in passing the survey and changing the teaching quality level and teachers’ pedagogical skills.

**Methods.** For the data collection, a questionnaire was used, which included closed-ended questions on the quality of teaching and open questions in terms of comments and recommendations of higher education students on the quality of teaching and several questions concerning the share of classes in the discipline attended by the student, ECTS scores, received by students from the relevant disciplines and the average score for the entire period of study. The questionnaire was created according to the method proposed in [16]. Assessment of the quality of teaching the relevant discipline is conducted in the form of a survey of students and graduate students after completing its study at the end of the module or semester. The questionnaire used to conduct the survey is given in Tables 1.2. It should be noted that considerable attention in the questionnaire is paid to assessing the quality of use of modern digital technologies in the teaching of academic disciplines. This is due to the fact that innovations in education have great potential, and modern education is irreversibly changing in the direction of globalization, digitalization and specialization [17]. Consequently, global digitalization requires a change in approaches to the organization of teaching and teaching methods, and hence their evaluation by students.

The method of analysis consists in processing the survey results. To assess the quality of teaching courses, the appropriate number of points is given for each answer to the questionnaire. The calculation of the result of the survey of respondents (gen-
eralizing indicator of teaching quality – GITQ) is carried out on a separate questionnaire question, a meaningful group of questionnaire questions and/or on all questions of the questionnaire, according to the formula

\[ a_j = \sum_{i=1}^{z} x_i n_i, \]

where \( a_j \) is the sum of points obtained by the teacher for answering the questionnaire in all disciplines, which were evaluated by applicants for higher education during the relevant period; \( j \) is an appropriate teacher; \( x_i \) is the share of applicants for higher education who chose this answer; \( n_i \) is the number of points that characterize this answer; \( z \) is the number of questions of the questionnaire.

The highest and lowest results are not considered when calculating the GITQ of an individual teacher for each discipline being assessed. If there are several identical results of the specified category, the above does not apply. When calculating the GITQ of an individual teacher for each discipline, the answers of higher education students who noted that they attended less than 30% of classes in the discipline are not considered, as the low proportion of respondents did not ensure the relevance of the study and the objectivity of the results.

According to the results of the survey of higher education students on the quality of organization of educational activities, the study on disciplines for the relevant period (autumn/spring semesters, academic year) is carried out by GITQ ranking of teachers in all disciplines together with the formula

\[ GITQ = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{t} a_j}{\sum_{j=1}^{t} m_{j \text{max}}}, \]

where \( GITQ \) is an integrative indicator of quality of the organization of educational activity of the teacher on all disciplines estimated by applicants of higher education during the corresponding period; \( m_{j \text{max}} \) is the possible amount of points that can be obtained by answering the questionnaire.

The indicator of the minimum respondents' number and the minimum share of students who participated in the survey

### Table 1

**Questionnaire for surveying students to determine the quality of teaching disciplines – part I**

| No | The quality of teaching the discipline | Excellent | Good | Satisfactorily | Bad |
|----|--------------------------------------|----------|------|----------------|-----|
| 1. | Assess how clearly, freely and meaningfully the teacher explained the material, answered the questions of students, commented on difficult moments, singled out the main theme and cited examples from practice |         |      |                |     |
| 2. | Evaluate the teacher’s use of interactive forms of classroom activities: discussions, active involvement of students in discussions, training, round tables, problem solving and other methods |         |      |                |     |
| 3. | Assess the extent to which the teacher used the practice of providing access/links to educational videos and presentations (from the Internet and their own methodological developments) |         |      |                |     |
| 4. | Evaluate the teacher’s classes using open electronic platforms (OCW, Mix learning, Coursera, and so on), own mobile devices (laptop, tablet, smartphone, and others.) |         |      |                |     |
| 5. | Assess how clearly the teacher organized the independent work of students: identified requirements, provided recommendations for homework, identified the necessary literature, and identified sources for its receipt |         |      |                |     |
| 6. | Evaluate the quality of the organization of independent work by the teacher using electronic platforms (OCW, Mix learning, Coursera, and others), distance courses of Sumy State University |         |      |                |     |
| 7. | Evaluate the possibility of obtaining advice from the teacher while working on the discipline |         |      |                |     |
| 8. | Assess how seriously and correctly the teacher treated all students |         |      |                |     |

### Table 2

**Evaluation of the quality of communication with students**

| Component assessments of the quality of communication with students | Corresponds to reality | Absolutely not true |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| 9. The teacher adheres to the start and end time of classes | | |
| 10. The teacher acquainted the students with the regulations, which specify the evaluation criteria, and clearly followed them | | |
| 11. The teacher objectively assessed all types of tasks provided by the regulations | | |
| 12. The course was taught in Ukrainian (English according to the curriculum) | | |
| 13. During the quarantine restrictions, the teacher held regular classes | | |

