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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF DEVELOPING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS SPECIALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS OF UKRAINE AND POLAND

Abstract. The presented paper deals with the problem of training bachelors in international relations in higher education institutions of Ukraine and Poland in the current conditions. The purpose and objectives of the research have been determined. For exploring various aspects of Ukrainian and Polish tertiary education systems, the modern state and achievements of HEIs in both countries have been analysed. The given article examines the peculiarities of training IR specialists in the first-cycle Bachelor’s studies in the leading HEIs of Ukraine and Poland. The similar and distinctive features of training international relations specialists are shown in terms of university entrance requirements, the duration of studies, and offered academic disciplines. The authors compare curricula for students majoring in International Relations at certain universities, namely Lviv Polytechnic National University and University of Warsaw. It is asserted that in both educational institutions students initially get basic knowledge in the field of international relations, foreign policies of certain countries, and features of geographical regions. The necessity of the implementation of such academic disciplines as European Integration, International Military Relations in Ukrainian HEIs is substantiated. It is stated that these academic disciplines are in great demand in the country in the conditions of the current war and Ukraine’s integration into the European Union. The authors have also found the valuable course Strategic Communications in International Relations provided by the educational programme of Lviv Polytechnic National
University. The conclusion is that the study of the Polish experience of training specialists in international relations for a Bachelor’s degree, shortening the period of study, modernization of training programmes, and introduction of new disciplines and approaches to training is necessary for improving the system of professional training in Ukrainian HEIs, that will contribute to the training of highly qualified specialists who might be ready to expand international cooperation and to establish diplomatic relations at the European level.

**Keywords:** professional training, international relations specialist, tertiary education, Ukrainian and Polish higher education institutions, academic discipline.

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**ВАЖЛИВІСТЬ РОЗВИТКУ СПЕЦІАЛЬНОСТІ МІЖНАРОДНІ ВІДНОСИНІ У ЗАКЛАДАХ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ УКРАЇНИ ТА ПОЛЬЩІ**

**Анотація.** У даній статті вивчається проблема підготовки бакалаврів з міжнародних відносин у вищих навчальних закладах України та Польщі, а також перспективи її удосконалення та розвитку в сучасних умовах. Визначено мету та завдання дослідження. Для вивчення різних аспектів системи вищої освіти України та Польщі проаналізовано сучасний стан і досягнення ЗВО обох країн. У даній статті розглянуто та відокремлено особливості підготовки фахівців з міжнародних відносин першому бакалаврського рівня у провідних ЗВО України та Польщі. Показано схожість та відмінність підготовки фахівців з міжнародних відносин, зокрема щодо вступних вимог до ЗВО, тривалості навчання, пропонованих навчальних дисциплін. Автори порівнюють навчальні плани для студентів спеціальності «Міжнародні відносини» окремих університетів, а саме Національного
університету «Львівська політехніка» та Варшавського університету. Стверджується, що в обох навчальних закладах студенти спочатку отримують базові знання в галузі міжнародних відносин, а на решті курсів вивчається зовнішня політика окремих країн і певні географічні особливості. Обґрунтовано необхідність впровадження у ЗВО України таких навчальних дисциплін, як “Європейська інтеграція”, “Міжнародні військові відносини”. Акцентується увага на тому, що ці навчальні дисципліни є необхідними для вивчення студентами, особливо в умовах війни та інтеграції України до Європейського Союзу. Автори також висококомпетентність вивчення дисципліни «Стратегічні комунікації в міжнародних відносинах», передбачений освітньою програмою НУ «Львівська політехніка». Висновок полягає в тому, що вивчення польського досвіду підготовки фахівців з міжнародних відносин бакалавра, скорочення терміну навчання, модернізації навчальних програм, впровадження нових дисциплін та підходів до навчання є необхідним для вдосконалення системи професійної підготовки в українських ЗВО, що сприятиме підготовці висококваліфікованих спеціалістів, готових розширювати міжнародне співробітництво і встановлювати дипломатичні відносини європейського рівня.

Ключові слова: професійна підготовка, фахівець у галузі міжнародних відносин, вища освіта, українські та польські вищі навчальні заклади, навчальна дисципліна.

