

### 3.3. MODERN APPROACHES TO ENSURING THE QUALITY OF VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN UKRAINE

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*The article analyzes the legislative acts and regulatory documents governing the quality of vocational education in Ukraine; characterizes the concept of «quality of vocational education» and the components of the system of its provision; defines modern approaches to ensuring the quality of vocational education in Ukraine and the peculiarities of the development and functioning of the internal system of quality assurance in vocational education institutions, taking into account the actual needs of consumers.*

**Keywords:** education quality assurance system, quality of vocational education, vocational education, approaches to ensuring the quality of vocational education, consumers of educational services.

### 3.3. СУЧАСНІ ПІДХОДИ ДО ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ ЯКОСТІ ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ (ПРОФЕСІЙНО-ТЕХНІЧНОЇ) ОСВІТИ В УКРАЇНІ

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*Проаналізовано законодавчі акти і нормативно-правові документи, що регламентують забезпечення якості професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти в Україні; охарактеризовано поняття «якість професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти» та складові системи її забезпечення; визначено сучасні підходи до забезпечення якості професійної освіти в Україні та особливості розвитку її функціонування внутрішньої системи забезпечення якості освіти у закладах професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти з урахуванням актуальних потреб споживачів освітніх послуг.*

**Ключові слова:** система забезпечення якості освіти, якість професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти, професійна (професійно-технічна) освіта, підходи до забезпечення якості професійної (професійно-технічної) освіти, споживачі освітніх послуг.

The implementation of strategic goals of the state policy in accordance to the national programs of the Recovery Plan of Ukraine, sustainable development, European integration, digitalization, and the development of Industry 4.0 affect the transformation of education significantly, focusing on its quality as the basis for political and economic independence and competitiveness of the state at the international level. The current vocational education and training (VET) system reforms aim to provide Ukrainian

citizens with access to quality VET and a wide range of flexible educational opportunities. For the labor market, these reforms are expected to supply competitive workers to the country's restoration and reconstruction. The responsibility of the state and society for improving the quality of VET is also determined by the growing demands of stakeholders who serve as both providers and consumers of educational services. The common desire for victory and European integration, overcoming political and socio-economic crises, achieving well-being, and ensuring decent working conditions actualize the need to approach modern quality assurance in VET.

According to the national legislation, «quality of education is the compliance of learning outcomes with the requirements established by law, the relevant education standard and/or the contract for the provision of educational services», and «quality of educational activity is the level of organization, provision and implementation of the educational process that ensures that individuals receive quality education» (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017a). In the research of the European Center for the Development of Vocational Education and Training, «quality is the degree to which the existing characteristics meet the requirements» (CEDEFOP, 2011), also the essence of the concept of «quality in vocational education and training» is characterized by dynamism with changes in the values, goals, resources of stakeholders, and the context of vocational education and training.

The national VET system in today's conditions is characterized by modernization processes, which are undoubtedly associated with changes in the values and goals of its current and future development. The transformational approach to ensuring the quality of VET is based on the implementation of the tasks of modern national programs in economic and educational development. For example, the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine until 2027 «Education of Winners» defines five goals under priority 4: «Transformation of Vocational Education» to: create an effective network of VET and professional pre-higher education institutions with modern infrastructure; ensure the acquisition of educational and professional competencies for personal development and successful career; attractiveness and prestige of VET and professional pre-higher education institutions for studying and working in them; effective use of their own organizational, academic and financial autonomy and obtaining result-oriented funding; establishing partnerships with business (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024).

The defining goals for the period until 2030 include ensuring comprehensive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all; promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all; creating sustainable infrastructure, promoting inclusive and sustainable industrialization and innovation (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2019a).

The priorities of vocational education transformation and sustainable development goals of Ukraine correspond to the main tasks of the Concept of Implementation of the State Policy in the Field of Vocational Education «Modern Vocational Education» for the period up to 2027 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2019b) and the corresponding Action Plan for 2020–2027 for its implementation (Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, 2020), which are: decentralization of VET management and financing; quality assurance of VET; public-private partnership in VET and interconnection with the labor market. Implementation of the tasks of ensuring the quality of VET includes: forming the content of VET on a competency-based basis; introducing an internal system of quality assurance and an external system of quality assurance; modernizing the educational environment to ensure innovation, accessibility, transparency, flexibility and openness of the educational process; improving the system of training of teachers in the field of VET with the involvement of highly qualified workers in production and services in the educational process; introducing motivational mechanisms to stimulate the professional activity and development of teachers.

The implementation of tasks to ensure the quality of VET involves their structuring about the priority goals of VET institutions, which are: learning goals (focused on the needs of participants in the educational process, consumers and stakeholders); management and control goals (correlated with the principles of state educational policy and the objectives of national, regional, institutional strategies); goals of partnership and responsibility (use of public-private partnership opportunities and appropriate use of resources to achieve performance results). Achieving VET quality is impossible by focusing only on one aim. After all, quality assurance approaches combine elements of all three goals because each requires various ways to achieve it.

