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Part 2. Financial and economic instruments to improve the life quality

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2.9. Quality of working life of teachers in the conditions of coronavirus COVID-19: organizational and economic aspect

The development of higher education is very uncertain in the long run, which cannot but affect the quality of working life of research and teaching staff (RTS). According to the European Fund, higher education is classified as an area of economic activity in which the number of remote workers has significantly increased due to the influence of pandemic restrictions. This situation affected the organizational conditions of the work activity of teachers and the characteristics of its content. As a rule, if the volume of job responsibilities and their complexity is growing, a decision must be made to increase compensation payments. At the same time, the teacher's work and its remuneration have special features that should be taken into account in assessing the impact of coronavirus COVID-19 on the quality of working life (QWL). The results of such an assessment will also depend on the chosen approach to understanding the substance of the phenomenon of “quality of working life”. Thus, the quality of working life of teachers in the context of coronavirus COVID-19 is a relevant issue and requires special approaches to the research.

The quality of working life is the one area of scientific research, which is characterized by numerous interpretations of this subject and selected determinants. Researchers, studying the quality of working life, supplement it with certain aspects or emphasize the importance of certain components. At the same time, almost all scientists in defining the construct use the concept of “meeting the needs” of the employee. The biggest area of uncertainty is the type of needs that must be met for a high quality of working life. For example, the theory of Maslow points out physiological needs, the need for security, the need for the respectful attitude, recognition of authority, needs for self-fulfillment, and self-development; K. Alderfer's theory stresses the need for existence, the need for communication with others; the need for personal growth and development, etc.

In this study of the quality of teachers' working lives, we highlight the key needs of employees that most researchers agree with, namely: the need for a decent wage (financial component), the need for decent working conditions, the need for protection (social security component), and the need for self-development and self-fulfillment.

It is also important to determine the methods of assessing the quality of working life. To obtain accurate estimates of its condition in our view, we need to use the subjective-objective approach proposed by W. J. Jankowski. That is, consideration of the quality of working life on the one hand as “a set of factors that characterize the objective parameters of subjects’ life at work”, and on the other – as “their attitude to the conditions of their work” [1]. This means that it is justified to use the method of sociological research and analysis of statistical data, reporting, etc. to assess the satisfaction of actualized needs of employees. The advantage of the survey as a method of assessing the quality of working life is the high sensitivity to changes in the state of its components. However, the surveys are often subjective which results in excessive fluctuation. To smooth those fluctuations it’s worth adding the analysis of statistical data and reporting.

To analyze the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic we conducted sociological research, questions for which we grouped according to various components of quality of working life – financial component, decent working conditions, social security, development, and self-fulfillment.

Also, to determine the strength of the pandemic's impact on the quality of teachers' working lives, the results of their survey in the epidemiological period were compared with the results in the pre-pandemic period. As it can be seen from Table 1, for most aspects of work, distributed by components of the quality of working life of teachers, there is a decrease in satisfaction in the first pandemic period (2019-2020) as compared to the pre-pandemic period (2017-2018). Exceptions are such aspects of working life as the mode of work, the relationship with the immediate supervisor, and independence in work. Such results are natural. Working from home is usually more comfortable in

comparison to the work in premises of educational institutions. Online mode increases the distance of power, which reduces the intensity of contacts with the direct supervisor but also increases the area where a teacher has more freedom of choice (eg, choice of software, creative approach to planning the structure of classes, and the selection of technologies, etc.).

The results of the survey of teachers based on the results of the second period of the global pandemic (2020-2021) were interesting. Almost all aspects of the work satisfaction of teachers have improved and even exceeded estimates of satisfaction in the pre-pandemic period (2017-2018 years.). The exception is the mode of work in which the satisfaction of teachers has decreased. This situation can be explained by the adaptation of teachers to the conditions of “digital” teaching, as well as by their assessment of the benefits of the digital learning process.

Regarding the deterioration of teachers' satisfaction with the work schedule, we see that the comfort of conducting classes at home has led to shifting the balance in the “work – personal life” pair. This problem, as studies show, existed even in the pre-pandemic period. In November 2017 Times Higher Education first conducted the research among universities staff in respect of the balance between work and family life. Representatives of almost 56 countries took part in the survey. There was a tendency among teachers to increase working hours. According to scientists, they are twice as likely as other employees to work 10 or more hours a day. 49% of teachers said that they usually work on weekends. Teachers tend to rest less than before and become more stressed. 33% of respondents said that in the past year they had only 1 or 2 days on vacation. Due to the workload, there is less time left for family and friends [2]. That is, this problem existed before, but quarantine restrictions have exacerbated the situation.

Assessment of quality of working life of teachers becomes specific with the introduction of quarantine restrictions as there appeared some epidemiological determinants – features of teaching online, the prevalence of organizational and technical conditions of work, features of motivation of scientific and pedagogical

workers, the risk of deterioration of the mental and physiological health, communicative isolation (Table 2). A significant percentage of teachers (42%) gave a positive answer to the question about the convenience of working online when checking students' ongoing and control work. According to only 23.7% of teachers, the independence of students' work has increased.