**Introduction.** Globalization processes, a large number of conflicts and terrorist attacks in the world, the intensification of interactions between the subjects of international relations, environmental, political, economic and other problems have led to the expansion of international relations speciality. Only professionals in this field can cope with modern security challenges and determine what we should expect in the coming decades. Therefore, every state, including Ukraine, wants to have highly qualified international relations specialists with prerequisite skills to work in state institutions, international organizations, embassies, international corporations, mass media, etc.

In recent years International Relations (IR) speciality has been found to be one of the most popular majors for applicants with the best grades in Ukraine. To prepare students for their future IR careers, universities must offer quality educational programmes, involve experienced teachers and provide advanced study of foreign languages.

**Analysis of the recent research.** Ukrainian scientists widely investigate the issues of the international relations training system, as well as
the peculiarities of higher education in Ukraine. Many scientific papers devoted to this topic were published by N. Mukan, K. Istonina, H. Yaremko, O. Snigovska, L. Grynevych, M. Havran, N. Koval, I. Gomza, etc. The last two researchers state that IR in Ukraine can be described by two characteristics: the legacy of the Soviet education system, and the transition to the Western traditions and standards of studying international relations [1, p.55-60]. Due to this fact, it will be useful for Ukraine to explore the foreign experience of training specialists in the field of international relations, especially in Poland. Many investigations on the key aspects of Polish higher education have been carried out by Polish and Ukrainian researchers: E. Haliżak, J. Czaputowicz, K. Ławniczak, A. Wojciuk, M. Kwiek, N. Zhornyak, I. Holub, F. Andrushkevych, and many others.

The focus on International Relations as a speciality has become even more crucial with the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine. Students should be able to build a prosperous state, protect its interests in the international arena and establish peaceful relations with other countries. The study and analysis of the curriculum for students majoring in International Relations at Polish universities will definitely help to develop a professional training system in Ukrainian higher education institutions (HEIs).

**The purpose of the article is** to define the significance of International Relations speciality development and compare the features of undergraduate programmes in International Relations at Polish and Ukrainian universities.

According to the purpose of the article, we define the following objectives: 1) to explore different aspects of Ukrainian and Polish higher education systems; 2) to determine the main characteristics of training IR specialists in Poland; 3) to analyze and compare curricula for students majoring in IR at certain Ukrainian and Polish universities; 4) to single out courses of IR programmes in Poland for its implementation in Ukrainian HEIs.

**Results of the research.** Ukraine and the Republic of Poland are neighbouring countries located in Central and Eastern Europe. After the fall of the Soviet Union, Ukraine and Poland started to carry out reforms in the direction of democratization of the HE system and its general accessibility. Their diplomatic relations began on December 2, 1991, when Poland became the first country to recognize the independence of Ukraine. The following year, Poland and Ukraine concluded the Treaty on Good Neighborliness, Friendly Relations and Cooperation (May 18, 1992). Since then, a large contractual and legal base has been created between the countries. There is cooperation in such areas as trade, energy, education, transport, military,
ecology, and culture. In the field of education, Ukrainian and Polish universities often cooperate with each other to organize student and staff exchanges, internships, and develop innovative teaching methods. For instance, on December 12, 2022, an Agreement was signed on the exchange of students from the Faculty of Political Science of the University of Warsaw and the Center for Europe, and the Faculty of International Relations of the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv [2].

At a time when the world is facing many complex issues, the IR speciality is very perspective. Students who have decided to get a degree in this field must be ready to adapt to stressful situations and new realities, negotiate, analyse policies of foreign countries, predict political outcomes and collaborate with international institutions. Without a doubt, the future of Ukraine, its accession to the EU, NATO, and victory over the aggressor country depend on the professionalism and academic attainment of IR specialists. As the language, culture and mentality of Ukrainian and Polish nations are very similar, Ukrainian youth often choose Polish HEIs for studying there. Taking this into account, it is worth comparing the professional training of IR specialists in both countries. In the research, we take the view that “professional training is a process of forming a set of professional knowledge, attributes, skills, labour experience and norms of conduct that can ensure the possibility of successful professional activity” [3, p.29].