In the process of realizing the learning objectives, the priority is a competence-based approach to ensuring the quality of VET, which involves compliance with the requirements of standards (professional and educational) that define mandatory competencies, a set of knowledge, skills,

and abilities for the quality performance of labor functions in professional activities. In the national VET system, the requirements for the learning outcomes of students of the appropriate level, mandatory key, general and professional competencies, VET content, educational level of applicants, qualification level of a VET graduate, total workload, and the list of basic teaching aids are determined by the State Standard of Vocational Education and Training (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2021). It is worth noting that the basis for the educational standards development is professional standards – «duly approved requirements for the competencies of employees that serve as the basis for the formation of professional qualifications» (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2017b).

The interconnection between professional and educational standards ensures that the quality of VET programs meets the needs of the labor market and forms the basis for a gradual transition from qualification characteristics and the grade system to the alignment of professional qualifications with the levels and descriptors of national and European qualifications frameworks. The instruments of the national qualifications framework are also based on competencies, and the processes of confirmation/assignment of professional qualifications in qualification centers, acquisition and/or confirmation of micro-qualifications expand the possibilities of their recognition in different European countries. These processes reflect the European integration approach to ensuring the quality of VET, as both the national and European qualifications frameworks promote the recognition of results achieved in different environments, thus linking formal, non-formal, and informal learning for young people and adults.

The goals of management and control in ensuring the quality of VET are based on compliance with current legislation, adherence to the principles of state education policy, and alignment with the objectives of national, regional, and institutional strategies. A systemic approach to quality management in VET involves considering all influencing factors on priority goals and adapting the characteristics of the elements within the comprehensive quality assurance system. The key directions of the quality assurance system's functioning are reflected in current legislation, which is subject to amendments and additions as required by relevant circumstances. The State Service of Education Quality of Ukraine is responsible for state policy in education, particularly on ensuring the quality of education and educational activities, as well as conducting state supervision (control) over

educational institutions (excluding higher education institutions) to ensure their compliance with legislation.

The components of the national education quality assurance system are: the quality assurance system at educational institutions (the internal quality assurance system); the external education quality assurance system; the system of quality assurance in the activities of governing bodies and institutions that provide external education quality assurance. The processes of improving the criteria for the quality assurance system in the activities of governing bodies and institutions responsible for external quality assurance, as well as the external quality assurance system itself, are based on the results of institutional audits. These processes lead to changes in the development and functioning of other components.

Based on the results of the analysis of the activities of local executive authorities, local self-government bodies, and their structural units on education in terms of compliance with education legislation and ensuring its quality, the State Education Quality Service of Ukraine in 2024 identified the main problems in the field of VET that need to be addressed at the state, regional, and institutional levels. The most crucial issues are: the network of VET institutions is not optimal; funding for training workers in professions that are not in demand in the local labor market; the transfer of institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine from state to communal ownership has not been completed; conducting the educational process according to curricula that are not approved by the regional education authority and do not meet current professional standards; lack of adequate staffing (especially in non-state-owned institutions); violations in the organization of distance learning; non-compliance with the requirements for qualification certification of students, etc. (State Education Quality Service of Ukraine, 2024). These difficulties are related to the processes of decentralization and gradual delegation of powers to regional authorities, which have certain opportunities to choose approaches for ensuring the quality of VET while adhering to centralized external procedures for its assessment. The prospects for expanding the autonomy and independence of VET institutions, which are laid down in the content of current draft laws in the field of vocational education, will facilitate independent management decisions on the formation and effective functioning of the internal quality assurance system in VET institutions, taking into account the peculiarities of the regional labor market and rapid adaptation to the needs of consumers of educational services in the region.

In this context, the regional approach to the formation of an internal quality assurance system in VET institutions involves the analysis of the socio-economic situation in the region, the involvement of local executive authorities, local governments, their structural units on education, heads of VET institutions, and business representatives in the formation of strategies, monitoring of regional development indicators, taking into account innovative approaches to the implementation of educational policy at the national level. The application of the regional approach to ensuring the quality of VET in the context of decentralization and the expansion of the autonomy of VET institutions is based on compliance with the principles of system development and functioning, namely: integrity (changes in system elements lead to changes in other subsystems), identification (specific features of subsystems that contribute to the functioning of the integral system); openness (influence of external and internal factors at the stages of system functioning); flexibility (prompt response to changes), dynamism (continuous innovative development and improvement of the system), etc.

The issues of forming an internal system of quality assurance in VET institutions are specified by the Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine «On Approval of Methodological Recommendations on the Formation of an Internal System of Quality Assurance in Vocational Education and Training Institutions», which states that «an internal quality assurance system is a set of conditions, procedures and measures that ensure the effectiveness of educational and management processes that directly affect the quality of the results of the educational process, formation of key and professional competencies of students, contribute to the comprehensive development of their personality» (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2021). The heads of vocational education and training institutions are recommended to approve the Regulation on the internal system of quality assurance in vocational education and training institutions, which provides for the development of a Strategy (policy) and procedure for ensuring the quality of education, which: defines the guidelines for the functioning of the internal system of quality assurance; takes into account the interests of participants in the educational process regarding the quality of educational services and the exercise of their other rights; complies with the principles of state policy in the field of education and the principles of educational activity.