**General assessment of the teacher’s work in the discipline**

| Your overall assessment of the teacher’s work in this discipline | Excellent | Good | Satisfactorily | Bad |
|----------------------------------------------------------------|----------|------|----------------|-----|
| 14. Your overall assessment of the teacher’s work in this discipline |         |      |                |     |
| 15. Your wishes, remarks, and suggestions on the quality of the organization of educational activities in the study of the discipline | A. | More 90%; A.2. 60–90%; A.3. 30–60%; A.4. Less 30%; A.5. I have an individual schedule |
| 16. What proportion of classes in the discipline did you personally attend? | B.1. F; B.2. Fx; B.3. E; B.4. D; B.5. C; B.6. B; B.7. A |
| 17. What grade on the ECTS scale did you get from this discipline? | C.1. 60–63; C.2. 64–73; C.3. 74–80; C.4. 81–89; C.5. 90–100 |
| 18. Your average score for the entire period of study | | | | |
are used to ensure the reliability of the results when calculating the normalized value of the generalizing indicator of teaching quality \((GITQ)\).

For those lecturers whose activities are evaluated according to the conditions presented above, the generalizing indicator of teaching quality \((GITQ)\) for the relevant period is normalized according to the absolute normalization formula

\[
GITQ^* = \frac{GITQ - GITQ_{\text{min}}}{GITQ_{\text{max}} - GITQ_{\text{min}}} \times 100\%,
\]

where \(GITQ^*\) is normalized value of the generalizing indicator of teaching quality for the relevant period; \(GITQ\) is value of the lecturer’s generalizing indicator of teaching quality for the relevant period; \(GITQ_{\text{min}}\) is minimum value of generalizing indicator of teaching quality for the relevant period; \(GITQ_{\text{max}}\) is maximum value of the generalizing indicator of teaching quality for the relevant period.

The generalizing indicator of teaching quality is determined by rating technologies and distributes teachers according to their value of \(GITQ^*\) by five levels: high (about 10 % of teachers whose activities are in accordance with the established limits), above average (about 20 %, respectively), medium (about 40 %, respectively), below average (about 20 %, respectively), low (about 10 %, respectively), including critical (if \(GITQ^*\) is within 0–35 %).

**Results.** Based on the study on the best practices from European universities since 2017, Sumy State University introduced an online survey of students as the main consumers of educational services regarding the quality of teaching disciplines. The survey is conducted exclusively online through the information service “Student’s Personal Cabinet”, which has many advantages. First of all, an online survey provides an opportunity to attract a significant contingent of respondents since students can answer questions conveniently and without identifying their identity. Given that access to the survey is provided through the “Student’s Personal Cabinet”, other persons not related to the object of expert attention cannot participate. These aspects increase the objectivity and reliability of the results. The availability of software developed by university specialists for the survey contributes to the result processing efficiency and the impartiality of the findings. One should note that the students’ involvement in the expert evaluation of the teaching discipline quality does not require significant amounts of material and technical resources both for the survey and to process its results.

SSU has the system of student survey regarding the teaching quality today that acts as an element of a centralized university structure of internal quality assurance and cover five main stages: conducting a survey, determining the results of the interview using the scoring method, analysis of respondents to assess compliance with the requirements for the minimum number and share of students who have evaluated the discipline, normalization of the indicators, building a rating of teachers according to the results of the survey to determine the level of quality: high, above average, medium, below average, low, critical (Table 3) and appropriate management decisions.

The algorithm to organize the interviewing of students about the teaching quality is shown in Fig. 1. The teaching quality is assessed to ensure the students’ rights to receive quality education and consider students’ proposals to improve the teaching quality. It provides information conditions to form a holistic view of the educational activity quality. This survey is based on the principles of transparency, objectivity, academic integrity & voluntariness. This study allowed us to draw few conclusions about students’ interest in internal quality assurance, particularly in passing the survey and changing the teaching quality level and teachers’ pedagogical skills.

