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THE QUALITY OF JOURNALISM EDUCATION IN WARTIME AND AI

The article is devoted to researching the sustainability of internal quality assurance in educational programs for journalists in the context of a systemic crisis caused by the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. Using the example of the educational program “Social and Cultural Journalism” at the Kharkiv State Academy of Culture, the article analyzes how the crisis affects compliance with quality standards, in particular ESG (2015) and the criteria of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAQA).

The research methodology is based on a mixed approach: content analysis of program documentation, qualitative expert assessment, and criteria-based analysis of compliance with ESG standards and NAQA requirements. Both quantitative and qualitative methods of analysis were used in the assessment process, which made it possible to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the internal quality assurance system.

The results of the study show that despite extremely difficult operating conditions, the educational program remains fundamentally compliant with national and European quality standards. Among its strengths are practice-oriented content, compliance with the National Qualifications Framework, and support for academic integrity. At the same time, significant challenges have been identified: underdeveloped mechanisms for stakeholder engagement, weak digitalization of the educational process, insufficient transparency, and untimely updating of information.

Areas for improvement of the quality assurance system in crisis conditions have been outlined, in particular through the integration of anti-crisis management elements.

Key words: sustainability, quality assurance, internal quality system, journalism education, educational program, crisis management.

Ангеліна ХОМЕНКО. ЯКІСТЬ ОСВІТИ ЖУРНАЛІСТІВ В УМОВАХ ВІЙНИ ТА III

Стаття присвячена дослідженню стійкості внутрішнього забезпечення якості освітніх програм для журналістів в умовах системної кризи, спричиненої повномасштабним вторгненням Російської Федерації в Україну. На прикладі освітньої програми «Соціальна та культурна журналістика» Харківської державної академії культури проаналізовано, як криза впливає на дотримання стандартів якості, зокрема ESG (2015) та критеріїв Національного агентства із забезпечення якості вищої освіти (НАЗЯВО).

Методологія дослідження базується на змішаному підході: контент-аналізі програмної документації, якісній експертній оцінці та критеріальному аналізі відповідності до стандартів ESG і вимог НАЗЯВО. У процесі оцінювання застосовано як кількісні, так і якісні методи аналізу, що дозволило виявити сильні та слабкі сторони внутрішньої системи забезпечення якості.

Результати дослідження демонструють, що попри надзвичайно складні умови функціонування, освітня програма зберігає базову відповідність національним та європейським стандартам якості. Серед сильних сторін – практико-орієнтований зміст, відповідність Національній рамці кваліфікацій та підтримка академічної доброчесності. Водночас зафіксовано значні виклики: недопрацьовані механізми залучення стейкхолдерів, слабка цифровізація освітнього процесу, недостатня прозорість та несвоєчасне оновлення інформації.

Окреслено напрями вдосконалення системи забезпечення якості в умовах кризи, зокрема через інтеграцію елементів антикризового менеджменту.

Ключові слова: стійкість, забезпечення якості, внутрішня система якості, журналістська освіта, освітня програма, антикризове управління.

Introduction. Ensuring the quality of higher education is a fundamental element of the sustainable development of academic institutions and society as a whole. In the European Higher Education Area, quality assurance processes are regulated by the ESG (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015), which establish framework requirements for internal and external quality

systems in higher education institutions. Ukraine, integrating into the European Higher Education Area, has implemented these standards through the activities of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAQA), as enshrined in the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education” [6] and relevant subordinate legislation.

Ensuring the quality of educational programs is particularly important in times of

systemic crisis. The full-scale military invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on February 24, 2022, has created unprecedented challenges for higher education: physical threats to the lives of students and teachers, partial destruction of infrastructure, mass internal and external migration of students and academic staff, a digital divide, and psychological trauma. In this context, the resilience of internal quality assurance systems becomes a critical indicator of the ability of educational institutions not only to survive but also to maintain academic quality [4].

The issue of the sustainability of educational programs in the field of journalism is particularly relevant, as the profession of journalism has a direct impact on the formation of the information space, social stability, and democratic institutions. Journalism in wartime becomes a critical component of a state's information security. At the same time, journalism education itself faces dual challenges: on the one hand, the need to comply with quality standards, and on the other, the need to quickly adapt content to new realities, including digital transformation, psychological support, risk communication, and working in a hybrid war environment.

