Анотація. У статті висвітлено проблему імплементації ефективної моделі забезпечення якості освіти в закладах загальної середньої освіти, що базується на поєднанні механізмів зовнішнього оцінювання діяльності закладу освіти та процедур самооцінювання результатів його функціонування. Зроблено акцент на необхідності проведення інституційного аудиту закладів загальної середньої освіти як необхідного складника системи зовнішнього оцінювання освітніх і управлінських процесів закладу освіти та внутрішньої системи забезпечення якості освіти, а також перевірки дотримання закладом освіти вимог законодавства у сфері освіти. Розглянуто законодавчі трактування якості освіти та складників системи забезпечення якості освіти, а також інституційного аудиту як однієї із компонентів зовнішньої перевірки та оцінювання якості загальної середньої освіти, результатом якого є ефективне функціонування і стаїй розвиток закладу освіти. Розкрито сутність інституційного аудиту й визначено процедуру його проведення в закладах загальної середньої освіти. Зауважено, що інституційний аудит проводиться Державною службою якості освіти України та її територіальними органами в межах своїх повноважень, відповідно до спеціально розроблених процедур за чітко визначеним переліком напрямів, вимог, критеріїв та індикаторів оцінювання. Розглянуто основні напрями проведення інституційного аудиту в закладах загальної середньої освіти. Підкреслено пріоритетність побудови сучасного інституційного аудиту на засадах інноваційності, прозорості, відкритості, високої якості, незалежності, та партнерства з іншими освітніми закладами, що є необхідною умовою забезпечення якості надання освітніх послуг у закладах загальної середньої освіти й запорукою ефективного розвитку освітньої сфери в Україні.

Ключові слова: інституційний аудит, якість освіти, освітні й управлінські процеси, оцінювання, перевірка, заклад освіти, загальна середня освіта.

INSTITUTIONAL AUDIT AS A KEY INSTRUMENT FOR ENSURING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Abstract. The article highlights the problem of implementing an effective model of quality assurance in general secondary education institutions, based on a combination of mechanisms for external evaluation of the activities of an educational institution and procedures for self-assessment of the results of its functioning. The emphasis is placed on the need to conduct an institutional audit of general secondary education institutions as a necessary component of the system of external evaluation of educational and management processes of an educational institution and the internal system of quality assurance for education, as well as verification of compliance by an educational institution with the requirements of legislation in the field of education. The legislative interpretation of the quality of education and the components of the quality assurance system, as well as institutional audit as one of the components of external verification and assessment of the quality of general secondary education, which results in the effective functioning and sustainable development of an educational institution, is considered. The article reveals the essence of institutional audit and defines the procedure for its conduct in general secondary education institutions. It is noted that the institutional audit is carried out by the Ukrainian State Education Quality Service and its territorial bodies within their powers, in accordance with specially developed procedures according to a clearly defined list of areas, requirements, criteria and evaluation indicators. The main directions of institutional audit in general secondary education institutions are considered. The priorities of building a modern institutional audit on the basis of innovation, transparency, openness, high quality, independence, and partnership with other educational institutions are emphasized, which is a prerequisite for ensuring the quality of educational services in general secondary education institutions and a guarantee of effective development of the educational sector in Ukraine.

Keywords: institutional audit, quality of education, educational and management processes, assessment, inspection, educational institution, general secondary education.

INTRODUCTION

The problem formulation. The current stage of society’s development and the challenges facing our country demonstrate the growing need for citizens to obtain quality education and expand the range of competencies necessary to ensure an adequate level of life in modern society. The quality of education is a basic category that plays a key role in reforming Ukrainian society. It is an integral part of the social function of public administration, which
considers education as one of the components of the mechanism of social reproduction of the population by creating conditions for the development and creative self-realization of every Ukrainian citizen who is able to work and learn effectively throughout life, providing a social environment that generates the need for quality education for citizens and provides opportunities for its acquisition (Bulba V., 2012, p. 293).

The education sector is multifaceted in nature, and the education services market is constantly facing challenges that necessitate finding new ways to improve the functioning of this sector. The changes taking place in the field of education, in particular, general secondary education, require not only updated management methods and technologies to ensure the quality of education, but also new approaches to the verification and evaluation of educational and management processes. It is undeniable that various mechanisms for ensuring the proper quality of education and procedures for evaluating the results achieved should be aimed at stimulating and improving pedagogical activity and developing an effective model of the educational institution. Accordingly, one of the conditions for the successful functioning of the education system at all levels – from the national to the institutional – is the creation of a reliable mechanism for evaluating and analyzing the results achieved in order to take them into account when developing a strategy for the development of the educational system and eliminating the identified shortcomings (Lukina T., 2023, p. 62). One of these effective tools for ensuring the quality of general secondary education and improving the mechanisms of functioning of educational institutions is institutional audit.