Fig. 2 shows the indicators of student participation in the survey on the teaching discipline quality for three academic years: 2017–2018, 2018–2019, and 2019–2020. The data shown in Fig. 2 give grounds to draw conclusions about the growth of student activity in the survey on the academic discipline quality. If 58.44 % of the total number of students from SSU took part in the survey during the autumn semester of 2017–2018 academic year, then for similar periods of 2018–2019 and 2019–2020 academic year, this figure increased to 69.05 and 76.68 %, respectively. In the spring semester of

### Table 3

| Quality level | Description |
|---------------|-------------|
| High          | The teacher has a high level of professionalism, skillfully forms students’ interest in the discipline, he or she is organized and objective in assessing their academic achievements |
| Above average | The level of educational activity organization is rather high. The teacher provides quality material, is able to organize independent work of students, is disciplined in the implementation of their professional responsibilities |
| Average       | The professionalism level is satisfactory, but there are significant shortcomings, indicated by the evaluation scores of the questionnaire |
| Below average | The professionalism level is satisfactory, but there are some shortcomings, indicated by the evaluation scores of the questionnaire, in the teacher’s work in some educational activities |
| Low           | There are significant shortcomings in the discipline teaching organization |
| Critical      | There are unacceptable violations in the organization of teaching discipline |

![Fig. 1. Algorithm for organizing the interviewing of students about the teaching quality (6 stages)](image-url)
2018–2019 academic year, the share of students who took part in the survey increased by 17.37% compared to the same period in 2017–2018 academic year and amounted to 79.77%. It is the highest figure for the last three years. The situation with students’ participation in the survey was deteriorated in the spring semester. It was caused by the introduction of quarantine restrictions, distance learning, and the students’ adaptation to new learning conditions. However, despite the conditions of the pandemic, it can be argued that the level of student interest in participating in this survey has increased. It is primarily due to the fact that after summarizing the survey students receive generalized information through the information service “Student’s Personal Cabinet” not only about the ranking of teachers by quality levels, but also about what management decisions were made based on their evaluation. This practice is fully in line with §1.9 of ESG 2015, which states “Any action planned or taken as a result of the review should be communicated to all stakeholders”. Gradually, students are realizing that they are active participants in the educational process, and their opinion is important because it can describe the features of teaching certain disciplines and to draw attention to systemic problems.

According to the SSU experience, the student surveys also have an important impact on increasing the quality of teaching. One should note that the data presented in Fig. 3 allow us to draw a number of conclusions. Firstly, over the last three academic years, there has been an increase in the number of teachers whose activities are evaluated by students. It also indicates an increase in students’ interest in participating in higher education’s internal quality assurance. Secondly, the growth of the number of teachers who, according to students, have a high level of teaching is a positive trend. If in the 2017–2018 academic year the number of such teachers was 57 people, then in 2019–2020 academic year, it increased by 35% to 77 people. Quality level “Above average” in 2017–2018 academic year was determined for 120 teachers, and in 2019–2020 academic year, their number increased by 30% and amounted to 156 people. It is noteworthy that in the 2019–2020 academic year compared to 2017–2018, there is a reduction in the number of teachers from 71 to 66 people (7%), who demonstrated the “Low” level of teaching. An important factor influencing the positive dynamics of the teaching quality level is that each semester teachers receive a detailed analysis of students’ answers with a visual display (graphs, diagrams, and so on.) for each questionnaire, as well as their comments and suggestions for teaching the relevant discipline through the information service “Personal teacher’s office” based on the results of the survey.

According to the evaluation analysis results, the applicants’ proposals to improve the education quality are considered, the annual competition “The best teacher through the eyes of students” is held and such teachers are awarded. Besides, teachers, whose teaching quality is highly appreciated by students, are involved in webinars, seminars, lectures in advanced training programs to disseminate best practices. Teachers who have demonstrated a “low” level of quality in the organization of educational activities receive recommendations for advanced training courses.

Thus, interviewing students on the teaching quality is a driving force that helps to increase teachers’ interest in their training and improve student performance; formation of highly qualified scientific and pedagogical staff at the university; creation of conditions for professional growth and development of teachers; identification of problematic issues in the formation of the human resources of research and teaching staff of the university. As a result, it leads to an increase in the higher education quality that notes as “a factor of the competitiveness of individuals, territories and the state as a whole, a defining tool for local development management” [18].

