

## COMPETITIVENESS OF THE HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE CONTEXT OF ENSURING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STATE

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### Abstract

The purpose of the article is to study the competitiveness of higher education in the context of ensuring the sustainable development of the state. The methodological basis of this article is a set of such methods as system analysis, logical generalization, analysis and synthesis, statistical analysis, abstract-logical, induction and deduction, graphic and others. In order to achieve the goal, the authors identified the levels of competitiveness of the higher education system and established the relationship between them; the dynamics of activity indicators of higher education institutions were studied; the main components of the higher education system, elements of its internal and external environment are clarified; the factors affecting the increase in the competitiveness of higher education in the context of ensuring sustainable development are outlined. The authors prove that the decisive influence of higher education on sustainable development lies in the fact that education is the key to understanding the essence of the paradigm of sustainable development and expanding humanity's capabilities in solving issues of economic development and environmental protection.

**Keywords:** *higher education, institutions of higher education, sustainable development, competitiveness.*

**JEL Codes:** *I 20, I 21, O 15.*

### Introduction

Higher education plays an important role in social development, solving existing problems of humanity. This affected the change in the tasks performed by the higher school. If earlier its role was reduced to the narrowly pragmatic tasks of training young people, modernizing production, forming an effective management system, etc., now everything is aimed at ensuring that students

think creatively, participate in the development of innovative projects taking into account modern socio-economic processes and environmental challenges and thereby supported the concept of sustainable development.

Among the 17 goals of sustainable development “Sustainable Development Goals – SDGs” (Agenda 2030), education is the

fourth goal, which consists in ensuring inclusive, equal and accessible quality education for all and encouraging lifelong learning.

Taking into account the numerous problems associated with the non-renewability of many types of natural resources, the real threats of environmental disasters and the economic and social problems necessarily associated with this, education in the context of ensuring sustainable development must be aimed at the formation of a peaceful, free and suitable environment for present and future generations.

The educational sphere occupies a very important place in the socio-economic system and is a strategic resource for social development, achieving and ensuring its improvement and competitiveness in modern conditions of globalization and digitalization. Currently, the role of education is to prepare people for life in the conditions of permanent and rapid changes in the factors of the external environment. It is a lifelong process that ensures an increase in the level of qualifications and knowledge of a person, as well as his adaptation abilities to modern requirements in social, economic, public, etc. spheres of life. Such a new understanding of education in ensuring social progress and sustainable development requires its radical transformation in managerial, organizational, financial and other aspects and issues of competitiveness. Competitiveness is a leading concept of a developed economy. Acquired knowledge, experience, acquired competences, developed abilities and skills of higher education students should become a resource and capital of the economy, which makes education a leading element of intellectual potential. Ensuring the quality of higher education is a guarantee of sustainable development and competitiveness of the state.

The purpose of the article is to study the competitiveness of higher education in the context of ensuring the sustainable development of the state.

To achieve the goal, the authors set the following tasks: determine the levels of

competitiveness of the higher education system and establish the relationship between them; to investigate the dynamics of university activity indicators; find out the main components of the higher education system, as well as elements of its internal and external environment; to outline the factors that influence the increase in the competitiveness of higher education in the context of ensuring sustainable development.

### **Literature review**

The competitiveness of higher education and its role in ensuring the sustainable development of the country is an extremely relevant area of research. Scientists (Cosmulese C. G., et al., 2019) study the impact of the digital revolution on the educational system of the EU countries. In a scientific study (Djakona A., et al., 2021) analyzes the educational dominant of the development of the information economy on the example of Latvia and Ukraine. Scientists (Djakona A., et al., 2020) devoted their research to studying the processes of adaptation of higher education to the digital economy. The purpose of the article by scientists (Elmassah S., et al., 2022) is to study the formation of the role of higher education in sustainable development based on the analysis of examples.

