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THE SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION QUALITY EVALUATION IN FRANCE: HISTORY AND MODERNITY

The features of the contemporary higher education system of France have been considered in the article. The types of higher education institutions in France and their peculiarities in the context of development tendencies have been studied and analyzed. The specific features of doctoral studies in France have been studied. The historical peculiarities of the quality evaluation system in the French higher education and its contemporary state have been highlighted.

Key words: doctoral studies; elite schools; higher education system of France; major public institutions; private higher institutions; quality evaluation; university.

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Introduction. The French Higher Education System is presently undergoing one of the deepest transformations of its history. In the last few years, several major pieces of legislation, partly unconnected, have triggered a process of change that will alter the structure of the system, the relations among its various components as well as their internal organisation. Parallel to these structural changes, the higher education and research system has been building up a comprehensive evaluation apparatus.

After a short account of the present state of higher education highlighting this paper will present the development of the methods and the institutions of evaluation over the last two decades. 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. Dzhurynskyi, L. Zyazyun, F. Kontrelyova, K. Korsak, S. Malkova, L. Makarova, A. Maksymenko, and others.

The purpose of the article is to study and analyze the features of the contemporary higher education system of France, to highlight the types of higher Education Institutions in France and their peculiarities in the context of development tendencies, as well as to study the specific features of doctoral studies in France; to highlight historical peculiarities of the quality evaluation system in the French higher education and its contemporary state.

The structure of the higher educational system in France. The French system is characterized by a duality of research and teaching organisation and a duality of

higher education institutions and programmes. The major part of publicly funded research was conducted by about twenty national research agencies. These agencies are autonomous but funded by the state. The best known is the «national centre for scientific research» (Centre national de la recherche scientifique – CNRS). Founded in 1939, it employs about 34 000 researchers and support staff and covers most fields of research. Research agencies operate their own laboratories and, since the end of the 1960's, cooperate with universities by providing funds and staff to selected laboratories named «mixed research units» (UMR). University research centres are eager to get this prestigious «label» from research agencies (Chevaillier, 2013).

The second distinctive feature of the French system is the duality of teaching institutions. Although the universities enrol about 60% of the higher education students, they are in competition with smaller independent institutions, often more prestigious, called «grandes écoles» or «écoles supérieures» enrolling from a few hundred to a few thousand student and specialising mostly in engineering and management. Since, unlike universities, they select their students through high-level competitive entrance examination, they attract the brightest students. They were traditionally not involved in research, with a few notable exceptions. Most of these écoles are public, funded by the state budget and controlled by various government departments that appoint their directors, their permanent staff and allocate funding to them. A number of them are private and may apply for state accreditation and increasingly for recurrent funding from the state budget (Chevaillier, 2013).

The French education system is characterised by a strong central State presence in the organisation and funding of Education. The French education system is regulated by the Department for National Education, Higher Education and Research. It governs within the

framework defined by the Parliament, which states the fundamental principles of education. The State plays a major role in governance, as, by long tradition, the French education system is centralised. The State defines the details of curricula at all education levels; it organises the teachers' admissions procedure, defines content, recruits teachers who become civil servants, provides them with in-service training; it recruits and trains inspectors, responsible for controlling the quality of the education system; it is the main funding body of the public education system and subsidises «private schools under contract» which receive approximately 20% of school pupils (France Overview). At the same time, at local level, and since the beginning of a process of decentralisation of competences in the administration of the educational system in the 1980s, local authorities have been playing an increasingly important part in governance, ensuring the material operation of the system: construction and maintenance of school buildings, school transport, supply of educational materials, etc.

French higher education system is characterised by the coexistence of several types of institution. There are: universities; major public institutions (grands établissements publics); grandes écoles (elite schools); administrative public institutions; private higher institutions or schools.

- **Universities.**

Universities are scientific, cultural and professional public institutions (E.P.C.S.C.P.) as defined by the 1984 Savary law. Organised since 1984 into training and research units (U.F.R.), they also include internal institutions and schools that dispense technical and short-term training: these are technological university institutes providing short higher education and professional university institutes awarding engineering diplomas.