There are many similarities in the tertiary education of Ukraine and the Republic of Poland. First of all, the two countries joined the Bologna process aimed at creating the EHEA, standing for the European Higher Education Area that is the international cooperation of 49 countries which are implementing structural reforms and joint instruments in the field of tertiary education. Secondly, both countries have full-time and part-time forms of obtaining higher education, as well as externships and distance learning. The third common feature is a basic framework of higher education system including three cycles, namely: Bachelor’s (in Poland depending on the area of study there is a Bachelor of Arts (Licencjat) or Bachelor of Science or Engineering (Inżynier)), Master’s and PhD [4, p.282-284]. These levels of education have been assigned to the ISCED 2011 classification, where Bachelor’s or its equivalents are first-cycle programmes and postgraduate studies, that is “a stage of learning open to holders of the secondary school matriculation certificate, which leads to the award of a first-cycle qualification” [5, p. 24].

In fact, Ukraine and Poland are among the countries with the largest number of people with tertiary education. The main sources of funding for tertiary education in Ukraine are the state and local budgets. It has been
established that total expenditures on higher education in Ukraine in 2016 amounted to UAH 30,595.9 million [6, p.196]. In Poland, the expenditure at HEIs is also mostly sourced through the public sector, funding 79% of the total costs of tertiary education in 2016, three-quarters of students of bachelor’s programmes attend public HEIs [7, p. 2]. But an interesting fact is that according to OECD (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) data, in 2016, Poland spent less on educational institutions per student USD 8,977 (1.2% GDP) than other OECD countries. We should add that Ukraine is not a member of this organization.

Having analyzed the information from the website osvita.ua [8], we found out that training of IR specialists in Ukraine is carried out by 85 higher education institutions. To be admitted to International Relations speciality students should possess both certificates of complete general secondary education and External Independent Evaluation (EIE, in Ukrainian ZNO) only after the 11th grade. As a result of the full-scale Russian invasion in Ukraine, in 2022 EIE was substantially modified. Instead, applicants took the National Multi-Subject Test (NMT) in Maths, Ukrainian language, and history of Ukraine. We should highlight that International Relations is mostly studied on a full-time form in the country. Obviously, the prospective students may have the chance to study without tuition fees if they get high scores for the ZNO or NMT. According to the data of 2022, more than 17,600 applications were submitted to the field of International Relations, and 557 applicants were admitted to budget places, which is about 3% of the total number. Among the leading HEIs providing professional training in a Bachelor International Relations degree in Ukraine, there are Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Kyiv National University of Culture and Arts, Lviv Polytechnic National University, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, National Aviation University, etc [9].

In the framework of our research problem, an experience of Lviv Polytechnic National University (LPNU) in training IR specialists is worth considering. The origins of the university date back to the creation of the Real School in Lviv in 1816. Now, the University is a centre of science and education, which has gained recognition not only in Ukraine, but also far beyond its borders. The advantages of studying at LPNU are the centuries-old traditions of educational and scientific activity, the possibility of in-depth study of foreign languages, modern interdisciplinary educational programmes and courses, international recognition of the diploma, and employment assistance.

Further investigation shows that LPNU offers international studies of Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in International Relations, Public
Communication and Regional Studies speciality that is provided by the Department of Political Science and International Relations. Tuition fee for studying at IR per year is UAH 32,000. It was found that the undergraduate programme in this specialty lasts 4 years/8 semesters and consists of 240 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits. The academic year is divided into two terms and usually lasts from the 1st of September to the end of June [10].

We investigated that the speciality International Relations, Public Communication and Regional Studies includes academic disciplines from different fields, namely economics, law, culture, history, and political science. Majoring in this field of study, students can develop organizational, research, analytical, interpersonal, and language skills. In general, the four-year programme in IR is sufficiently saturated:

1) At the first year of training, there are subjects as: Theory of International Relations, Country-Specific Studies, Political Science, History of Ukrainian State and Culture, International Organizations, History of International Relations, Computer Science and Modern Information Technologies.

2) The second year includes Conflict Studies and Negotiation Theory, International Law, Strategic Communications in International Relations, Diplomatic and Consular Service, Foreign Policy of Ukraine, EU Initiative Eastern Partnership: Opportunities for Ukraine, Philosophy.

3) Then, third-year students can gain skills in Regional and Cross-Border Cooperation, European Union in International Relations, Central East and South East European Countries’ Foreign Policy, Fundamentals of Occupational Safety and Health.

4) In the fourth year of studying, there are such obligatory subjects as Foreign Policy of Asian, African, North and Latin American Countries, Foreign Policy of Western Europe Countries, Diplomatic Protocol and Etiquette.