The authors of the paper (Griebeler J.S., et al., 2022) argue that the Sustainable Development Goals are the basis for the deployment of indicators for higher educational institutions. Within the scope of work (Grosu V., et al., 2021). investment aspects of the impact of higher education on sustainability are analyzed. The studies (Kholiavko N., 2021, 2022) is of practical importance, within which the authors analyze the priority directions for increasing the adaptability of universities to the conditions of the digital economy and their role in the development of the digital economy. The authors of the article (Lazarov A. S., et al., 2022) consider education for sustainable development in higher educational institutions

of Romania within the framework of the goals of sustainable development. The main task of the article (Zhavoronok A., et al., 2021) is a study of the integrated model of higher education financing based on the concept of a four-way spiral. The study (Casanovas M., et al., 2022) analyzed best practices for building competencies for sustainable development through the use of active learning methodology.

Despite a significant number of publications, scientific issues and practical aspects of the competitiveness of higher education in the context of ensuring the sustainable development of the state require further research, analysis and justification.

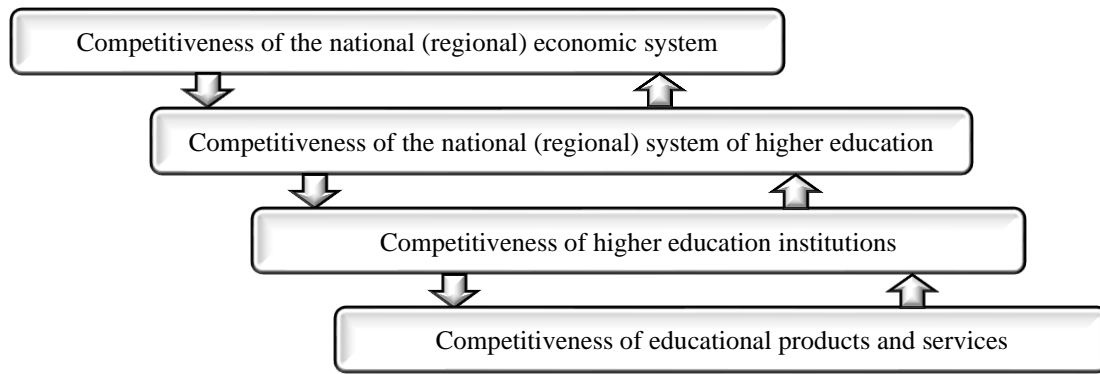
### **Methodical approach**

In the study, the theoretical and methodological foundations are, firstly, the dialectical method of scientific knowledge, and secondly, the fundamental provisions of the theory of competition. When writing the article, the authors used a set of research methods such as analysis and synthesis to understand the importance of implementing the fourth goal of sustainable development, which relates to ensuring affordable quality education, in particular, improving the quality of higher education and promoting the establishment of a sustainable relationship between it and scientific and innovative activities among other goals of sustainable development, the achievement of which is an important task of humanity today; induction and deduction, which were used to interpret the essence of the category "competitiveness of higher education", distinguishing approaches to its understanding and levels of competitiveness in the higher education system, as well as establishing the relationship between them; systemic approach - to determine the components of the higher

education system, its internal and external environment and factors affecting the competitiveness of higher education; logical generalization - when studying approaches to the concept of competitiveness; statistical analysis - when researching trends in the development of higher education institutions, abstract and logical - for forming conclusions and proposals for increasing the competitiveness of higher education in the context of ensuring sustainable development of the country; graphic - for a visual presentation of the results of this study.

### **Results**

According to the classic position of the theory of competitiveness (Porter M. et al., 2009), competitiveness is understood as the competitive advantages of an enterprise, firm or company, field of activity or country, which are formed taking into account many factors at different levels: from global to local. Based on the research of scientific sources, the competitiveness of higher education has the following approaches to understanding: firstly, the definition of the general theory of competitive advantages, which is inextricably linked to the theories of human and social capital; secondly, a complex characteristic that is inextricably linked to the following concepts: efficiency, quality, social responsibility and obligations, as well as the needs of consumers, individuals, companies and society in general; thirdly, taking into account the influence of a large number of various factors, higher education is permanently changing, and therefore its competitiveness must be studied in interaction with the competitiveness of the national economic system and the competitiveness of such main elements of the educational system as higher education institutions and their products and services (Fig. 1).