- **Major public institutions (Grands établissements publics).**

«Grands établissements» are higher education institutions mainly admitting on the basis of an entrance exam taken by students in classes preparing for admission to Grandes Écoles «classes préparatoires aux grandes écoles» (CPGE). They are governed by the provisions of chapter VII of the Education Code and their statutory decrees. The following fall under this category: Collège de France, Conservatoire national des arts et métiers (CNAM), École centrale des arts et manufactures (ECAM), École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), École nationale des Chartes (ENC), École nationale supérieure d'arts et métiers (ENSAM), institut Polytechnique de Bordeaux (IPB), École nationale supérieure des sciences de l'information et des bibliothèques (ENSSIB), École pratique des hautes études (EPHE), Institut d'études politiques de Paris (IEP), Institut de physique du globe de Paris (IPG), Observatoire de Paris, Institut national des langues et civilisations orientales (INALCO), Muséum national d'histoire naturelle (MNHN), Palais de la découverte, Institut national d'histoire de l'art (INHA), Université de technologie en sciences des organisations et de la décision de Paris-Dauphine, École des hautes études en santé publique (EHESP), Institut polytechnique de Grenoble.

- **«Grandes écoles» (elite schools).**

«Grandes écoles» is a title that covers engineering colleges, «écoles normales supérieures» (ENS), business schools and veterinarian colleges. These grandes écoles are characterised by a very selective admissions policy and the high level of training and qualifications dispensed (5 years of higher education).

- **Higher education research hubs (Pôles de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur).**

Since the planning law for research of 18 April 2006, higher education institutions can decide to pool together their activities and resources by creating higher education research hubs «pôles de recherche et d'enseignement supérieur». Their aim is to create a momentum between the different types of institution (universities, grandes écoles, research organisations) and propose a more consistent and legible research and training system. The development of such hubs is backed up by the effective autonomy of universities.

- **Private higher education institutes and schools.**

There are two types of institutions:

- Free private higher education institutions of which there are 13 (5 of which being Catholic Institutes) governed by the law of 12 July 1875 relating to the freedom of higher education, which provide university education;

- Private and consular higher education institutions of which there are 134 (including 44 private engineering schools and 90 private and consular business and management schools).

Training provided by these institutions, recognised by the State, is approved or supervised by the Department of Higher Education. Engineering colleges are authorised to issue an engineering diploma and business and management schools are authorised to issue an approved diploma.

Some private technical higher education institutions can also be recognised by the State for training preparing to pass the Brevet de Technicien Supérieur (BTS – Advanced Technician's Diploma). In this context, only the training is recognised and not the institution itself. In the system of the French higher education defined are the first cycle programmes and the first cycle programmes. The first cycle programmes are represented by: Bachelors (3-year-course) and some Short-cycle course (2 years of studies), corresponding to a first cycle level, mainly concern the industrial, service and paramedical sectors.

Organisation of Doctoral Studies. The «doctorat» (PhD) is prepared in six semesters (it corresponds to a baccalauréat diploma + 8 years of study). The diploma is awarded after presentation of a thesis. This third level is one of high specialisation and research training. After the master's degree or a recognised equivalent, students showing aptitude for research can access PhD studies within the framework of doctoral schools. These schools allow the preparation of a doctorat (PhD) in three or four years (presentation of a thesis or of a set of work). In compliance with the commitments taken in the «Pacte pour la recherche», expressed by the planning law for research no. 2006-450 of 18 April 2006, doctoral training has been renovated: the new order of 7 August 2006 bearing on doctoral training is consistent with the orientations set

out in the «European Charter for Researchers» especially as regards the status of PhD students. Moreover, attention paid to the implementation of the «thesis charter», a genuine moral contract between the PhD student, his or her thesis supervisor, the doctoral school head and the director of the host laboratory, guarantees quality insofar as it defines the rights and duties of each party. The preparation of a thesis should be part of a personal and professional project clearly defined in its objectives and resources. Consecutive to this reform adopted by the order of 7 August 2006, PhD training should offer young PhDs excellent training, attractive nationally and internationally, and the best possible career prospects. Moreover, doctoral studies allow:

- a scientific framework guaranteed by recognised research units or teams;
- training useful for steering their research project and elaborating their professional project;
- international opening;
- the possibility of doing a work placement;
- integration monitoring.