The aim of this article is to analyze the resilience of the internal quality assurance system of a journalism study program under the conditions of war and systemic crisis in Ukraine. Using the case of the Bachelor's Program "Social and Cultural Journalism" at Kharkiv State Academy of Culture [5], the study evaluates the program's compliance with ESG (2015) standards and the criteria of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAQA) [3]. The article also examines how crisis-related factors – such as infrastructure disruption, student and staff displacement, psychological risks, and the growing need for digital transformation and AI integration – influence the sustainability of journalism education quality. The findings are aimed at identifying areas for improvement that would strengthen the program's resilience and alignment with both national and European quality standards.

The Kharkiv State Academy of Culture, located in one of the most affected regions of Ukraine, is a representative case for analyzing the sustainability of internal quality assurance. The first (bachelor's) level educational program "Social and Cultural Journalism" [5], which underwent accreditation during the war, demonstrates both the strengths and weaknesses of the quality system. According to the materials

of the accreditation review (Attachment 1 to the NAQA protocol No. 7 (57) dated 26.03.2024) and internal self-assessment, the program was conditionally accredited. This indicates the relevance of a systematic study of the factors that influence the sustainability of internal quality assurance [1].

Statement of the Problem. Journalism education in Ukraine is operating under unprecedented crisis conditions caused by the full-scale war, which threatens the continuity and quality of training future media professionals. At the same time, rapid digital transformation and the integration of artificial intelligence tools require journalism programs to update their internal quality assurance systems to comply with national and European standards. However, there is still a lack of research on how journalism programs can remain resilient and ensure quality under such extreme circumstances.

Literature review. Education in emergencies encompasses the provision of quality educational opportunities in crisis situations—during conflicts, natural disasters, and other emergencies. This includes both formal and informal education, which unfolds in the preparation, response, and recovery phases (INEE, 2024 [7]). Given the military aggression against Ukraine, the concept of education in emergencies is critical for analyzing the resilience of higher education programs: "Education in emergencies refers to quality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis, including conflicts, natural disasters, and other emergencies. It includes formal and non-formal education and encompasses preparedness, response, and recovery phases" (INEE, 2024 [7]).

Y. Kivisto from the University of Tampere emphasizes the importance of transparency and reducing information asymmetry between universities and stakeholders. In his work, he notes: «It is believed that without government intervention, information asymmetry around universities will lead to market failure, with universities charging higher fees and, as a result, providing insufficient quality of teaching or research. Such behavior will, in turn, reduce demand for higher education outcomes and lead to insufficient investment in teaching and research. However, government control, funding, and ownership of universities do not in any way reduce information asymmetry or the problems associated with it. After the era of centralized control and planning, the imitation of market discipline in measuring performance was integrated into the management and

coordination of universities in many countries. In this sense, the circle is now complete: there are attempts to neutralize market imperfections through management procedures that attempt to mimic the activities of markets. This is particularly important in crisis situations, where rapid and transparent data exchange can improve the speed of decision-making on quality assurance [8].

K. Suprun from the University of Tampere, commenting on the adaptation of Ukrainian higher education institutions to the online format during the war, noted: "The vast majority of them continued to teach in a mixed mode, mostly online... the details really depend on the region and the educational institution". She emphasizes that despite insufficient preparation, higher education institutions were able to quickly implement digital solutions in the educational process [9].

PBF is a funding model in which public funds are distributed among universities based on their performance (e.g., number of graduates, scientific publications, graduate employment, etc.). This approach is widely used in the EU, the US, Canada, and Australia. Due to the full-scale war, PBF was effectively suspended. But in mid-2023, the government resumed discussions not only about the return of this model, but also about its reformatting to take into account new realities – destroyed infrastructure, loss of human capital, and migration of students and teachers. If Ukraine does indeed reinstate PBF during active warfare, it will be the first case in global practice where a performance-based funding model is applied not in a recovery period, but directly during a prolonged crisis. Y. Kivisto and K. Suprun also studied funding models that support reforms in crisis conditions: "Contrary to the best practices of other countries, Ukrainian universities were not granted greater financial autonomy after the launch of PBF. Nevertheless, PBF has significantly contributed to the transparency of the distribution of public funding in Ukrainian higher education. In mid-2023, the Ukrainian government resumed discussions on restoring PBF and revising its structure to take into account the needs of a devastated sector affected by the war. If this is done, it will be the first case of PBF implementation in a system under prolonged crisis conditions". This work highlights the key role of performance-based financing (PBF) models. In mid-2023, the Ukrainian government resumed discussions on restoring PBF and revising its structure to take into account the needs of the war-torn sector. If this is done, it will be the first time that PBF has

been implemented in a system under prolonged crisis conditions. This paper highlights the key role of results-based financing (PBF) models in supporting higher education reforms during crises – in particular, the impact on transparency and adaptation to war conditions.

