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# CONTEMPORARY DEVELOPMENT TENDENCIES OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN FRANCE

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## ABSTRACT

*The contemporary tendencies in the development of higher education of France in the context of integration processes have been considered in the article. The peculiarities of the implementation of the main provisions of the Bologna Convention by the French higher school have been traced. The innovations inherent to the modern higher education of France and its desire to preserve the centuries-old national achievements have been highlighted.*

**Key words:** *all-European educational tendencies; French higher education; national achievements in the field of education.*

## INTRODUCTION

In modern conditions of the development of Europe, there is a tendency to integrate higher education systems of different countries. The latter is due to real changes taking place on the territory of the European educational space, the problems of globalization, the emergence of the information society, the intensification of migration processes, the mobility of the labor market, cultural exchanges, etc. Ukraine's desire to find a worthy place among European countries, to make its own achievements in cultural and spiritual life, an integral part of the common European heritage, brings the entry of the national education into the European educational space. In this context, it is important to study the experience of the French higher school, which functions in the context of modern integration processes preserving at the same time the national identity. Developing under the influence of historical, economic and social factors, French higher education is characterized by a number of features which distinguish it among other Western European countries.

## ANALYSIS OF RELEVANT RESEARCHES AND PUBLICATIONS

Dozens of scientific sources highlight the system of higher education of France as the one that has its own specifics and is significantly different from the systems of higher education of other European countries. Among the authors who deal with this problem are the French scientists C. Agulhon, D. Albertini, G. Brucy, B. Caceres, P. Champagne, F. Cardi, A. Chambon, C. Charle, J. Verger and others, as well as Ukrainian and Russian scientists: M. Vladimirov, S. Golovko, A. Dzhurynskiy, L. Zyazyun, F. Kontrelyova, K. Korsak, S. Malkova, L. Makarova, A. Maksymenko, and others.

France attracts foreigners with its quality of life, rich cultural heritage, the idea of students' equality – and, of course, a broad palette of educational programs offered. The French system of education in general and higher education in particular, which was formed for two centuries, is considered one of the best in the world. There is no speciality that cannot be obtained in one of the educational institutions of the country. Every tenth student who receives higher education on the French land is a foreigner. General statistics show that more than 25% of foreigners choose the study of economics and management in teaching which the French are traditionally strong, and about 16% of young men and women are striving to master exact sciences here (Motruk, 2013, p. 15).

However, the analysis of scientific works shows that despite the rather active study of various aspects of the development of higher education in France, the study of the problem of the development of higher education in France in the context of European integration processes has not received a comprehensive analysis yet.

**The purpose of the article** is to study and analyze the features of the higher education system of France in the context of contemporary development tendencies and integration processes.

## **GENERAL TRENDS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE EUROPEAN EDUCATIONAL SPACE**

For a better understanding of the problem under consideration, let us dwell on some of the main trends in the development of higher education in Europe.

Based on the research of Ukrainian scientists (V. Kremen, V. Zhuravskiy, P. Saukh), it should be noted that at present European countries are characterized by new features, including the introduction of pan-European educational standards, the increase in the number of students and teachers, unhindered opportunities for borrowing of the programs of foreign educational achievements, expanding of the labor market, defining of the universal principles for strengthening the competitiveness of countries through the priority development of education and science. The search for various forms of integration continues, and simultaneously, as V. S. Zhuravskiy (2004) notices, the pressing problem is how to combine integration which is needed today, with a great variety of systems, norms, symbols, etc., which is typical for the states of the western region (especially in the field of culture and education) (p. 42).

At the same time V. Kremen (2013) states that progress in the European and global educational space will only be productive when it is not only the national education that will receive a positive effect from such an entry, but the pan-European humanitarian space will be enriched by interacting with national traditions in the field of education (p. 28).

At the same time, in the general scientific controversy V. O. Ognevyyuk (2016) argues that the satisfaction of individual and social needs for an understanding of the changes taking place in the world and the world has long ceased to be an area of concepts exclusively abstracted from everyday life and has become a category of politics and economy. In spite of this, the scholar maintains that the innovative agenda and practical steps to implement it in different countries have national peculiarities, yet some universal principles of strengthening the competitiveness of countries are clearly manifested through the priority development of education

and science. Among the priorities V. Ognevyuk highlights the importance of investing in education in order to provide the intellectual and technological base of knowledge and competencies carriers (p. 42).

