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SASKATCHEWAN-UKRAINE RELATIONSHIPS IN EDUCATION: HISTORY, CURRENT STATE, AND PROSPECTS

САСКАТЧЕВАНО-УКРАЇНСЬКІ ВІДНОСИНИ В ОСВІТІ: ІСТОРІЯ, СУЧАСНИЙ СТАН ТА ПЕРСПЕКТИВИ

САСКАТЧЕВАНО-УКРАИНСКИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ В ОБРАЗОВАНИИ: ИСТОРИЯ, СОВРЕМЕННОЕ СОСТОЯНИЕ И ПЕРСПЕКТИВЫ

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Abstract. *For the last decade, the internationalization of higher education became a priority for both the Canadian province of Saskatchewan and Ukraine. Having historically strong ties, these two parties attempt to build equally strong educational relations. By analyzing educational partnerships and collaborations between the post-secondary institutions in Saskatchewan and Ukraine, the paper examines the history, nature, and development of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in higher education. The author analyses the case of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine cooperation in higher education by examining documents related to the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relations, those outlining Canadian federal and provincial policy initiatives, and Ukrainian state legislature. The paper also discusses the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational cooperation as it is promoted on the websites of the universities involved in such cooperation. The author investigates different internship programs and initiatives between two Saskatchewan universities – the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan, and three Ukrainian public universities – Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas, and Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University. The document analysis provides information of three major categories: the history of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relations, the current state of such relationships in education, and the prospects of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational cooperation. Regardless of the strong governmental support of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in education, several challenges to the relationships appear in the light of the current political-economic contexts. The paper discusses these challenges and suggests recommendations for developing further Saskatchewan-Ukraine cooperation in the educational field.*

Key words: *higher education, internationalization, international collaboration, Saskatchewan-Ukraine partnership, document analysis.*

Анотація. За останнє десятиліття інтернаціоналізація вищої освіти стала пріоритетом як для канадської провінції Саскачеван, так і для України. Маючи міцні історичні зв'язки, ці дві сторони намагаються побудувати однаково міцні відносини у галузі освіти. Аналізуючи освітні партнерських відносин та співпрацю між вищими навчальними закладами Саскачевану та України, стаття досліджує історію, природу та розвиток саскачевано-українських відносин у вищій освіті. Автор аналізує саскачевано-українську співпрацю у галузі вищої освіти шляхом вивчення документів, безпосередньо пов'язаних із саскачевано-українськими відносинами, та тих, що окреслюють канадські федеральні та провінційні політичні ініціативи та законодавчі документи України. У статті також розглядається інформація з веб-сайтів університетів, які задіяні у співпрацю між Саскачеваном та Україною. Таким чином, автор досліджує різні ініціативи та програми стажування між двома університетами Саскачевану – університетом Реджайни та університетом Саскачевану та трьома державними університетами України – Чернівецьким національним університетом імені Юрія Федьковича, Івано-Франківським національним технічним університетом нафти і газу та Тернопільським національним педагогічним університетом імені Володимира Гнатюка. Аналіз документів дає можливість виділити три основні категорії щодо природи та динаміки саскачевано-українських відносин: історія відносин між Саскачеваном та Україною, сучасний стан цих відносин та перспективи співпраці між Саскачеваном та Україною у освітній галузі. Незважаючи на потужну державну підтримку відносин між Саскачеваном та Україною в освіті, низка викликів постає у світлі поточного політико-економічного контексту. Автор розглядає ці виклики та пропонує рекомендації щодо розвитку подальшого освітнього співробітництва між Саскачеваном та Україною.

Ключові слова: вища освіта, інтернаціоналізація, міжнародна співпраця, партнерство Саскачеван-Україна, аналіз документів.