European and Ukrainian quality assurance systems are defined by ESG (2015) [10], which establishes an international vision of quality assurance in higher education (student-centeredness, risk management, continuous improvement); the Ukrainian model of NAQA integrates ESG, taking into account national realities.

Thus, the analysis of the literature justifies the need to study the sustainability of internal quality assurance in crisis situations.

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the internal quality assurance system of the journalism education program adapts to crisis conditions, which elements of the system have proven to be resilient, and which ones need significant improvement. The study diagnoses changes in the education program to improve the resilience of quality assurance systems in the context of war and other crisis situations.

The main **objectives** of the study are: to assess the compliance of the educational program "Social and Cultural Journalism" [5] with ESG [10] standards and NAQA criteria [3]; to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the internal quality assurance system in wartime conditions; to analyze the impact of crisis factors (war, migration, digital divide, psychological risks) on quality assurance mechanisms.

The research methodology involves the use of three interrelated levels of analysis: normative-criterial, structural-functional, and contextual-situational (taking into account the impact of crisis factors such as war).

The study is based on the following main sources: materials for the accreditation of the educational program (Attachment to NAQA Protocol No. 7 (57) dated March 26, 2024); the content of the educational program; the criteria of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (NAQAA); ESG standards (2015) [10] – Part 1 "Internal Quality Assurance"; open data of the academy (website, reports, policies) [1].

Limitations of the study. The study is based on the analysis of a single case, which limits its representativeness for the entire higher education system in Ukraine. Some of the data is limited or fragmentary (in particular, information on stakeholder involvement and syllabi for educational components). Inability to

use full-fledged quantitative surveys due to the crisis context.

Results. Analysis of the compliance of the educational program “Social and Cultural Journalism” of the Kharkiv State Academy of Culture [5] with internal quality standards (ESG, 2015) [10] showed that the program demonstrates fragmentary stability in individual components, but needs significant improvement to ensure systemic quality.

According to ESG criterion 1.1, “Quality Assurance Policy”, the program does not have a separately articulated quality assurance policy as part of the strategic management of the higher education institution. There is no evidence of continuous (periodic) involvement of external and internal stakeholders in the formation and implementation of quality policy, except for taking recommendations into account when updating the curriculum. According to ESG criterion 1.2, “Program Development and Approval”, the program’s objectives, learning outcomes, and compliance with the national qualifications framework (NQF Level 6) are clearly stated [2]. The description of the qualification awarded (bachelor’s degree in journalism) is consistent with the requirements of the national framework. However, the curriculum is not synchronized with the professional standard, as that standard was approved in January 2025, after the curriculum was accredited.

Criterion 1.3 of the ESG, “Student-centered learning, teaching, and assessment”, mentions the use of innovative and interactive teaching methods, but there is no specific information about mechanisms for involving students in shaping the educational process or adaptive forms of assessment. The ESG criterion “Student admission, achievement, recognition, and certification” is complied with in the policies of the HEI. According to the ESG criterion “Teaching staff”, the program is taught by specialists with appropriate qualifications. The involvement of practitioners is noted, which ensures a connection with the labor market.

According to ESG criterion 1.6, “Learning resources and student support”, the HEI website has a section on psychological support. According to ESG criterion 1.7, “Information management”, no information is provided on the collection and use of analytics for decision-making, monitoring student performance, workload, or program evaluation. 1.8. “Public Information”: there is a description of the program, but there is no information about the information policy, the regularity of data updates, the transparency of admission

rules, accreditation documents, or ratings. 1.9. Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programs: there is no description of program monitoring procedures, performance indicators, or stakeholder involvement in the review. 1.10. Cyclical external quality assurance: the program does not indicate whether it has undergone external accreditation (preliminary or international). However, the NAQA appendices contain information about conditional (deferred) accreditation of the program in this specialty.

The program ensures basic compliance with key educational standards, particularly in terms of goal setting, program learning outcomes, compliance with the National Qualifications Framework, and ensuring practice-oriented training for applicants. This is evidence of the program’s functional stability, even in conditions of war and systemic crisis [2].

At the same time, the analysis revealed significant gaps in strategic quality management, formalization of processes, public accountability, and stakeholder engagement.