**Analysis of recent research and publications.** In the last few years, the problem of institutional audit as a mechanism for evaluating the educational and management processes of an educational institution, which results in improving the quality of its functioning, has received considerable attention from the educational and scientific community. The study of this problem is primarily related to the search for the most rational tools for ensuring the quality of education, the need to develop effective mechanisms for evaluating the results of the functioning of educational institutions (Lukina T., 2020; Kraviskyi O., Forkutsa O., 2021; Ilich L., Akilina O., Panchenko A., 2023). Modern scientific developments confirm the fact that the greatest effect in achieving better results in the quality of education is provided by those models of evaluation and control of educational activities of an educational institution that are based on a combination of external verification systems (institutional audit) and internal assessment (self-assessment) of the quality of education (Hromovyi V., 2019; Hrachyansh V., 2019; Dudka T., 2020; Bobrovskyi M., Horbachov S., Zaplotynska O., Linnik O., 2021; Drobin A., Kurlova O., 2022; Lukina T., 2023). Foreign scientists focus on issues related to finding a balance between external and internal assessments of the quality of educational and management processes of an educational institution and the conditions for improving its activities and efficiency (Blok N, Sleegers P., Karsten S., 2008; Ehren M., Shackleton N., 2015; Ehren M., Baxter J., 2020; Brown M., Gardezi S., Blanco L., Simeonova R., Parvanova Y., McNamara G., O’Hara J., Kechri Z., 2021). Simultaneously, it should be noted that the outlined issues have not received multidimensional coverage in scientific research, and successful practices of internal and external assessment of the quality of functioning within general secondary education institutions in the form of institutional audit require further study and adaptation to modern realities.

**AIM AND TASKS RESEARCH** – to investigate the essence of institutional audit as one of the most important components of the education quality assurance system, to outline the main directions and procedures for conducting institutional audit of general secondary education institutions and to determine the prospects for its use as a tool for assessing the educational and management processes of an educational institution and the internal system of education quality assurance, and to verify compliance by an educational institution with the requirements of the legislation in the field of education.

**RESEARCH METHODS:** to accomplish the objectives of the article, the methods of theoretical analysis, study of scientific literature and regulatory documents on the selected research problem, systematization, comparison and generalization of research results and pedagogical experience were used to determine the relevance of the problem of institutional audit as a tool for ensuring the quality of education, to identify the essential features and components of the subject of scientific research, to combine them into a holistic phenomenon and to formulate reasonable conclusions.

**RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH**

The educational sphere development is largely determined by the quality of educational services, as well as the implementation of educational services on the basis of democracy, respect for representatives of other nations and cultures, national consciousness and humanism, as defined by the Ukrainian Constitution (The Ukrainian Constitution, 1996). Global trends in changes in the socio-economic and socio-political organization of society due to the rapid development of science, technology, and engineering have significantly affected the potential of our country to ensure its competitiveness and the dynamics of social progress. Consequently, there is an urgent need for changes in the social, economic and industrial spheres that form a social order for the level of education of Ukrainian citizens as a result of receiving quality education (Drobin A., Kurlova O., 2022, p. 54).

The issue of ensuring the quality of education in Ukraine is related to the general guidelines for improving the education system at all levels and is regulated by the legislative framework, which is based on the Law of Ukraine «On Education» (2017). This document defines the quality of education as «the compliance of learning outcomes with the requirements established by law, the relevant education standard and/or the contract for the provision of educational services», and the quality of educational activities as «the level of organization, provision and implementation of the educational process which ensures that individuals receive a quality education and meets the requirements established
by law and/or the contract for the provision of educational services» (On Education, 2017). The quality assurance system includes the following components: a quality assurance system in educational institutions (internal quality assurance system); an external quality assurance system; a quality assurance system in the activities of governing bodies and institutions that provide external quality assurance of education (On Education, 2017).

The Government, responding to significant changes in the social demand for education, has developed the Concept of Implementation of the State Policy in the Field of General Secondary Education Reform «New Ukrainian School» for the period up to 2029, which reflects the necessary steps in reforming and modernizing the education system in order to improve its quality (Concept, 2016). The implementation of the Concept determined the need to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of educational and management activities of educational institutions, which was reflected in the legislative acts regulating institutional audit. This became the starting point in the process of creating a quality assurance system for education and academic activities in general secondary establishments.

Ensuring quality services in the field of general secondary education is implemented through institutional audit as one of the most important components of the system of external quality assurance of education. Its purpose, tasks, content, order and procedure are regulated by a number of legal acts, including the Law of Ukraine «On Education» (2017), the Law of Ukraine «On General Secondary Education» (2020), and the Procedure for Conducting Institutional Audits of General Secondary Education Institutions (2019). In accordance with the Law of Ukraine «On Education» (2017), institutional audit should be understood as «a comprehensive external audit and evaluation of the educational and management processes of an institution of education that ensure its effective operation and sustainable development» (On Education, 2017). At the same time, its purpose is to assess the quality of educational activities of an educational institution and to determine recommendations to the founder and general secondary education institution to improve the quality of educational activities and the internal system of quality assurance, as well as to bring educational and management processes in line with the requirements of the law (On General Secondary Education, 2020).