Аннотация. За последнее десятилетие интернационализация высшего образования стала приоритетом как для канадской провинции Саскачеван, так и для Украины. Имея исторически прочные связи, эти две стороны пытаются построить одинаково прочные отношения в области образования. Анализируя образовательные партнерские отношений и сотрудничество между высшими учебными заведениями Саскачевана и Украины, статья исследует историю, природу и развитие саскачеван-украинских отношений в высшем образовании. Автор анализирует саскачеван-украинское сотрудничество в области высшего образования путем изучения документов, непосредственно связанных с саскачеван-украинскими отношениями, и тех, которые определяют канадские федеральные и провинциальные политические инициативы и законодательные документы Украины. В статье также рассматривается информация с веб-сайтов университетов, которые задействованы в сотрудничестве между Саскачеваном и Украиной. Таким образом, автор исследует различные инициативы и программы стажировки между двумя университетами Саскачевана – университетом Реджайны и университетом Саскачевана и тремя государственными университетами Украины – Черновицким национальным университетом имени Юрия Федьковича, Ивано-Франковским национальным техническим университетом нефти и газа и Тернопольским национальным педагогическим университетом имени Владимира Гнатюка. Анализ документов дает возможность выделить три основные категории относительно природы и динамики саскачеван-украинских отношений: история отношений между Саскачеваном и Украины, современное состояние этих отношений в высшем образовании и перспективы сотрудничества между Саскачеваном и Украины в сфере образования. Несмотря на мощную государственную поддержку отношений между Саскачеваном и Украиной в образовании, ряд вызовов возникает в связи с текущим политико-экономическим контекстом. Автор рассматривает эти вызовы и предлагает рекомендации по развитию дальнейшего сотрудничества между Саскачеваном и Украины в сфере образования.

Ключевые слова: высшее образование, интернационализация, международное сотрудничество, партнерство Саскачеван-Украина, анализ документов.

Introduction. For the last several decades, globalization and internationalization have defined socio-economic and education policies in many countries. The internationalization of higher education has a broad focus comprising academic mobility, international research collaboration, networking, and internationalization at home, to name a few. Regardless of a country or a part of the world, the internationalization of higher education is always connected with economic growth, benefits for trade, foreign policy relationships, and building a modern society. Because of the increasing importance of internationalization, the higher education sector in Canada and Ukraine has been undergoing radical changes reflected in national strategies, government policies, and higher education practices.

Canada has sufficient experience in all aspects of internationalization with a shared commitment from government, academia, and the private sector (Knight, 1997). Although the internationalization of higher education in Canada is widely discussed, and various forms of internationalization are analyzed (Altbach, 2002; Knight, 1997, 2013), there are specific goals and motives for internationalization in each higher educational setting. The newer this educational setting is to internationalization; the more necessity appears to study and understand the driving forces of internationalization, especially those related to leadership and decision-making in different educational systems. This point is of critical importance for the relationships between the Canadian province of Saskatchewan and Ukraine. These two partners have only recently been engaged in international education to develop related higher education policies.

Saskatchewan's government interest in the internationalization of higher education began to increase only since 1998 (Garcea & Hibbert, 2014). The province prioritizes international student policies mainly as a part of its comprehensive immigration interest (Assailly, 2012; Garcea & Hibbert, 2014; Saskatchewan, 2009). Ukraine can be similarly considered new to the internationalization of higher education. The internationalization of Ukrainian higher education manifests in the country's search for internationalization markets, anticipating mainly European direction. This prime focus on Europe reflects in standardizing key elements of higher education and introducing the Bologna Process into Ukrainian education (Kushnarenko & Knutson, 2014).

The Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships have been scarcely analyzed in the relevant literature. Multiple sources explore the collaboration between Canada and Ukraine (Loreman et al., 2016; Kushnarenko, 2010; Nedashkivska & Bilash, 2015), but only few researchers prioritize the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relations in their works (Kishchuk, 2015; Zakharchuk, 2018). An even smaller amount, mainly government documents, covers some aspects of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in the education field (Saskatchewan, 2010; Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee, 2010, 2012). Thus, critical literature presenting an in-depth picture of the nature and development of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine partnership is much needed. The significance of the detailed account of these relationships is not only in their potential to contribute to the education development of the two parties. The insights on these relations provide an opportunity to question the common perception of the Canada-Ukraine relationships as between developed and developing countries. For now, such perception posits developing countries as only "buying" countries (Albach & Knight, 2007, p. 294) and developed ones as providers of most services (Albach & Knight, 2007).

The purpose of the research is to examine the development and the nature of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in higher education by analyzing educational partnerships and collaborations between the relevant post-secondary institutions. This paper will discuss the history of the relations in education between Saskatchewan and Ukraine. Further, it will outline the current state of these educational relations on the examples of cross-border partnerships between two Saskatchewan and three Ukrainian public universities. Moreover, the paper will discuss prospects of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relations in education and conclude with the recommendations for developing further Saskatchewan-Ukraine cooperation in the educational field.

Research method. In this paper, the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in higher education are understood as strategic partnerships, collaborations, and other professional and academic initiatives in higher education at the institutional and provincial/national levels in Saskatchewan and Ukraine for “educational, socio-economic, and cultural benefits” (Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee, 2012). A few examples of such relationships are the Memorandum of Intent between the Government of Saskatchewan and Chernivtsi Oblast to promote and facilitate international linkages in education, the Prairie Centre for the Study of Ukrainian Heritage on the University of Saskatchewan campus with the Study Abroad in Ukraine Program (Government of Saskatchewan, 2017), and the Students’ Mobility Program under the Canada-Ukraine Science Internship Program between the University of Regina and Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas (University of Regina External Relations, 2011).

