

Reflections on the Development of Higher Education and Accreditation

During the years of Covid-19 pandemic, and moreover during the cruel aggression of Russia against Ukraine, we at Ukrainian-American Concordia University (UACU) have been cooperating with our partners in discussions of the strong and weak points of educational processes and in what ways they may influence accreditation procedures and vice versa.

Development of accreditation procedures varies from one country to another; however, the main principles do remain the same.

Many very important, useful, and innovative trends in higher education have been rapidly developing recently. They, together with higher education improvement, will become a source for positive, and negative, effects on accreditation procedures.

Issues concern several progressive spheres of higher education: online programs, artificial-intelligence development, student-mobility programs, double-diploma programs, dual programs, non-formal education, library resources, equipment development, and others.

Let's have a look at some of higher education's important issues:

- Online education together with broadening horizons of university and college education bring questions like identification (and verification) of the student performing the academic task. Universities apply new methods to address this problem, but various aspects still remain unresolved.
- Plagiarism is being detected by high-tech anti-plagiarism platforms. Nonetheless, there is still some probability that, for example, a thesis was developed by another person or even that ChatGPT was used.
- Student-mobility programs (well developed in Europe) should be carefully planned, so that there is transparency in partners' accreditation levels. Also, accreditation can expire during the period of a student's study with the partner university. Can the credits still be easily transferred and recognized?

Since 1997, we at Ukrainian-American Concordia University have been very keen on mobility-program development. In 2022 after Russia's invasion, with the help of our partners from Canada, Germany, Great Britain, and the US, we established a new type of mobility: our students are directly enrolled (online) into the courses of our partner universities. We continue to develop other mobility formats; some of them are quite traditional but no less productive. For example, professors at our partner universities teach courses for our students, and they deliver lectures for our students within courses offered by our faculty, and they contribute video lectures and presentations to the courses of our faculty.

This last technique turned out to be especially important when Ukraine found itself without electricity and, as a result, without reliable Internet. These video materials became a great help for students to study subjects asynchronously at those times when the Internet was available.

And for sure students do benefit most from being physically on our partner campuses and having the opportunity to communicate, interact, experience culture, etc. Thanks to the support and efforts of

our partner universities from Canada, Germany, Great Britain, and the US, all types of mobility formats turn out to be successful and important for our Bachelor, Master, and Ph.D. students. They are also of enormous assistance to the faculty and staff and are a source of in-service training.

- Double Diploma programs can pose the same questions as student mobility. (See the previous point.)
 - Dual Programs, which prepare students for future career development and broaden present career opportunities when students combine academic studies with working in organizations of the corresponding field, open questions of credit, workload, and assessment criteria that contrast with pure academic assessment processes which include class attendance, homework, in-class activities, midterms, finals, etc.
 - Non-formal education issues are similar to Dual education format.
 - Library Resources: in the contemporary world when more and more open-access resources are available, a student's home university library resources can gradually lose their significance. We are now witnessing hundreds of world libraries opening their resources to Ukrainian students and faculty giving the unprecedented opportunity to Ukrainian, and international, students and faculty who are studying and working in Ukraine.
 - Equipment (computer labs, etc.) for many specialties can lose its significance. (It does not concern natural and technical spheres, of course.) Software development, to the contrary, becomes critical when everyone can have their university, their country, the entire world on their smartphones. Even during The War, Ukraine has launched and is successfully implementing the digital program **Країна в смартфоні** (The State in the Smartphone).
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Higher Education cannot develop without integration, internationalization, online technologies, and the combination of theoretical and practical issues on an entirely new level. The accreditation process should be able to answer the challenges of innovatics so to guarantee the standards, to insure development, and to evaluate everything progressive and modern. This can ensure that the university education does not lag behind the rapid changes of life development.

Trust and transparency have become the unsurpassed criteria without which the development of higher education would become impossible in a globalized and innovative world.

In Europe, in the sphere of accreditation, there is a new tendency. In Germany, for example, a surprising number of universities are now allowed to perform self-accreditation.

When we dream for an ideal global society, we cannot fail to notice that part of it has already been created.

In this context of globalization, the expansion of access to Internet services and the improvement of its quality will give a powerful new impetus to the production and dissemination of knowledge. So hopefully, the future will bring us to the creation of an all-world, university library with a maximum of resources and free access for all students and professors at colleges and universities around the world. The global library can be supported through the patronage of UNESCO. These and other changes can lead to increased opportunities for learning, research, and economic expansion in countries whose economies had previously lagged behind.

The triumph of democracy, justice, and human values over the ruthless aggression and predatory goals of Russia in The War against the Ukrainian people will certainly give new impetus to the alliance of progressive countries of the world. The benefits flowing from this consolidation can lead to rapid development of the social sphere and can spur economic growth throughout the world.

With my best regards,

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