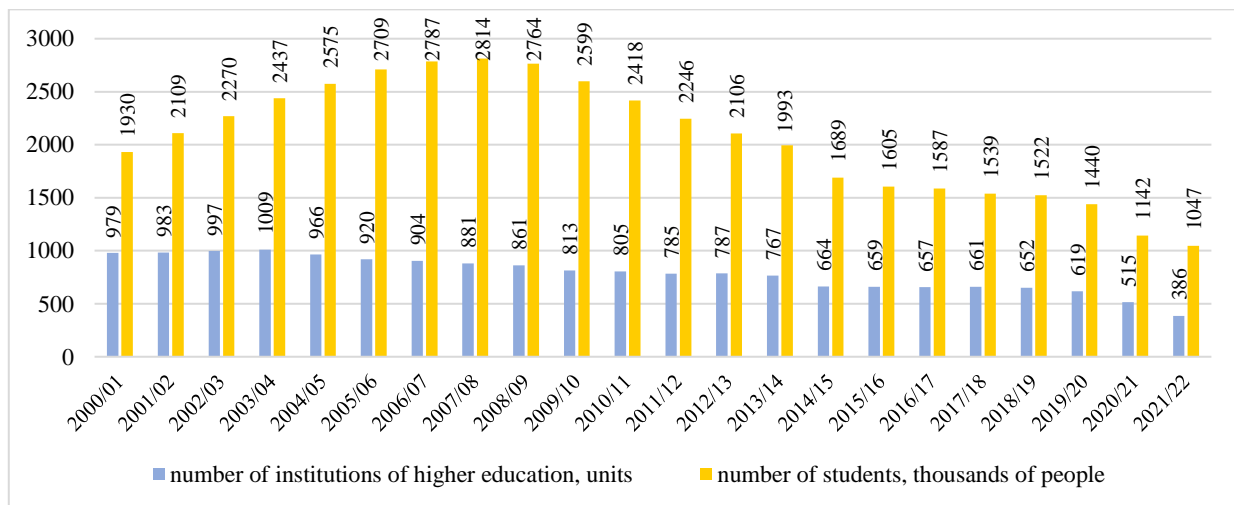
**Figure 1. Relationship between levels of competitiveness in the system of higher education**

\*Source: systematized by the authors.

Summarizing the above-mentioned approaches to understanding the competitiveness of higher education, in a general sense, this category can be defined as the ability of its components to form products that provide competitive advantages in creating social capital and achieving the goals of social development at all levels. In a narrower sense, the competitiveness of higher education should be understood as the competitiveness of higher education institutions as its leading components, which is defined as a property of this system that characterizes its advantages over competitors and certifies the effective use of resources for the realization of defined goals in market conditions.

Analyzing the performance indicators of higher education institutions (Fig. 2), it should

be noted that in the period 2000/01 - 2007/08 academic years, there was a positive trend regarding number of students studying in higher education institutions. Thus, in the 2000/01 academic year, 1,930 students studied in 979 institutions of higher education, and in 2007/08 – 2,814 students, although the number of institutions of higher education slightly decreased and amounted to 904 units. Starting from the 2009/10 academic year and until 2021/22, the number of students gradually decreased. In 2021/22 academic year, there was a significant decrease in higher education institutions, their number was 386, with 1,047 students. The indicator of the number of students in the 2021/22 academic year is 2.7 times less compared to the 2007/08 academic year.