The research method employed in this study is document analysis, “a systemic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents” (Bowen, 2009, p. 27). It is used to discover meaning and understanding and develop relevant knowledge (Bowen, 2009). The relevant documents were chosen based on the following considerations. Saskatchewan and Ukrainian public universities can be considered a microculture commonly influenced by the larger organizational culture of the government through macro-level policies and practices. The universities’ policy and mission depend on the federal/provincial (in Canada) and state (in Ukraine) policies in education and the demands of the time. Saskatchewan and Ukrainian universities are not entirely free in determining their missions just any way they please. In Saskatchewan, Canada’s International Education Strategy and the overall Saskatchewan’s provincial policies on education and immigration influence universities’ mission, highlighting its orientation towards doubling the number of international students. In Ukraine, several Ukrainian state laws on higher education and national development strategies determine Ukrainian public universities’ international direction. Therefore, given the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational cooperation, there is a need to examine documents directly related to the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relations, those outlining Canadian federal and provincial policy initiatives, and the Ukrainian state legislature. As such, for this study, the data is collected from the following documents: *Building on Success: International Education Strategy* (Government of Canada, 2019), *Saskatchewan’s Immigration Strategy: Strengthening our Communities and Economies. Advanced Education Employment, Immigration and Labour* (Saskatchewan, 2009), *Saskatchewan-Ukraine Relations* (Government of Saskatchewan, n.d.), *Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Fact Sheet* (Government of Saskatchewan, 2017), *Report of the Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee* (Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee, 2010, 2012)), *Law of Ukraine “On higher education”* (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2002, 2014), *National Developmental Strategy* (President of Ukraine, 2002, 2013).

Alongside the analysis of federal, provincial, and state legislative provisions, the study examines the websites of the universities involved in the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational cooperation. They are two Saskatchewan universities – the University of Regina and the University of Saskatchewan, and three Ukrainian public universities – Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University, Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas, and Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University. These data sources contribute to the limitation of the study: all detailed information about the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational cooperation is available on each of the two Canadian universities’ websites, while all three Ukrainian universities only briefly mention their collaboration with Canada (Chernivtsi National University, n.d.; Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas, n.d.; Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, n.d.). Therefore, the following data on the Saskatchewan-Ukrainian partnership are retrieved from the websites of the universities of Regina and Saskatchewan. Moreover, the relevant journal articles, news releases, reports, and books of the last 15 years contribute to understanding the matter under research.

Research results. The document analysis is conducted to provide information on three major categories: the history of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relations, the current state of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational cooperation, and the prospects of such cooperation.

Historical overview of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relations. Saskatchewan and Ukraine have a long history of social and political relations. Both parties' interest in internationalization and their historically strong ties lead to the recent renewal of their relationships. These relationships progress in many sectors: immigration, education, justice, health, agriculture, energy, and environment (Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee, 2012).

In education, the relationships date back to the 1980s, when the first formal agreement between the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Chernivtsi was signed (Government of Saskatchewan, 2017). The agreement was renewed in 2008 when the province developed a Memorandum of Intent on Education with the Chernivtsi Oblast. This inter-university agreement is considered the longest-standing partnership between Canadian and Ukrainian universities (Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee, 2012). Since then, the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in education have been a product of individual and organizational efforts on both sides. These connections have taken different directions and forms, but a significant shift in the relationships occurred in 1991 after the collapse of the Soviet Union when Ukraine gained its independence (Government of Saskatchewan, n. d.; Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee, 2010).

Though the history of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in post-secondary education started in the 80s of the 20th century, the intensive collaboration between provincial and state higher education institutions began only at the turn of the 21st century (Government of Saskatchewan, 2017). Such partnership was primarily facilitated by the education initiatives and recommendations under the Saskatchewan Ukraine Memorandum of Understanding signed in 1995. Even though in 2012, the Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee admitted that the arrangements and conditions of the Memorandum of 1995 could be formally considered completed on behalf of both parties, the Committee concluded that there were still many issue areas to consider and further pursue. From then on, the Committee advised focusing not on a renewal of the formal agreement between the Government of Ukraine and Saskatchewan, instead to seek and negotiate arrangements with particular oblasts. For instance, a more comprehensive approach was suggested to identify Ukrainian oblasts for future cooperative efforts. As the Committee stipulated in its report, “[c]urrently agreements exist with Zhytomyr and Chernivtsi Oblasts. A number of other regional jurisdictions such as Lviv, Ternopil and Ivano-Frankivsk Oblasts together with the City of Lviv present interesting opportunities for strategic cooperation” (Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee, 2012, p. 13).