To determine the guidelines for the functioning of the internal quality assurance system in VET institutions and to implement the goals of

partnership and responsibility, it is significant to use a partnership approach based on the principles, technologies, and mechanisms of Public-Private Partnership (PPP).

As noted by V. Radkevych, «the general principles of PPP development in the field of VET provide for interaction between state institutions, private companies and public organizations, stipulate mutual benefit and transparency of activities, innovation in the development and implementation of educational programs, social responsibility and ensuring the availability and quality of VET, as well as sustainability and adaptability to changes in society and the economy». Specific principles are also crucial for improving the quality of VET, its relevance to the needs of the labor market and for creating effective beneficial cooperation between government agencies, the private and public sectors, namely: integrity, cooperation and compromise, linking theory to practice and productive activity, decentralization of management, equality of partners, alignment of interests of the parties to the partnership, social responsibility, benchmarking, co-financing, risk sharing between partners (Radkevych et al., 2023).

The choice of guidelines for the activities of the PPP institution involves the use of management decision-making technology, the stages of which are as follows (monitoring the current situation in the internal and external environment (identifying the problem); developing an optimal solution; making a compromise management decision; feedback from all stakeholders). This technology enables the development of constructive interaction between PPP parties at different levels (Kravets et al., 2023) and its result is a defined direction of innovative development of the VET institution and improvement of the quality of the educational process not only to meet the interests of the PPP subjects, but also with their active participation in these processes.

Mechanisms of PPP contribute to the formation of an internal quality assurance policy in VET institutions, providing them with a certain degree of independence in decision-making and do not contradict the main provisions of current legislation. This includes the application of the roadmap for the development of PPPs in VET, the use of cases of cooperation between business and VET institutions (Radkevych et al., 2024); the algorithm of partnership interaction between entities interested in developing modern professional qualifications for the post-war reconstruction of Ukraine (Kravets, 2024); recommendations for the

establishment of sectoral qualification centers for the award, confirmation and recognition of professional qualifications of various categories of the population, including war veterans and internally displaced persons (Onyshchenko, 2024); Strengthening the role of advisory bodies in the field of VET, which implement advisory, expert-analytical, informational, educational and monitoring and evaluation functions in order to establish cooperation between VET institutions, employers and other stakeholders to improve the quality of vocational training of skilled workers, taking into account the needs of post-war reconstruction of Ukraine (Radkevych, 2024). The partnership approach affects the process of developing and quality of the strategy (policy) for ensuring the quality of PA, specifying in the content of the procedure: planning (setting clear and realistic goals), implementation (determining the necessary structure to achieve the goals), evaluation (developing mechanisms for collecting and evaluating information on the achievement of goals) and review (evaluating the results and making necessary amendments or changes) with the participation of stakeholders. Stakeholders on the basis of partnership, influence the improvement of the quality of VET programs. The level of satisfaction with the quality of educational activities/processes necessitates the revision of strategies and relevant procedures. In addition to participants in the educational process (students, pedagogical, research and teaching staff, parents, etc.), consumers of educational services are employers, the community, the state, and society, whose needs are changing and growing in today's conditions.

In this context, the importance of applying a predictive approach to ensuring the quality of VET is becoming more relevant, which implies the ability of the system to update development benchmarks, promptly provide quality educational services following the needs of the economy and regional demands for qualified workers, as well as build flexible procedures and measures for quick access of education seekers, including veterans, demobilized, internally displaced and other people to the market of decent work and civilian life. The predictive approach to ensuring the quality of VET is based on the analysis of the requests of consumers of educational services, the peculiarities of modern reforms of the VET system, trends in the development of the national qualifications system, which are increasingly determining the need for new professions and qualifications; expanding the possibilities of confirmation/assignment, recognition of full and partial professional qualifications, in particular in qualification centers; provision of lifelong professional (vocational) training, in particular in

training centers, industry hubs, enterprises, institutions or organizations; involvement of stakeholders in the development of innovative national education and qualification system that are in line with European quality standards.

Thus, the substantiated modern approaches (transformational, competence, European integration, systemic, regional, partnership-oriented, and prognostic) are comprehensively aimed at developing high-quality national vocational education. These approaches ensure conditions for maximizing individual potential at different stages of life and in changing circumstances, expanding learning opportunities for all social groups in line with labor market needs, and building strong partnerships with businesses to address economic challenges related to Russia's military aggression. Additionally, they contribute to the development and functioning of the national qualifications system, the preservation of human capital, and the fulfillment of Ukraine's European integration commitments.

The implementation of these and other new approaches to the quality assurance system in VET necessitates the revision and updating of its components, the development of effective management technologies, operational measures and procedures, as well as evaluation mechanisms and criteria. Thus, the dynamism of the concept of «VET quality» is confirmed, which continuously evolves in response to modern challenges, covering the set of necessary resources for the organization and provision of quality educational services, taking into account the strategic goals of state policy, innovative approaches to the development of national and regional labor markets, interests and growing needs of students and our society.

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