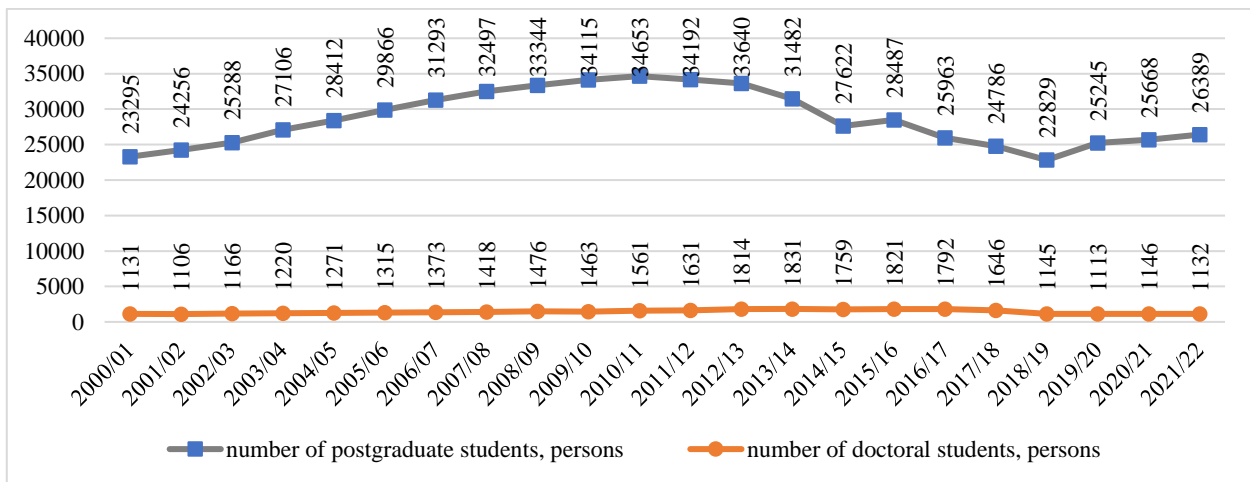


**Figure 2. Dynamics of the number of higher education institutions and the number of students, 2010-2021**

\*Source: compiled by the authors based on <https://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/>.

The highest indicators of the number of doctoral students were in the 2013/14 academic year (1831 doctoral students), the lowest - in the 2001/02 academic year (1106 doctoral students). If we analyze the situation

regarding postgraduate students, then the highest value of them was in the 2010/11 academic year, and the lowest value in 2018/19 and amounted to 34653 and 22829 postgraduate students, respectively (Fig. 3).