Following the recommendations, the Saskatchewan government has recently contributed to developing the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational collaboration. A unique role in these efforts belongs to the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina. As a result, reciprocal visits, educational missions, joint conferences, international work and study opportunities, and internship programs have intensified in the last ten years (Government of Saskatchewan, 2017).

The current state of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relations. Two main influences shape the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational relationships. The primary influence comes from the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora. Formed in four waves over one hundred years by the immigrants from Ukraine and their descendants, the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora has changed its educational priorities several times in response to historical transformations and political movements in Ukraine. This evolution of educational priorities reflected a shift from preserving Ukrainian culture, language, and literature in Canada to “establishing a broader educational base that is mutually beneficial to both Saskatchewan and Ukraine” (Kishchuk, 2015, p. xiv). The second influence on the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships is the increasing role of internationalization. In the education sector, internationalization is recognized as a process that has shaped national and institutional education policies and the higher education landscape worldwide (Altbach, 2002; Knight, 2013). Higher education in Saskatchewan and Ukraine is not an exception.

Currently, the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in the education field are mainly determined by post-secondary institutions' initiatives. Each year increases the number of students participating in study abroad programs between Saskatchewan and Ukraine (Government of

Saskatchewan, 2017). The governments of both countries strongly support these post-secondary institutions' initiatives. The educational relationships between Saskatchewan and Ukraine develop through cross-border collaboration agreements and two Memoranda of Understanding between the University of Saskatchewan and two Ukrainian universities (Government of Saskatchewan, 2017). Moreover, in 2007 the University of Regina, alongside the Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas, opened the Canada-Ukraine Science Internship Program. Likewise, the University of Saskatchewan is engaged in long-term cooperation with two Ukrainian universities: Chernivtsi National University and Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University.

The Prairie Centre for the Study of Ukrainian Heritage (PCSUH) is a leading supporter of Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational partnerships at the University of Saskatchewan. It was established "to support the pioneering tradition of Ukrainian Studies" (PCSUH, n.d.c, para.1). The Center positions itself as "a hub for scholarly work and advocacy" (PCSUH, n.d.c, para.1) in the field of Ukrainian Studies. While providing an opportunity for the Canadian students to minor in Ukrainian Studies, it is also involved in many cross-border collaborative programs with two Ukrainian universities: Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University and Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University.

The PCSUH's Canada-Ukraine Initiative covers a wide range of actions, from supporting and promoting the research of the University of Saskatchewan faculty and graduate students on various contemporary political, social, and economic issues of the Canada-Ukraine relationship to providing targeted funding and academic opportunities for graduate students engaged in the area (PCSUH, n.d.a). The purpose of the Initiative is "to nurture and encourage a wider understanding of current Canada-Ukraine relations at the governmental and non-governmental level" (PCSUH, n.d.a, para. 1). Within this purpose and in addition to other activities, the Initiative (a) supports various scholarly conferences on issues relating to the Canada-Ukraine relationship, (b) promotes joint research projects between Canadian and Ukrainian scholars, (c) provides undergraduate and graduate research assistantships and designated research grants for those working within the Initiative to study contemporary Canada-Ukraine relations, (d) sponsors the public presentation of the academic work of the students supported by the Initiative, (e) co-ordinates and manages Internship programs, and (f) supports the publication and dissemination of research conducted under the program (PCSUH, n.d.a).

The *University of Saskatchewan Graduate Internship Program with Yuriy Fedkovych Chernivtsi National University* was created in 2006 with financial support from the Government of Saskatchewan through the Department of Advanced Education and Immigration (PCSUH, n.d.b). This internship program is primarily focused on the single-sided mobility of Canadian undergraduate or graduate students. As the PCSHU describes (n.d.b),

The program's purpose is to place a University of Saskatchewan graduate or post-graduate for a single semester [...] at the Hnatyshyn Centre for Canadian Studies [...], Chernivtsi National University. The student, whose graduate work is in the Canadian Studies field, teaches and works at the Centre. [...] The placement provides a rare and exciting international experience for graduate students, giving opportunity for recent graduates to acquire desirable teaching experience in their field of study. The placement also helps promote interest in Canadian Studies [...], and strengthens both the educational links between the universities, and the historical/cultural bond between the twinned regions of Saskatchewan and Bukovyna. (para. 1-3)