During their doctoral training, PhD students take support training courses and pictograms in teaching sessions, seminars, missions or placements organised within the framework of the doctoral school. Admission to a doctoral school with a view to preparing a PhD is open to holders of a national master's diploma or another diploma conferring the grade of master, an engineering diploma or equivalent diploma through the validation of acquired experience. Enrolment is confirmed by the head after proposal by the doctoral school head and validation by the thesis supervisor and research unit director. It confirms admission to the training dispensed by the doctoral school. Enrolment should be renewed at the start of every university year. PhD training consists in training through research, in research and innovation. It is a genuine professional research experience, opening up the way to a career, in variable conditions and with variable responsibilities depending on the sector. Obtaining a PhD can also be followed up by registration with a view to approval to supervise research, a diploma confirming the aptitude to implement original high level research and ability to supervise young researchers. The key purpose of this diploma is to allow access to the profession of «university lecturer». PhD students conduct their work under the control and responsibility of their thesis director.

System of evaluation in France's higher education.

Before the creation of the AERES (Higher Education and Research Evaluation Agency) in 2007, responsibility for evaluation of higher education and research was distributed among different agencies. At the government level, evaluation appeared quite late compared to other countries: the first legislation providing for evaluation of public policy was published in the early 1990's. A major reform of the state budgetary process (LOLF, 2001) that took almost ten years to produce its full effects, submitted the state administration and all the state «operators» (public or private bodies funded from the state budget) to evaluation of their actions through reports to the parliament on the achievement of detailed objectives stated to them. As far as higher education

and research are concerned, targets and indicators were set to public operators, universities, écoles and national research agencies. Among such targets it is possible to find degree completion, transition from one level to the other (bachelor, master and doctorate), transition to labour market (time from degree to employment, adequateness of employment, etc.), productivity of research (publications and patents, income from grants and industrial contract, etc.). At the level of the higher education and research sector, evaluation had been present for quite a long time, through the tradition of peer assessment used in selection and promotion of academics. The Higher Education Act of 1984, devoted to restructuring of the internal organisation of universities, increased the relative autonomy of institutions to the detriment of individual academics and introduced a national committee for evaluation of higher education institutions (CNE – comité national d'évaluation des établissements publics d'enseignement supérieur). The committee, set up in 1985 as an independent authority, comprised members designated by different academic bodies and public agencies. His mission was to systematically evaluate universities and public higher education institutions and to report to the President of the Republic on the state of higher education (Chevaillier, 2013).

Over its first years of existence, CNE developed its own methodology for institutional evaluation that differed substantially from what was done in the neighbouring countries that were most advanced on the field of higher education evaluation. In 2003, it produced a manual called «the book of reference», witness of the evolution of its evaluation practices in the perspective of the Bergen conference on evaluation in HER and the setting up of the new European quality assessment principles (Standards and Guidelines, 2015) by ENQA. CNER, the national committee of evaluation of research (comité national d'évaluation de la recherche), created soon after for evaluating public research programmes and policies, was much less visible partly because overlapping of other agencies. It did not have any role in the assessment of individual research centres and could only conduct survey and write reports on the broad issues of research. A third agency operated parallel to CNE and CNER, is the Mission scientifique, technique et pédagogique (MSTP). It is a task force of the Ministries for Higher Education and Research, drawing on a large number of experts appointed by the ministers among academic staff of the universities and the national research agencies. Its mandate was to evaluate the laboratories entirely owned by the universities (since evaluation of UMR was conducted by the research agencies), the academic teaching programmes (for accreditation of university programmes and doctoral schools) and individual academics staff (for awarding bonuses and distinctions). The individual evaluation of the academic staff of the universities is mainly devoted to the national council of universities (conseil national des universités – CNU). This consultative body, originally created in 1945 and organized in its present shape in 1987, advises the Minister in charge of Higher Education on matters relating to recruitment and promotion of the tenured academic staff of the universities. It is composed of members elected for

two thirds by all tenured academics and appointed for a third by the Minister. The National Research Agencies have their own evaluation bodies, initially set up to assess internally their own staff and the research programmes of their own laboratories.