**Discussion.** The survey of students on the teaching quality, methods to process the obtained results and managerial decisions made as a result of the survey should be the researchers’ focus since it is necessary to continue working to improve the reliability and validity of surveys and the students’ authority level, their ability to influence the careers of academic scholars. One should note that the validity, quality and relevance of the methods and tools applied by the expert used for the survey can have a significant impact not only on the quality and efficiency of the study results but also on the confidence level of all stakeholders in the conclusions and activities carried out based on the survey results. Therefore, when organizing a student survey on the teaching quality, it is necessary to focus on several aspects. First of all, it is necessary to ensure the relevance of the content and architecture of the survey to the strategic goals of the internal quality assurance system and the strategy of human resources development of the university. It is reasonable to form the survey in cooperation with internal stakeholders — students and academic staff and external stakeholders — employers and graduates, who can offer adjustments to its content following the modern labor market requirements. The surveys should be conducted systematically using scientifically sound methods and those who have passed the appropriate testing to obtain comparable results and make managerial decisions. If the survey is conducted online, an essential aspect of its organization is choosing the perfect software product and platform for the survey, which will fully ensure compliance with the principle of anonymity, one of the key factors determining the reliability of the results. One of the key points in the student survey organization should be the representativeness of the respondents’ sample, their voluntary participation, the publication of information about the survey results, the obtained conclusions and the taken managerial measures.

In the conditions of the students’ online survey, in our opinion, it is perspective to assess the risk of information loss.
management caused by personnel, technical problems, software, cybercrime, virus attacks and other factors influencing possible incidents [19, 20].

Conclusions. Thus, the student surveys on the quality of discipline teaching are, first of all, an effective tool for obtaining information about the state and trends to provide the staff of higher education institutions.

Survey of students on the quality of teaching educational components at the university level, organizational and methodological aspects of which were considered in this study, on the one hand, allows monitoring students’ satisfaction with methods used by the teacher in training and communicating with students. On the other hand, it is a method to control the institution’s authority over the educational service quality and the HEI’s mission implementation. According to the analysis results of the received information, managerial decisions can be developed and implemented to improve the content and practice of implementing educational components, improving the professional skills of research and teaching staff, advancement of best pedagogical practices.

Besides, the survey allows obtaining objective information on the study’s focus, namely identifying shortcomings in the teaching of disciplines and research and teaching staff professionalism. Besides, surveys identify problematic aspects of the system assuring the internal quality in general. Thus, the results obtained during the survey can improve the regulatory framework in streamlining the organization, conduct, and use of student survey results. In the context of the observed issues, further directions of research can be related to improving the content of the survey on the teaching quality, substantiation of methods to process the results, and organizing student surveys on the educational program quality and ranking educational programs.

Acknowledgement. This research was funded by the grants from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine “Reforming the lifelong learning system in Ukraine for the prevention of the labor emigration: a cooperation model of institutional partnership” (reg. no. 0120U10201) “Convergence of economic and educational transformations in the digital society: modeling the impact on regional and national security” (reg. no.0121U109553).

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споживачів освітніх послуг щодо якості викладання навчальних дисциплін. За останні 3 роки спостерігається збільшення кількості викладачів, діяльність яких оцінюється студентами СумДУ. Зростає зацікавленість студентів в участі у внутрішньому забезпеченні якості вищої освіти. Зростає кількість викладачів, які, на думку студентів, мають високий рівень викладання, що є позитивною тенденцією. Якщо у 2017–2018 навчальному році кількість таких викладачів у СумДУ становила 57 осіб, то у 2019–2020 навчальному році вона зросла до 77 осіб (на 35 %). Рівень якості «Вище середнього» у 2017–2018 навчальному році було встановлено за опитуванням для 120 викладачів, а у 2019–2020 навчальному році її кількість зросла до 156 осіб (на 30 %). У 2019–2020 навчальному році порівняно з 2017–2018 роками спостерігається зменшення кількості викладачів із 71 до 66 осіб (на 7 %), які продемонстриравали рівень викладання «Низький».

Наукова новизна. Опитування студентів за якістю викладання освітніх компонентів, з одного боку, дозволяє контролювати їх задоволеність методами, що використовуються викладачем при навчанні та спілкуванні зі студентами, а з іншого боку, є методом контролю повноважень університету за якістю освітніх послуг і реалізацією його місії. Важливим фактором, що впливає на позитивну динаміку рівня якості викладання, є те, що викладачі кожного семестру отримують детальний аналіз відповідей студентів із візуальним відображенням для кожнії анкети, а також свої зауваження та пропозиції щодо викладання відповідної дисципліни через інформаційну службу «Особистий кабінет викладача» за результатами опитування.

Практична значимість. За результатами аналізу отриманої інформації можуть бути розроблені й реалізовані управлінські рішення для поліпшення змісту та практики реалізації освітніх компонентів, підвищення кваліфікації наукових і педагогічних кадрів, поширення передових педагогічних практик.

Ключові слова: якість вищої освіти, якість викладання дисциплін, ЗВО, опитування студентів

Recommended for publication by T.V.Pimonenko, Doctor hab. The manuscript was submitted 30.02.21.