In this context, in our opinion, modern European education is the product of the social and economic development of Europe and, at the same time, the creator of the new public realities of each individual European country in preserving their national achievements and traditions. In particular, in the communiqué of the conference of European Ministers responsible for Higher Education “Towards a European Higher Education Area: Answers to the Challenges of Globalization” (2007) it is noted that in the ever-changing world, the need to adapt national higher education systems, supporting the competitiveness of the European Higher Education Area, is rising.

The European Training Foundation (ETF), which supports the development of education and tracks its trends, conducted a series of studies on higher education. In particular, the ETF experts drew attention to the fact that in Europe there are significant differences in the implementation of professional training of specialists; today there is no single model for higher and postgraduate education, and the diversification of higher professional education takes place in different directions: existing international classifications are not suitable for a clear definition of boundaries: some countries classify their teaching systems according to UNESCO’s International Standard Classification of Education (ISKED), others seek to preserve the national identity of vocational education systems, the basic requirements for higher school staff noted the absence of optimal integration of general scientific, psycho-pedagogical and practical aspects of teacher training. (Tsyrelchuk, 2001, p. 32–33).

France is one of the countries of Europe that has a highly developed system of higher education, developing in the conditions of a single European educational space, but simultaneously it preserves the national identity and its own achievements in the training of specialists with a higher education.

## **MODERN FRENCH HIGHER EDUCATION IN EUROPE AND THE WORLD**

Reforms and national achievements in higher education in France have made a significant contribution to the development of the pan-European educational space. Although, as V. Lashchykhina (2010) points out, France for the last two centuries has been a classic example of the country with a strictly centralized and administratively monotonous system of education (p. 132).

Scientific research has confirmed that in the 1980s the rapid progress of science and technology, significant socioeconomic and political transformations, and the dynamic processes of European integration forced European countries and France in particular, to reform education (Romanenko, 2007, p. 10). An analysis of the dynamics of the development of French university education in this period made it possible to conclude that the French higher school underwent numerous reforms, the main reason for which, according to L. Shapovalova (2010), is the need to adapt university knowledge to the labor market requirements (p. 59).

The modern system of higher education in France is characterized by the diversity of higher education institutions and the organization of the educational process in them. To date, the country has 78 universities, five of which are private. In total, the country has 453 higher educational institutions, which are

predominantly monodisciplinary and have a small contingent of students. It should be noted that about 2/3 of all students in the country study at state universities, which are large educational institutions with a dozen or more thousand students.

In France today, there are three educational paths for higher education. These are, first of all, universities, which are state multi-profile higher education institutions and provide a diversified general university and specialized education of various levels. Scientific, technological and commercial Grand schools (Grandes Écoles) train specialists at a specialized higher educational level. There are also Higher Specialized Schools, which train specialists for different professional fields of study. As V. Motruk (2013) specifies, there is no fundamental difference between university and higher schools, we can refer more to historically developed types (p. 17).

In addition, the French system of higher education provides for short-term and long-term training. Short-term training is offered to future specialists in the industrial sector, trade, services and future employees of auxiliary medical personnel (Khmil, 2010, p. 96). Long-term training is offered by universities and other higher education institutions of a high level: universities, Grand schools of several types, Higher normal schools, schools of art and architecture and institutes of political studies. It is worth noting that 68% of bachelor's degree holders choose this area of higher education. The university education in France provides for two types of higher education: general university (fundamental, basic) and specialized. In general, university education provides training in art, law, philology, foreign languages, medicine, humanities and social sciences. Specialized higher education provides for a large number of sectors, such as commerce, management, informatics, etc.

The management of higher education in France is carried out by the Minister of National Education – *Ministre de l'éducation nationale* through the Council of Higher Education and Scientific Research.

Let's refer to the place of university education in France in the leading educational ratings. Thus, among the top ten countries, whose universities are represented in the Academic Ranking of World Universities: Statistics (Electronic resource), France ranks eighth (table 1).

*Table 1*

The top ten countries whose universities are represented in the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) in 2016

Country	TOP 20	TOP 100	TOP 200	TOP 300	TOP 400	TOP 500
The USA	5	50	71	98	119	137
Great Britain	3	8	21	28	33	37
Japan	1	4	6	9	12	16
Switzerland	1	4	6	7	8	8
Austria	-	6	8	14	21	13
Canada	-	4	6	13	16	19
Germany	-	3	14	21	27	38
France	-	3	9	13	18	22
The Netherlands	-	3	9	11	12	12
Sweden	-	3	5	8	10	11

If you take some of the higher educational institutions in France, then in the ranking of the 200 best universities in the world in 2009, the French *École Normale Supérieure* took the 28th place, and *École Polytechnique* – the 34th place.