Institutional audit is a process of external evaluation of general secondary education institutions, which involves the study of management and educational processes taking place in them, and is designed to help these institutions develop on the basis of innovation, high quality, transparency and partnership with other educational institutions. The mechanisms of institutional audit are regulated by statutory documents, in particular, the Procedure for Conducting Institutional Audit of General Secondary Education Institutions (2019), which defines the procedure and peculiarities of conducting institutional audit of general secondary education institutions in Ukraine. Pursuant to this regulatory act, the procedure for conducting an institutional audit involves assessing the educational and management processes of an educational institution and the internal system of quality assurance in the field of general secondary education, as well as verifying that the educational institution meets the requirements of the legislation in the field of education (Procedure for Conducting Institutional Audit, 2019) (Fig. 1).

In the framework of this research, we will clarify the requirements for the organization of educational and management processes of an educational institution and the internal system of quality assurance in each of these areas:
• The educational environment of an educational institution: ensuring healthy, comfortable and safe learning (working) conditions; creating an educational environment free from any form of violence and discrimination; creating an inclusive, developing and motivating educational space.

• Student assessment system: the existence of a student assessment system that ensures fair, impartial, objective and honest assessment; systematic tracking of student learning outcomes and support in the educational process; the focus of the assessment system on developing students’ responsibility for their learning outcomes and ability to self-assess.

• Pedagogical activity of pedagogical staff at educational institutions: effectiveness of planning by pedagogical staff of their activities, use of modern educational approaches to the organization of the educational process in order to form key competencies of students; continuous improvement of the level of professional capacity and skills of pedagogical staff; establishment of cooperation with students, their parents or other legal representatives, employees of educational institutions; organization of pedagogical activity on the basis of academic integrity.

• Management processes of an educational institution: availability of a strategy and planning system for the institution’s activities, monitoring of the implementation of goals and objectives; formation of relations of trust, transparency, and compliance with ethical standards; effectiveness of personnel policy and provision of opportunities for professional development of teaching staff; organization of the educational process on the basis of human-centeredness, management decision-making based on constructive cooperation of participants in the educational process, interaction of the educational institution with the local community; formation and implementation of the academic integrity policy.

Each of the areas of assessment of the educational and management processes of the educational institution and the internal system of quality assurance is carried out in accordance with the criteria and indicators defined by the Procedure for Conducting Institutional Audits of General Secondary Education Institutions (2019), which are used by experts during the institutional audit. To conduct an institutional audit in an educational institution, the State Service of Education Quality and its territorial body creates an expert group consisting of employees of the Service and/or its territorial body, as well as experts – pedagogical staff who have been certified and/or have the highest qualification category, heads of educational institutions that have undergone an institutional audit, as well as other specialists in the field of general secondary education (Procedure for Conducting an Institutional Audit, 2019).

As evidenced by the results of comprehensive external audits conducted by the State Education Quality Service and its territorial bodies, institutional audit has become a key tool not only for assessing the performance of general secondary education institutions in Ukraine, but also for strengthening and developing them. This process replaced the certification of educational institutions and has proven to be a powerful tool in ensuring quality education. Based on the results of the assessment, educational institutions receive conclusions and recommendations for improving the internal quality assurance system, which help to bring management and educational processes in line with the requirements of the current legislation in the field of general secondary education, as well as to identify key vectors for further development of the educational institution. The generalized results of the institutional audit in 2020-2022 are publicly available on the website of the State Education Quality Service (Analytical Report on the Results of Institutional Audits 2020-2021, 2021; Report on the Results of Institutional Audits in 2022, 2022).

With the beginning of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the institutional audit was suspended. However, this temporary pause does not mean stagnation in the field of education. The state’s educational policy and the activities
of the educational community will continue to focus on creating the necessary conditions for providing students with quality educational services. Due to the impossibility of implementing state supervision measures during the martial law regime, the activities of the State Education Quality Service are now aimed at assisting all participants in the educational process, heads of general secondary education institutions and local education authorities in the context of the challenges and threats facing the education system today, in particular, the peculiarities of organizing the educational process, improving the quality of educational activities and improving the internal system of quality assurance.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS OF FURTHER RESEARCH

In contemporary conditions, auditing the effectiveness of educational institutions is relevant in terms of competitiveness and the importance of developing strategic decisions on the development of educational activities and building an internal system of quality assurance. Institutional audit is an external assessment of the processes taking place in an educational institution. It ensures sustainable development and effective operation of an educational institution on the basis of innovation, transparency, high quality, culture and partnerships with other educational institutions, contributes to improving the quality of general secondary education and increasing public confidence in education in general. Institutional audit is designed to identify the level of compliance of the quality of educational and management processes of a general secondary education institution with the final results and, as a result, social and economic efficiency.

Prospects for further research are associated with the study of experience and generalization of the results of institutional audit in general secondary education institutions, research of the most optimal conditions and mechanisms for ensuring the quality of education under martial law.

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