Moreover, students majoring in International Relations are offered elective subjects or blocks of disciplines during the 2nd-4th academic years. Also, from the beginning of their undergraduate studies, students have the discipline Foreign Language I (English), and in addition to this, in the third and fourth courses they need to select Foreign Language II among the following: German, French, Polish, and Japanese. Finally, to successfully complete the undergraduate programme in IR, a student must defend the Bachelor’s thesis and pass the qualifying exam [10].

For a deeper understanding of IR specialist training system peculiarities in HEIs of Poland, we have analyzed official statistical data and
research works [5; 11; 12; 13; 14] that let us find out that it has dynamically been developing for the last decades. Czaputowicz J. and Ławniczak K. state that in Poland, as in other CEE countries, in the 1990s, the IR discipline was attracting more students and professional scholars than it had previously [11, p. 97]. It is obvious because of the increasing enrolment in IR programmes, for instance, in 2012, there were 28,000 IR students in Poland.

Nowadays, according to Polish Accreditation Committee, there are about 40 public and private HEIs that offer Bachelor's degree programmes in International Relations [12]. Interestingly, full-time education in the field of IR at public HEIs is mostly free for people of Polish origin. On the other hand, you will have to pay for studying at private universities and part-time form of education at public universities. It is crucial to note that only persons who have received a maturity certificate (świadectwo maturalne) can enter the HEI. Although the requirements are determined by each HEI separately, there are subjects most often needed for admission to the International Relations speciality: geography, history, foreign language, Polish language, mathematics, and computer science. The best for professional training in IR in Poland are such universities as Jagiellonian University in Krakow, University of Warsaw, Marie Curie-Skłodowska University, University of Wroclaw, Poznan University of Economics and Business, University of Lodz, and so on [13].

Studying the peculiarities of professional training in International Relations in Poland, we should come straight to the point that one of the best universities is the University of Warsaw (UW), which is an excellent choice for students because of its prestige, opportunities for development, and high-quality education services. It ranks No.1 in the rating of the 10 best universities for International Relations and Diplomacy in Poland due to its research performance in the field [14]. Moreover, almost 1/3 of the university’s budget is spent on the aim of conducting research. In order to strengthen its international position and increase the potential of the humanities and social sciences this HEI implements the multi-annual development plan “University of Warsaw 2016-2025”. Besides this, UW is an attractive higher education institution for foreigners. It has 4,900 international students, including Ukrainians, Spaniards, Mexicans, Italians, Turks, Chinese, Indians, and others.

Considering the undergraduate programme in IR provided by UW [15], we revealed several essential facts: 1) the entire course is conducted in English by European and American academic teachers, being well suitable for foreigners; 2) the cost of education in this specialty is 3400 EUR/year, but it can be paid by two instalments – 1700 EUR/semester; 3) pursuing a
Bachelor IR degree here students take 3 years/6 semesters, and graduates are known as licencjat; 4) Students, mostly, are provided by the opportunity to study abroad for free for one semester, because of the Erasmus + Programme and Bilateral Agreements.

It should be noted that undergraduate programme in IR at UW is provided by the Faculty of Political Sciences and International Studies. Students are required to obtain 180 ECTS credits during their first-cycle study. Additionally, the academic year does not begin in September, but in October, and lasts up to the end of June. The important characteristic of training IR at the University of Warsaw is the interdisciplinary nature of the curriculum. Consequently, graduates have relevant knowledge and experience to hold prestigious positions and they can even find a job in institutions that are not directly connected with international relations.

During the first year of studying at UW, students acquire basic knowledge in such academic subjects as History of International Relations, Occupational Safety and Health, Sociology, Introduction to Law, European Integration, Economics, Introduction to International Protection of Intellectual Property, Studies on State, and Information Technologies. The second year of studying includes International Cultural Relations, Demography, International Economic Relations, Contemporary Political Systems, Statistics, and International Military Relations. In the third year, there are such disciplines as International Negotiations, International Organizations, International Relations in North and South America, International Relations in the Asia-Pacific Region, International Relations in Europe, Poland’s Foreign Policy, International Relations in Africa and the Middle East. Each academic year, students are also eligible to choose general elective courses, which are provided by the Faculty of Political Science and International Studies. The professional training ends with passing exams and defending a diploma thesis. After completing the first-cycle programme, the graduate should have a B2 level of English according to the Common European Framework of Reference [15]. One of the interesting approaches concerning Internships is offered by UW, where students can choose if they will take the Internship after obtaining formal approval from the administration or want to get the 4 ECTS studying general elective courses.