In cooperation with the partner institution of Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University, the University of Saskatchewan, specifically St. Thomas More College, offers Spring Session in Ukraine Program. The program allows Canadian students to spend a sprint term (5 weeks from May to early June) in the Ukrainian university to undertake an intensive language and culture program (PCSUH, n.d.d). Language courses are available of three levels of Elementary, Intermediate, and Advanced Ukrainian, along with individual language tutoring. Apart from language orientation, the program also targets a cultural component. Thus, it offers a culture course of Anthropological Perspectives on Contemporary Ukraine (PCSUH, n.d.d).

The Canada-Ukraine Science Internship Program between the University of Regina and the Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas functioned as a mobility program for Canadian and Ukrainian students. The internship program was designed and managed by the Office of Energy and Environment at the University of Regina to help undergraduate students gain international experience, which promoted their competitiveness in the global marketplace. The program provided an opportunity for senior engineering and science undergraduate students from the University of Regina to acquaint themselves with technologies and research in the oil and gas sector in Ukraine (University of Regina External Relations, 2011). Likewise, as the University of Regina External Relations (2011) stated,

Each year, the [...] program brings five students to Saskatchewan from western Ukraine to participate in three-month internship activities in Canada at various companies. During these internships, students learn western business practices and enhance Canadian business economy and culture by sharing their knowledge of Ukrainian culture and business. (para. 5)

In 2010, several Saskatchewan organizations, such as the Government of Saskatchewan's Ministry of Advanced Education, Employment and Immigration, MERA Consulting, Petroleum Technology Research Centre, Prairie Adaptation Research Collaborative, and SaskPower, volunteered to host internships for Ukrainian students and provide financial support for this purpose for the next five years. Moreover, after completing their undergraduate studies in Ukraine, the students were welcomed to return to Canada and continue their education at the graduate level at the Universities of Regina and Saskatchewan (University of Regina External Relations, 2010).

As can be seen from the partnerships between the Saskatchewan and Ukrainian universities, they are strongly supported by the Saskatchewan government and numerous non-governmental organizations. Interestingly, all the Ukrainian universities involved in the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships are public universities from western Ukraine. Given the nature of these international education initiatives, the University of Regina and Ivano-Frankivsk National Technical University of Oil and Gas have concentrated mainly on student mobility cooperation. At the same time, the University of Saskatchewan has a broader focus that is not limited only to student exchange programs but also encompasses many different scholarly activities.

Prospects of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine higher education collaboration. In the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in higher education, both countries are proactive in maintaining and developing their partnership. Even though Saskatchewan and Ukraine are new to internationalization in higher education, they prioritize this process towards excellence and innovation in higher education and seek ways to strengthen their positions in the international arena. However, many questions arise about the nature and the prospects of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships. This paper approaches the discussion of the prospects of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in higher education, considering the interdependence between (a) the differences in perception of Saskatchewan-Ukraine education partnerships and (b) the vision for the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships.

Differences in perception of Saskatchewan-Ukraine education partnerships. Several concerns originate from the discrepancies that different geo-political realities of Saskatchewan and Ukraine bring into the perceptions of and expectations from these relationships.

First, different geo-political realities in Canada and Ukraine resulted in different educational systems: decentralized versus mainly centralized despite the numerous decentralizing attempts, correspondingly. These dissimilarities tie the discussion on internationalization around autonomy in decision-making at various educational levels.

The decentralized nature of Canadian higher education manifests in the parallel operation of different provincial/territorial educational systems. Canada has neither a national system of education nor a national ministry of higher education. The provincial/territorial governments are constitutionally responsible for post-secondary education; however, there are overlapping responsibilities at the federal and provincial levels. This tension in federal-provincial relations appears both from federal control over national well-being and their connection to higher education and the historically predetermined 'federal spending power' (Cameron, 2004, p. 7). Higher

education internationalization is one area where such overlapping interests of the federal and provincial governments meet. As Muir (1997) pointed out, Saskatchewan developed a distinctive system of higher education shaped by the distinct history, economic, and demographic situation. In Saskatchewan, the higher education system comprises two universities – the University of Saskatchewan and the University of Regina – and their affiliated colleges and colleges with federated status, technical/vocational institutes, community/regional colleges, private/vocational schools, and bible colleges (Muir, 1997). Saskatchewan’s post-secondary institutions enjoy broader authority in choosing their institutional policy and strategic directions (Cameron, 2016; Jones, 2016).