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## **FRENCH HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF EUROPEAN INTEGRATION**

Let us analyze the development of modern higher education in France: the main trends and patterns in the context of European integration processes. First of all, we will consider the course of the French higher school due to the joining the Bologna process, taking into account the critical analysis of its aspects: both positive and undesirable consequences.

It should be noted that the following educational parameters are subject to unification in all European space (Higher Education in Ukraine and the Bologna Process: Textbook, 2004): gradation of higher education (commensuration of levels and cycles of instruction);

the content of training for each qualification area and level of education, the structure of which envisages all-European and national components; the optimal way of organizing the absorption of the content of education (educational process) in order to ensure coherence and interdependence - credit-module and credit transfer system; availability of uniform quality standards for higher education; the unified “measurements” for assessing academic achievements and the quality of final and intermediate results of the content of education.

All the other areas of improving national education systems, according to M. Bilozerova (2013), each country can choose, based on its own priorities for social and economic development and social demands and needs (p. 3).

France was one of the first European countries that started the embodiment of the ideas of the Bologna Process in the system of higher education. The changes caused by the principles of the Bologna Process were accompanied by the adoption and approving of a number of legislative acts, among which the most well-known is the decree on the adaptation of the French educational system to the European higher education area (April 8, 2002). Reforms, called LMD (licence – master – doctorat) pass unchanged in the legislation, which is an undoubted advantage, they are being implemented with the help of government decrees and ministerial resolutions. The government has declared the autonomy of higher education institutions, and all changes and transformations in France take place in several ways, albeit centrally. Some universities accept most of the innovations simultaneously, others – through the reorganization of numerous specialized projects (Smuzhanytsya, 2017, p. 212).

So, France as a participant of the Bologna Process, despite the unification of the basic educational parameters, still retained the distinctive national features of higher education, considering them a matter of national pride and prestige. French educational elite and the French government in recent decades are trying to choose the best way to integrate into the European educational space, so as to maximally preserve the national identity of higher education. In particular, France managed to preserve the traditional network of higher education institutions for it. Despite significant differences, the general basis of the modern organizational training scheme in them is the ownership of educational programs and the resulting performance, qualifications for one of the main cycles of higher education. At the same time, the educational process is based on a multistage system, which is implemented in different ways in institutions of the university but non-university type. (Belozerova, 2013, p. 2).

It is worth noting, which is a characteristic feature of the European educational space, in France diplomas have analytical and professional components. However,

such differentiation is violated by innovations by professional university institutes that enroll students after the first year, they study for three years and after each year of education those who completed the educational program, are issued a diploma of general university education, a diploma of a licentiate and a master's degree.

Consequently, such a policy embodiment of the idea of the Bol'sian process in the system of higher education in France allowed initiating a number of innovations, but at the same time to preserve the main national assets of the French higher school, which have a centuries-old history.

The latest achievement due to the phased activities (Motruk, 2013, p. 15): further professionalization of the university sector of higher education on the opening of new specialties of interdisciplinary and technological types and the introduction of professional-oriented training for specialists; maximally possible integration of the educational process and scientific research at universities; maintaining of high quality of education primarily due to the improvement of procedures, mechanisms and incentives for monitoring its quality.

As you know, one of the most important European values of higher education is its accessibility. As stated in Art. 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, ensuring the human right to education is considered one of the most important duties of the state. Note that the questions of public education were among the first slogans of the French Revolution. Thus, in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen, in 1789, the tasks of organizing public education in France, which were accessible to all citizens of the country, were proclaimed.

It should be noted that the sphere of higher education is accessible to all sections of the population of France. Realizing the right of equal access of citizens to all stages of higher education, the French Republic confidently holds the position of one of the European leaders in the field of democratization of education. An example of the latter is the level of enrollment of young people with higher education. Since the early 1990s, the number of students has increased by 0, 5 million. In 2000, – by more than 2 million (almost 50% of young people). It should be noted that almost 2/3 of students in the country study at state universities.

Every graduate of the baccalaureate after having completed three years of study at the Lyceum, which is a full-time secondary education institution, has the right to obtain higher education in France. The bachelor's degree is awarded after completing a series of final examinations, which are held simultaneously throughout the country.

An example of borrowing of the experience of access to higher education is the fact that every student of a lyceum in France, studying in the last grade, can apply to the board of the school with a request, based on the submission, to decide the question of entry with a selective enrollment until (Khmil, 2010, p. 96): preparatory classes that prepare intensively for the entry through a rigorous competition in popular French schools; the University Technological Institute, in which for two years of study you can get a technological diploma, which is a qualification first and foremost favorable for success in the labor market; sections of the higher training of technicians, with the passing in two years to a diploma on a higher technical worker training; the noted experience of selective selection of admissions in higher educational institutions can help in solving the issue on new strategies for the development of higher education in Ukraine.