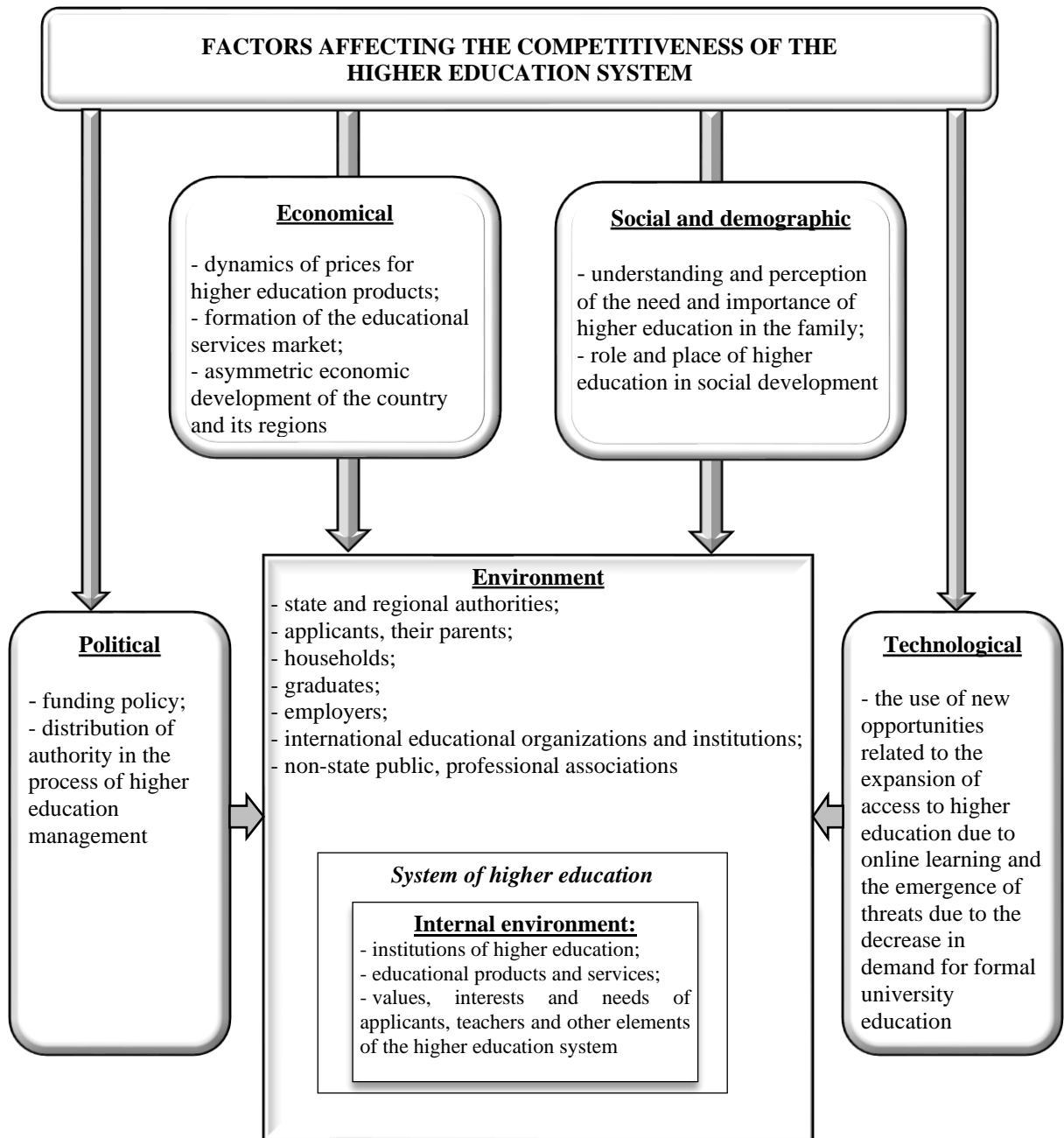


**Figure 3. Dynamics of the number of graduate students and doctoral students, 2010-2021**

\*Source: compiled by the authors based on <https://www.ukrstat.gov.ua/>.

The characteristics of higher education as an object of research are determined by a set of factors that shape its place and position in social life. This is reflected in the study of the process of functioning and development of higher education from the point of view of the formation of, firstly, social capital at various levels: from personal to state, and secondly, innovative potential for increasing the level of economic development in other areas. It

requires research and the system of higher education with an indication of its internal and external environment. Among all factors that significantly affect the competitiveness of the higher education system in the context of ensuring sustainable development of the state, the following can be distinguished: economic, political, social, demographic and technological (Fig. 4).



**Figure 4. Factors affecting the competitiveness of the higher education system in the context of ensuring sustainable development of the state**

*\*Source: systematized by the authors.*

Social and demographic factors include understanding and perception of the need and importance of higher education in the family, its role and place in social development; structural features of the country and its regions. Economic factors – processes of formation of the educational market, its price aspects and trends of functioning and development. Political factors are related to the

degree of development of educational law and civil society, management aspects of higher education and its financing processes. Technological factors - with the level of digitization of higher education processes, which, on the one hand, provide new opportunities and spread them due to the use of the online format, and on the other - lead to a decrease in popularity and demand for the

classic format of higher education and university education, include the inevitable its transformation.

Therefore, a set of economic, social, demographic, political and technological factors exert a significant complex influence on the competitiveness of higher education, which indicates the need to take into account such systemic influence and understand the importance of the educational sphere in social development.

### Conclusions

Compliance with the principles of sustainable development requires the search for new approaches to solving existing problems of humanity, behavior and everyday life, rethinking the attitude to natural resources, their preservation and use. Sustainable development meets the modern globalization challenges of world civilization. Adherence to the principles of sustainable development ensures the process of harmonizing the reproduction of productive forces, meeting ever-growing social needs under the conditions of careful attitude and preservation of the environment.

It has been studied that the competitiveness of higher education must be

studied in interaction with the competitiveness of the national economic system and the competitiveness of such basic elements of the education system as higher education institutions and their products and services. The decisive influence of education on sustainable development lies in the fact that education is the key to understanding the essence of the paradigm of sustainable development and expanding the capabilities of humanity in solving issues of economic development and environmental protection. Achieving the goals of sustainable development is possible only with the participation of every member of society. The educational process provides an opportunity to inform everyone about the existing global environmental threats arising from the destructive production activities of business entities, to focus on the possibilities of their elimination and prevention of global environmental changes, as well as to rethink the values and everyday behavior of everyone in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Further research is required to investigate the peculiarities of the restoration and modernization of the higher education system in the conditions of war challenges.

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