Contemporary state of the system of quality evaluation in France's higher education. Two major acts were voted by parliament in 2006 and 2007, bringing deep changes that have not yet produced all their effects. The «Act on freedom and responsibility of universities» passed in August 2007 provided essentially for a new governance and a larger financial autonomy of universities. Within five years they were to be devolved full responsibility for managing their personnel and their buildings and get funding through a block grant.

The «programme act for research» of April 2006 contained three main provisions:

- the creation of a new evaluation agency for research and higher education, AERES;
- the extension to the research agencies of medium term funding contracts signed by the ministry in charge of research on the basis of the their strategic plan;
- the definition of a new institutional setting to foster increased cooperation between research agencies, universities and grandes écoles to build centres of excellence, create strong thematic research networks, raise funds from private donors and build regional «higher education and research pole» (PRES). The new evaluation agency, AERES, was conceived as a unified evaluation agency responsible for all fields of evaluation for higher education and research. CNE, CNER and MSTP were actually merged into AERES but a few specialized bodies remained outside.

AERES was given four missions:

- Evaluate higher education institutions (universities, écoles) and research agencies;
- Evaluate operation and outcomes of research units;
- Evaluate teaching programmes and degrees;
- Validate the procedures for individual evaluation of academic and research personnel.

The purpose of evaluation. Evaluation may have different purposes according to the different stakeholders of the Higher Education and Research system:

- Provide reliable information for decision making to prospective students, to employers wishing to assess programmes and degrees of their future employees, to accreditation and funding agencies, presently the HER ministry.
- Assess consistency and performance of the HER system for accountability towards society at large.
- Help the evaluated entities, support them in building capacity for self-evaluation, provide them with comparisons and references they may use to best fulfil their missions and ground their strategies. There may be conflicts between purposes as the tools used by evaluation differ from one to the other (4). The assessment of the education system is a collection of processes that can be split into two broad categories:
 - On the one hand, those processes consist of a number of assessments that cover the system as a whole or one or more of its aspects. The assessments are done by different stakeholders with varying frequency.

- On the other hand, there is an annual arrangement for assessing the system with the help of relatively stable indicators; it is done with a view to budget management, and it calls upon a small number of stakeholders (France Overview).

Today's bodies for higher education evaluation are the following:

- The Evaluating Agency for Evaluating Research and Higher Education (l'Agence d'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur (AERES);
- The National Committee for Evaluating Schools of a Scientific, Cultural and Vocational Nature (Comité national d'évaluation des établissements publics à caractère scientifique, culturel et professionnel (CNE);
- Inspection General of the Administration of National Education and Research (Inspection générale de l'administration de l'éducation nationale et de la recherche – IGAENR);
- The High Evaluation Council (HCE – Haut conseil de l'évaluation).

Higher education institutions also contribute to assessing the system by implementing internal assessment procedures. The assessment of the state of the French higher education system relies on both external and internal evaluations.