Based on the analysis according to the criteria of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance [3] and ESG [10], the SWOT analysis of the Social and Cultural Journalism educational program [5] shows the following:

The Social and Cultural Journalism program has a solid academic framework (structure, scope, practice orientation), but the level of internal quality assurance, transparency, alignment with current trends, and stakeholder engagement remain critically weak. If the weaknesses are addressed without delay, the program has high potential to achieve sustainability and compliance with both Ukrainian and international standards. Otherwise, there is a risk of negative accreditation decisions and loss of competitiveness.

The educational program “Social and Cultural Journalism” of the Kharkiv State Academy of Culture [5] has the status of accredited until 2029 in accordance with the decision of the National Agency for Higher Education Quality Assurance (Attachment to Protocol No. 7 (57) of 26.03.2024) [1]. This gives the administration of the higher education institution, the department, and the curriculum support group the opportunity to eliminate the identified shortcomings over the next few years and ensure that the program complies with both Ukrainian and European quality standards.

Conclusions. The conducted study demonstrates that the journalism education program “Social and Cultural Journalism” at Kharkiv State Academy of Culture [5] retains

Table 1

**SWOT Analysis of the Bachelor's Program "Social and Cultural Journalism"
at Kharkiv State Academy of Culture**

<p>Strengths: Compliance with the current Higher Education Standard for specialty 061 "Journalism" (scope, structure, content). Clear structural design of the educational program: normative, elective, and practical blocks. Practice-oriented content: three types of internships, connection with the real media market. Clear compliance with the volume (240 ECTS credits) and distribution of credits by cycles. Presence of interdisciplinary components (sociology, communication, ethics). Academic integrity is integrated into the HEI's policy (available documents, video materials). The educational process is organized in accordance with the law, using student-centered approaches. The presence of a psychological support section on the HEI's website.</p>	<p>Weaknesses: Lack of a documented internal quality assurance policy as part of the HEI's strategy. The educational program is not synchronized with professional standards (due to the time lag between approvals). There are no formalized mechanisms for involving stakeholders (employers, graduates, students) in reviewing the educational program. There is no systematic analysis of the labor market, digitalization trends, or the use of AI in journalism. The educational program lacks a clear description of assessment mechanisms, forms of control, and appeal procedures. There are no English-language courses, international modules, or references to mobility.</p>
<p>Opportunities: Integration of the provisions of the new professional standard (2025) into the next cycle of OP revision. Expansion of elective disciplines with topics from related fields (PR, advertising, media management, digital technologies, AI). Introduction of courses in English, international modules, and involvement of foreign teachers. Formalization of cooperation with the media industry: participation of employers in teaching, assessment, and consultations. Development of a separate section on the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 into the educational process.</p>	<p>Threats: The widening regulatory gap between educational and professional standards may reduce the relevance of the program for the labor market. Decreased competitiveness of graduates in the context of the digitalization of the journalism industry. Loss of part of the target audience (applicants and applicants) due to insufficient transparency of rules, procedures, and public information. Increased competition from higher education institutions that are adapting more quickly to digital transformations and international requirements. Increased reputational risks in the event of repeated conditional or negative accreditation, given the significant shortcomings in terms of the NAQA criteria [3].</p>

its fundamental compliance with national and European quality standards despite operating under severe war-related constraints. The internal quality assurance system shows sustainability in such areas as alignment with the National Qualifications Framework [2], practice-oriented training, and support for academic integrity. However, systemic weaknesses—particularly insufficient stakeholder engagement, lack of transparency, sporadic use of analytics for decision-making, and limited digital transformation—reduce the effectiveness and adaptability of the program under crisis conditions. A special challenge is the insufficient integration of artificial intelligence tools and digital competencies into the curriculum, which could widen the gap between educational outcomes and the needs of the rapidly evolving media industry. To ensure long-term resilience and competitiveness, the program requires strategic modernization of its internal quality assurance processes, strengthening data-driven management, and systematic implementation of European ESG standards [10]. Overall, the

identified resources and accreditation status provide a real opportunity for progressive improvement and transition toward a crisis-resilient model of journalism education aligned with contemporary global demands.

Perspectives for Further Research.

Future research should focus on developing models of internal quality assurance that remain effective under crisis conditions, particularly in regions exposed to prolonged security threats. A promising direction is the study of systemic integration of artificial intelligence into journalism curricula, including its role in monitoring quality indicators and enhancing resilience of educational processes. Comparative studies of journalism programs across different Ukrainian and European institutions could help identify best practices in digital transformation and stakeholder engagement during emergencies. Further attention should also be given to the long-term psychological, infrastructural, and demographic consequences of the war for journalism education quality and workforce sustainability.

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