On the contrary, Ukraine has a strongly centralized educational system with the Ministry of Education as a central decision-making body in all educational issues (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2014). Ukraine joined the Bologna Process in 2005; however, Ukrainian universities were only legally granted the right to make decisions on their own only in 2014. Nevertheless, the question of when, if at all, the universities received actual autonomy from the state remained open. The historical and socio-political factors contributed to the preservation of the inherited centralized governance both at the national level and at the level of separate institutions (Zakharchuk, 2021). Moreover, the financial dependence of the universities from the state contributed to the “remnant[s] of the Soviet educational bureaucracy, which [was] a rigid form with little new content” (Osipian, 2014, p. 82). As a result, such centralization significantly influenced the Ukrainian universities’ ability to strategically approach the issues of international cooperation (Zakharchuk, 2021). Therefore, the question persists: to what extent do these differences in the education sector power balance influence the relationships between the two parties?

Second, apart from the differences in the degree of institutional freedom in decision-making, higher education in Saskatchewan and Ukraine is based on different educational philosophies: Western and Post-Soviet. These educational philosophies stem from a particular geographical region’s distinct historical, social, cultural, and political realities. Thus, the Western educational philosophy is predominantly individualistic, encouraging initiative, independence, and pluralism of opinions, tending to greater freedom and autonomy at all levels, and welcoming multiculturalism (Hassan & Jamaludin, 2010). Typical for many post-Soviet countries, the centralized and structurally unified education system in Ukraine has been undergoing a series of paradigmatic shifts. Niyozov (2017) specified a few: (a) a move from a single ideology to the abundance of competing and changing values and norms; (b) an introduction of religious and nationalist discourses into a used-to-be atheistic nature of education; (c) a shift towards internationalization of educational institutions (pp. 92–93). Such Ukraine’s transition towards democracy and pluralism is not yet completed (Zakharchuk, 2021), and it might be either an asset or a liability in the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships.

The next gap embodies the discrepancies in different rationales for the internationalization of higher education. For the last several decades, globalization plays a leading role in shaping the higher education landscape in Canada. Advisory Panel on Canada’s International Education Strategy (2012) emphasized the global perspective of internationalization of Canadian education, determining the latter as “a key driver of Canada’s future prosperity” (p. viii). Global tendencies cause the growing federal interest in the internationalization of higher education in Canada, influencing economic and national well-being. Thus, doubling the number of international students “who will either decide to make Canada their home or return to their home countries as leaders” is one of Canada’s International Education Strategy goals (Advisory Panel, 2012, p. ix). The report emphasized the importance of attracting international students “to sustain the quality of the education systems” (Advisory Panel, 2012, p. 7) as a reason for developing international student policy. Consequently, by prioritizing the configuration of the political framework towards internationalization, the federal government determines the direction for further development of higher education for the provinces and territories to follow.

Moreover, a new version of Canada’s internationalization strategy places Ukraine in the scope of targeted countries for future educational collaboration and partnerships (Government of Canada,

2019). However, the Strategy emphasizes that each Canadian province or territory, education association, and institution should choose their partners based on their needs, backgrounds, historical ties, and so forth. The orientation of higher education towards internationalization is a priority for the Government of Saskatchewan, which recognizes the connection between international education and the province's economic prosperity. The governmental recognition is expressed in the Saskatchewan Plan for Growth: Vision 2020 and Beyond (Government of Saskatchewan, 2012). The strategies for Saskatchewan's long-term economic prosperity are: (a) increasing the number of international post-secondary students; (b) increasing the immigration and population growth through attracting and retaining international students; (c) promoting international engagement of students and business community; and (d) establishing the Saskatchewan's International Future Scholarship for domestic students to study business abroad and return to Saskatchewan after graduation (Government of Saskatchewan, 2012). Moreover, the Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee (2012) urged the provincial government to maintain and facilitate close relations with Ukraine at all levels. The Committee emphasized that such ties were desirable and mutually beneficial given the historical experience and their previous success.

Conversely, as a post-Soviet country and “not a central player in international education” (Kushnarenko & Knutson, 2014, p. 25), Ukraine is still searching for its niche in the international arena. This search is greatly predetermined by Ukraine's geographic location – between the European Union and Russia. The move to economic and political integration with the European Union defines the character of Ukrainian internationalization. Ukraine pursues mainly European internationalization, for “[w]hen Ukrainians mention ‘internationalization’ of higher education, they usually mean ‘Europeanization’” (Kushnarenko & Knutson, 2014, p. 25).