Various aspects of higher education and research are submitted to external evaluation, in particular the following:

- schools;
- research units;
- training courses and diplomas;

The bodies responsible for the external evaluation of higher education are involved in assessing one or several of these aspects. Each body has its own approach. For example, the AERES assesses the institution's capacity for understand itself, determine and follow objectives in the framework of the general outlines decreed by the State, detect dysfunctions and implement actions for improvement. The agency pays particular attention to policy conducted by institutions towards students and student life. An institution's assessment is done in several stages: preparation, visits and feedback. In accordance with the autonomy principle for institutions, the first responsibility in managing the teaching quality of higher education falls to the institution itself, which lays the foundations for instilling responsibility in the university system itself as part of the national quality framework. Procedures for self-assessment (or internal assessment) are implemented in institutions under the urging and follow-up of AERES and the CNE. Self-assessment tools are placed at the disposal of institutions by these bodies, as for example the Livre des références (LDR–Reference Book) by the CNED. This tool is composed of three chapters (training policy, scientific policy and management) that respond to the basic remits of universities. The institution is led to identify its strengths, its weaknesses and its progress; it acquires a global view of how it works. Internal evaluations may be done in a one-off manner or as an on-going process (France Overview).

Conclusions. As a result of the study, it can be concluded that the duality of research and teaching

organisation and a duality of higher education institutions and programmes are a characteristic feature for higher education in France. Theoretical analysis made it possible to determine that French higher education system is characterised by the coexistence of several types of institutions. French higher education system relies on

both external and internal evaluations. Summarizing, certain features of the organization of the French system of evaluation of higher education can be used to develop recommendations on the use of progressive ideas of the country's experience in the development of the system of higher education quality evaluation in Ukraine.

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СИСТЕМА ОЦЕНКИ КАЧЕСТВА ВЫСШЕГО ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ ВО ФРАНЦИИ: ИСТОРИЯ И СОВРЕМЕННОСТЬ

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В статье рассмотрены особенности современной системы высшего образования Франции. Изучены и проанализированы типы вузов во Франции и их особенности в контексте тенденций развития. Изучены особенности докторских исследований во Франции. Выделены исторические особенности системы оценивания качества во французском высшем образовании и его современное состояние.

Ключевые слова: высшие учебные заведения; докторантура; основные государственные институты; оценка качества; система высшего образования Франции; университет; частные высшие учебные заведения; элитные школы.

СИСТЕМА ОЦІНЮВАННЯ ЯКОСТІ ВИЩОЇ ОСВІТИ У ФРАНЦІЇ: ІСТОРІЯ ТА СУЧАСНІСТЬ

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У статті розглядаються особливості сучасної системи вищої освіти Франції; зазначено дуальність між французькими закладами вищої освіти та дослідницькими центрами, а також дуальність між освітніми установами та навчальними програмами. Розкрито особливості функціонування дослідницьких центрів. Вивчено та проаналізовано типи закладів вищої освіти у країні та особливості їх діяльності в контексті сучасних тенденцій розвитку. Вивчено особливості функціонування університетів, «великих шкіл» та приватних закладів вищої освіти. Розкрито порядок здійснення докторських досліджень у Франції. Зазначено умови вступу та підготовки докторів філософії. Виділено історичні особливості системи оцінювання якості у французькій вищій освіті та її сучасний стан. Розглянуто функції і завдання установ, що задіяні у систему оцінювання якості вищої освіти Франції та зазначено мету проведення оцінювання якості освіти. Зазначено органи, які займаються оцінкою якості вищої освіти у державі. Досліджено роль, історичні аспекти та місію Агентства з оцінки вищої освіти та досліджень Франції. Зазначено роль та місію Національного комітету з оцінки державних вищих навчальних закладів. Розкрито особливості зовнішньої та внутрішньої оцінки якості вищої освіти у країні; зазначено участь вищих навчальних закладів у проведенні оцінювання. У статті розглянуто сучасний стан сфери оцінювання якості вищої освіти. Акцентовано на сильній централізованій присутності держави у сфері освіти Франції, зокрема у розробці навчальних програм на всіх освітніх рівнях, визначенні змісту навчання, а також у підборі викладацького складу, призначенні та навчанні інспекторів, що здійснюють контроль за якістю освіти. Звернено увагу на роль автономії закладів вищої освіти у їх розвитку та діяльності та місцевих органів влади, які здійснюють матеріальне забезпечення задля функціонування закладів освіти.

Ключові слова: докторантура; елітні школи; основні державні інститути; оцінка якості; приватні вищі навчальні заклади; система вищої освіти Франції; університет.

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