In the course of the modern development of modern high school in France and the impact of the European Union on it, one more factor should be noted: the

decentralization of the French education system. As noted by V. Lashchykhina (2010), France during the last two centuries was a classic example of a country with a strictly centralized and administratively monotonous education system (p. 132). The foundation of the state educational institutions in it, funding, approval of curricula and programs, as well as the issues of employment, relocation, dismissal of teachers were strictly regulated by laws, decrees, circulars of the central department for education. Until recently, regional and local authorities did not have the right to independently make important decisions, and could only monitor the implementation of decisions, came from the central office of the education department. Such a management system in the French Republic was acceptable as long as the number of educational institutions was relatively small. When their number increased, centralized leadership in the sphere of education became ineffective.

On the territory of the all-European educational reforms in the 80's of the XX century in France the administrative decentralization was launched, which also affected the sphere of education. The laws on decentralization of 1982, 1983, as well as the 2003 law broadened the competence of French territorial communities at the level of regions and departments (OECD News: Education, Science, New Economy, 2004, p. 13). The adopted laws divided the spheres of powers of the state, regional municipal structures of power on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity, which provides for complementarities and reduces the risk of dubbing of functions in education management.

In particular, according to the Decentralization Act of 2003, aimed at increasing the role of regions, departments and local communities in education management, new intermediary structures have been created at the regional level - the Academic Councils for National Education (Conseils académiques de l'éducation nationale, CAEN) and Regional Councils for National Education (Conseils territoriaux de l'éducation nationale, CTEN) (Lashchykhina, 2010, p. 135).

It should be noted that with a fairly wide variety of higher educational institutions in France and the peculiarities of their administrative subordination, the tendencies in the decentralization of the sphere of education are ambiguous and they sometimes lead to the complication of the structure of education management.

It is well known that the processes of reform that occur in the educational systems of European countries have affected not only the structure of the curricula and their content, but also the quality of providing educational services in higher education. Recent changes in higher education and research in France indicate an attempt by state structures to change the approach from direct control of higher education to the implementation of strategic management. (Zolotaryova, & Kolisnyk, 2015, p. 75).

In order to improve the quality assurance system of education in France, in 2006, the governmental body AERES (Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur) was established to evaluate higher education institutions and scientific institutions. The task of AERES is to test and evaluate quality and strategies developed by educators and research institutes. The Ministry of National Education enters into a new agreement with the university every four years, which in turn requires the university to undergo accreditation procedures before it, and this, in turn, is implemented by the AERES.

With the help of the AERES, in addition to elements of quality control of higher education, such as, for example, complex inspection (inspection), tools

for measuring performance and assessing the effectiveness of higher education institutions began to crystallize. According to I. Zolotaryova and M. Kolisnyk (2015), with the help of these tools, especially the effectiveness of evaluation, the state goes beyond monitoring and evaluation of observance of clear norms and rules and is guided by responsible open dialogue (p. 75). The agency AEREC is responsible for two interrelated tasks: performance of tasks to assess the effectiveness of institutions, research units and educational institutions; creation of tools for assessing the quality of higher education institutions and research organizations.

At the same time, it should be noted that in France, great importance is placed not only on monitoring of the quality of education at the national level, but also due attention is paid to international monitoring projects such as PISA, PIRLS, TIMSS, TRANSITION and others.

It should be noted that monitoring and evaluation of education in Ukraine requires new innovative approaches that can give qualified assessment to strategic directions of education sector reform. The undeniable experience of France in this aspect would help in the creation at the national level of an analytical expert network for monitoring and assessing the quality of education and would allow implementing in the national sphere of higher education recommendations on the problems of educational policy related to the pan-European trends in the development of higher education.

## CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing, we will note that in France, as one of the active participants of the Bologna process, traced are the tendencies and regularities inherent to the European educational space as a whole: the diversity of higher educational institutions and the organization of the educational process in them, the accessibility of all sections of the population to higher education, the decentralization of educational spheres, effective quality assurance of higher education. An analysis of the experience of higher education in France allows us to conclude that the French higher school traces the tendencies and patterns inherent in the European educational space, but at the same time national original traditions are preserved. The experience of reforming of the French higher school from the point of view of preserving national characteristics and at the same time, moving towards international “unification” should be studied not only to accelerate Ukraine’s integration into the modern European educational community, but also to form effective national strategies for the development of higher education.

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