For the 30 years, Ukraine has not developed a separate national strategy for internationalization in higher education. All internationalization reforms are outlined in several Ukrainian legislative documents – both *Laws of Ukraine “On higher education”* of 2002 and 2014 (Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine, 2002, 2014) and *National Developmental Strategies* of 2002 and 2013 (President of Ukraine, 2002, 2013). They emphasized the demand for internationalizing universities, developing international partnerships, and promoting academic mobility. As became evident from the recent study on the transformation of Ukrainian public universities (Zakharchuk, 2021), the universities had multiple opportunities for international cooperation. However, they did not always seize these opportunities due to the lack of state formal international strategy. Predominantly, international collaboration was initiated through personal connections between university staff and international colleagues. The efficiency of such international cooperation depends mainly on the university's capacity. It includes but is not limited to academic mobility, collaboration with international universities and non-educational organizations, participation in international research projects, and joint research. Ukrainian universities usually have an extensive geography of international cooperation. However, Polish universities remain the primary international partners. Such partnerships develop at the levels of institutes, individual faculties, and specialties (Zakharchuk, 2021).

Vision for the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships. A wide range of factors contributes to the vision for the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships. As the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships have focused on broadening the educational base and internationalizing higher education, they attracted the government and institutions of both parties (Government of Saskatchewan, 2015). Such renewed interest in the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in higher education predominantly originates from the historically strong ties between Saskatchewan and Ukraine and the previous success of these relationships.

In light of the current political-economic context, several challenges influence the vision for the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships. The Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee (2012) characterized the present moment as the most challenging for the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships, as “[it] offers even a greater challenge to adapt to the geo-political realities of the ‘new’ Ukraine and to build upon the last 21 years of partnerships at various levels between

Saskatchewan and Ukrainian interests” (p. 2). The challenges are mainly connected with civil liberties movements, democratic developments in Ukraine, Ukraine’s search for balance between Western Europe and the former Soviet Union states, military aggression of the Russian Federation in Eastern Ukraine, and a resultant current economic slowdown (Chernova & Pashkova, 2017; Kishchuk, 2015; Morelli, 2017; Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee, 2012; Zakharchuk, 2021). Such an unstable political and economic situation made the supporters of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine cooperation carefully approach the educational partnerships between two parties. While the political and economic situation in Ukraine is very troubling, the Saskatchewan provincial government’s commitment to Ukraine relations remains unchanged. As Deputy Premier Krawetz indicated, “[s]ettlers from Ukraine helped shape our province more than a century ago, and we remain committed to enhancing this special, long-standing relationship ..., particularly in light of Ukraine’s current crisis” (Government of Saskatchewan, 2015, para. 3).

The vision on the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in education becomes explicit mainly through the reports of the Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee. Even if the three Ukrainian universities have comprehensive visions for educational cooperation with Saskatchewan, it is difficult to analyze those strategic plans as no relevant information is publicly available. From Saskatchewan’s perspective, the Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee (2012) considers the field of Ukrainian Studies and language training a solid background to build closer collaboration and strategic partnerships with Ukrainian educational institutions. Moreover, the Committee encourages the province to develop other initiatives on various education-related topics, such as career development internships. Having a long-term strategy for the Saskatchewan-Ukraine cooperation, the Committee also identified specific short-term initiatives and actions. In 2010, the Committee set out three main recommendations within the Saskatchewan Ukraine Memorandum of Understanding: (a) to foster academic and professional initiatives such as reciprocal visits and joint conferences, as well as to establish a Chair of Ukrainian History at the University of Saskatchewan; (b) to expand the scope of international opportunities for students’ linguistic training while traveling, studying, and working in a partner university; (c) to promote career development initiatives for Canadian and Ukrainian students, such as internship programs, short-term exchanges, online educational courses, and so forth (Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee, 2010).

In subsequent years, several steps were undertaken by the Saskatchewan government and institutions as responses to the recommendations. Among them were the inclusion of some cultural and historical aspects related to the Holodomor, the World War I Internment of Ukrainians, and Ukrainian diaspora into the curriculum development, the Provincial Government Mission to Ukraine, and the review of different programs and agreements for intergovernmental and inter-institutional cooperation (Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee, 2012). While the following report of the Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee in 2012 recognized the importance of the undertaken actions, it stressed the significant decline in the community interest towards language and culture learning. The Committee expressed a similar concern regarding “a significant diminished training capacity at institutional levels and a lack of community organizational focus in this sphere” (Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee, 2012, p. 8).