As it has been demonstrated above, in both mentioned HEIs of Ukraine and Poland, students initially get basic knowledge in the field of international relations, and at the remaining courses, foreign policies of individual countries and certain features of geographical regions are studied. However, there are also certain differences in International Relations undergraduate programmes in LPNU and UW. For example, the discipline of European
Integration is taught at the University of Warsaw, and Ukraine does not have such subject in its curriculum. During this course, students acquire holistic knowledge about the development of the European Union, its main treaties, EU institutions and bodies, EU budget, and the role of the European Union in the international arena. Another example is the course in International Cultural Relations, which focuses on the notion of culture, cultural diplomacy, the protection of world cultural heritage, significance of culture in the world. One of the valuable subjects might be International Security, which is studied at UW during the last semester of the undergraduate programme.

Additionally, we suppose that the academic discipline International Military Relations can be successfully adopted into Ukrainian HEIs in the process of training IR specialists. It is assigned 30 teaching hours for students to analyze military conflicts in the XXI century and to understand the structure, functions of armed forces, and their role on the world stage [16]. Topics that are being discussed during the classes are armed forces in the contemporary world, current challenges in military affairs, armed forces of certain countries, alliances and coalitions, peace operations, etc. Taking into consideration the war in Ukraine, the introduction of the above-mentioned course is in great demand in Ukrainian universities.

Having carried out an analysis of IR curriculum of LPNU, we revealed the course of Strategic Communications in International Relations is offered to students at the second-year of studying, covering such topics as: 1) information in the system of strategic international communications, 2) international PR, 3) media communications and media diplomacy, 4) soft power policy, 5) image and brand communication, etc [10]. Such course can also be implemented in Polish tertiary institutions training IR specialists, as the goal of the discipline is to provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary for effective communication at the regional, national, and international levels using modern information and communication technologies.

Finally, our findings show a distinction between the duration of the first-cycle study in Polish and Ukrainian HEIs. In Ukraine, the undergraduate programme in International Relations lasts 4 years, whereas, in Poland, it takes only 3 years to obtain a Bachelor’s degree in this area which is enough to acquire knowledge in social, legal, political sciences and economics; to get analytical capacities and the necessary skills to be aware of local problems in the world perspective; to understand how world economy work and international relations function in order to succeed in the European labour market. Nevertheless, both education models are common in countries
affiliated with the Bologna process and they are also equally suitable for providing students with high-quality tertiary education.

Conclusions. Our work has led us to conclude that the Ukrainian and Polish tertiary education systems have a lot in common. Both states offer a wide range of prestigious HEIs that provide their students with excellent educational services, opportunities for personal and professional growth, as well as chances to find a job and build a successful career. Considering the current political situation in Ukraine, our endeavour to become a full member of the European Union and willingness to build a democratic society, we are aware of the important role of training International Relations specialists. A comparative analysis of training IR specialists in Polish and Ukrainian universities demonstrated that their curricula include studying the issues of global development, international security, foreign policy of world states, and ways of solving existing international conflicts. Nonetheless, there are also certain dissimilarities in the education of the mentioned countries, namely in the duration of Bachelor’s degree programmes and respectively number of subjects provided by HEIs. Academic disciplines that can be adopted into the higher education system of our state were pointed out. Moreover, one of the interesting findings worthes being implemented in Ukrainina HEIs is to expand students’ opportunities to study for one semest abroad for free.

Undoubtedly, the professional training process in Ukraine needs improvements and modern changes, like shortening the period of study, modernization of training programmes, and introduction of new disciplines and approaches to training, that may contribute to the training of highly qualified specialists who are ready to expand international cooperation and to establish diplomatic relations at the European level.

Thus, studying Polish experience in training Bachelors in IR is extremely useful. However, we believe that our results concerning the international relations specialist training process will only prospect for deeper interest and further investigations into this area, as IR professional training in Ukraine requires enhancement and modernization, especially concerning the current war and Ukraine’s integration into the European political and economic environment.

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