At the same time, the Committee warned that if the community interest and the training capacity were not restored, the Saskatchewan-Ukraine education-based collaboration would decline. Thus, they specified further recommendations: to facilitate educational development of immigrant families through online counseling sessions with Ukraine-based specialists; to continue educational exchanges in Ukrainian studies; to support ongoing curriculum development regarding the inclusion of Ukrainian history and cultural aspects (Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee, 2012). The Committee summarized that while the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational partnership focused on thematic areas of cooperation, its development depended on further strategic evaluation of how the corresponding actions were implemented. Moreover, the 1995 Memorandum between Ukraine and Saskatchewan should be replaced with a comprehensive strategy for collaboration,

which outlined both the distinct targets for future strategic relationships and the mechanisms to oversight the agreements (Saskatchewan Ukraine Relations Advisory Committee, 2012).

Discussion of the results and conclusions. With internationalization being so important to Saskatchewan and Ukrainian post-secondary institutions and yet so different in forms and motivations, it has provoked reflections on the ‘drives’ that make the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships work. The complexity of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in higher education can be understood by looking into the circumstances and historical context of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relations. These relations in higher education are mainly shaped by two influences: the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora and the increasing role of internationalization of higher education.

While the Saskatchewan and Ukrainian governments strongly support the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in education, numerous Saskatchewan non-governmental organizations also facilitate their development. These relationships are implemented through different internship programs and initiatives between two Saskatchewan and three western Ukrainian public universities. Given the nature of these international education initiatives, they concentrate mainly on student mobility. However, a broader focus has also been introduced through academic and professional initiatives promoting linguistic training, career and employment opportunities, joint educational projects, and conferences.

The prospects of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational relationships can be considered within the interdependence between the differences in perception of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine education partnerships by the partners and their vision for these relationships. Overall, the development of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational partnership depends on its further strategic evaluation and subsequent strategic planning on both sides. As such, a comprehensive strategy for collaboration with the distinct targets and the mechanisms to implement those actions is much needed.

The Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational collaboration is significant as it informs international cooperation in education between Canadian and Ukrainian universities. Moreover, the Saskatchewan-Ukraine joint programs in higher education set an example for Canadian universities to consider prospective cross-border partnerships with Ukrainian universities, attract more international students from Ukraine, and encourage Canadian students to study and practice internationally. Moreover, the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational relations also contribute to the Canadian-European educational partnership and facilitate the discussion of joint Canadian-European degree programs, branch campuses, distant learning, and virtual academic mobility.

While the significance of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational relations is undeniable, there are multiple gaps in understanding the nature of these relations. These gaps contribute to the concerns and uncertainty about the future of the relationships. The challenges to the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational relations mainly originate from the differences between the partners in the decision-making process, educational philosophies, rationales for and approaches to internationalization. However, the critical issue remains whether the significance of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine educational relationships counterbalances the discrepancies of geo-political situations and internationalization priorities of the parties.

As Saskatchewan and Ukraine have historically strong relationships in various spheres, it is essential to use them as a basis for building similarly productive and mutually beneficial Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in higher education. Thus, there is a need to capitalize on the motivations, nature, and factors influencing these relationships. As the next step, the reflections from relative stakeholders actively involved in implementing collaborative initiatives in Saskatchewan and Ukraine at various levels are crucial as they will contribute to a better understanding of the essence of the existing relationships and the strategic directions for their further development. New knowledge and insights on each partner’s internationalization policies will help plan the Saskatchewan-Ukraine partnership’s future and identify new forms of potential collaboration. Furthermore, such insights will inform a policy framework that better situates Saskatchewan and Ukrainian universities in future partnerships and facilitates effective educational programs and research initiatives between the parties.

As exemplified earlier, the recent interest in the internationalization of both Saskatchewan and Ukraine and their different rationales for internationalization lead to a number of concerns about the nature of the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in education. What are the motives and prime goals that each party pursues in these relationships? Do the different rationales for internationalization at the national level influence the reasons and goals for the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships at the level of post-secondary institutions? In this regard, the decision on the priority of the Saskatchewan-Ukrainian relations belongs to the respective universities. For example, Ukrainian universities have to decide whether they prioritize the internationalization within the European Higher Education Area and regard the neighboring European countries as more important for educational partnerships or whether Canadian universities also pose an interest for further cooperation. If the decision favors broadening the geography of international partnerships, then Ukrainian universities have to approach such partnerships strategically. So far, Saskatchewan seems to show more interest and exemplifies strategic planning dealing with the Saskatchewan-Ukraine relationships in education.

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