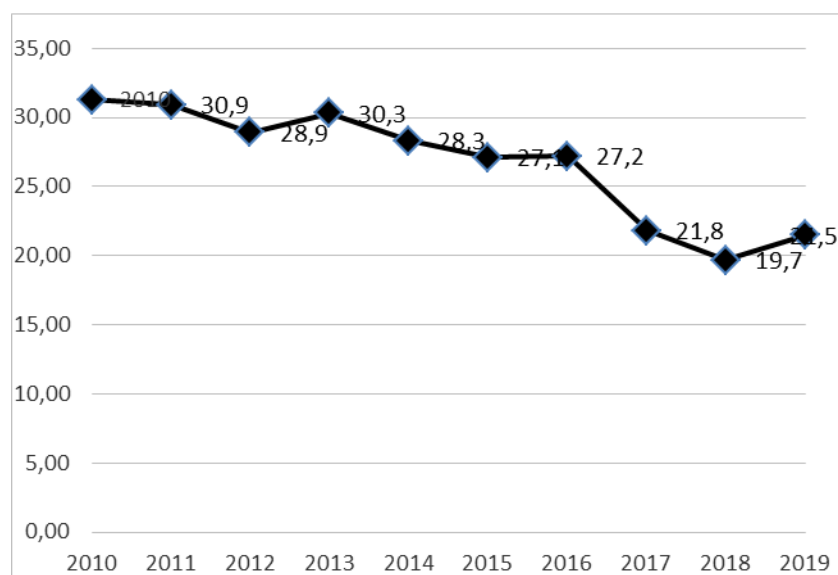
Almost 95% of teachers said that they spend much more time on the computer and on the web to complete the teaching programs, but also 83% of teachers felt that the educational process costs increased. Less than half of the respondent teachers (45.4%) described the class schedule as convenient.

Such changes in the organization of the educational process could not but affect the state of mental and physiological health of teachers. 81.1% of teachers experience an increase in mental and psycho-emotional stress, as well as fatigue. There is a high probability that the deterioration of teachers' health also occurred due to limited communication with students and colleagues, i.e. due to communicative isolation. Only just over a third of teachers reported improved communication with colleagues and students. More than half of the teachers agreed that the online mode is more convenient only for informing students about the learning results and providing them with current tasks.

It is logical to conclude that in most cases, the time spent on educational, methodological, and organizational work of teachers during the pandemic has increased, mental and physical health problems have become more likely, and remuneration has not changed. The non-financial incentives, namely free working time and career growth mentioned only 16% and 32.3% of teachers respectfully.

To make managerial decisions it is necessary to study the real workload of teachers by every component of their work. The results of the survey are presented in Table 3. Most of the interviewed teachers believe that the time spent on all types of work has increased. Also, as Table 4 shows, the new types of work that have emerged as a result of online and mixed modes of the educational process. Lack of reaction of the

management of higher education institutions to changes in the content of teachers' work can lead to higher stress, professional burnout, deterioration of the quality of educational services, as well as the turnover of teachers. In our opinion, there are alternative options for adequate management response to changes in the work activities of teachers – increasing the norms for the standard types of work of teachers and/or increasing teachers' wages in accordance with the real workload. Unfortunately, an increase in teachers' salaries in public educational institutions is the least likely, as the public funding for higher education, as shown in Fig. 1, is reduced.



*Fig. 1. Dynamics of state budget expenditures on higher education
in Ukraine in all expenditures, %*

Source: compiled by the author based on [3].

Therefore, the most probable scenario of reaction to the excessive workload of teachers should be an increase in time for all types of work, the inclusion of new types of work in the list, as well as reducing the maximum workload for research and teaching staff per academic year (currently 600 academic hours) as stated in the law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”.

Table 1. The results of the survey among RTS in the “KNEU named after Vadym Hetman” during the epidemiological period (2020-2021)

The name of the epidemiological determiner	Formulation of questions	Survey results,% * (* Combined positive answers “I completely agree” and “I probably agree” are given)
1. Special aspects of teaching online	Is it more convenient to check the routine tasks, exams and tests completed by students online?	42
	Is it more convenient to control the independence of students' work during the routine tasks, exams and tests online?	23.7
2. Prevalence of organizational and technical working conditions	Are you spending much more time online (on a computer, etc.) to complete your work?	94.7
	Do you spend much more time on the educational process?	83
	Has your schedule become more convenient?	45.4
3. Nuances of RTS motivation	Have the conditions for your personal and professional development improved?	32.3
	Do you have more free time?	16
4. Risk of deterioration of mental and physiological health	Do you feel yourself stressed more (mental, psycho-emotional, etc.)?	81.1
	Do you feel yourself more tired?	81.1
	Do you feel a greater psychological comfort?	18.7
5. Communicative isolation	Has it become more convenient for you to promptly inform students about learning results?	68
	Has it become more convenient for you to provide students with routine tasks, exams and tests?	54.4
	Do you have a better communication with students online?	38.3
	Do you have a better professional communication with colleagues online?	31.2

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of a poll

Table 2. The results of the survey of RTS in the “KNEU named after Vadym Hetman” during the pre-pandemic and pandemic periods (2017-2021)

Component QWL of RTS	Aspect of work	Survey results, on the level of satisfaction of RTS, % * (* Combined positive answers "very satisfied" and "apparently satisfied" are given)		
		2017-2018 years	2019-2020 years	2020-2021 years
1. Compensatory (financial)	Salary	11.7	9.8	20.3
2. Decent working conditions	Working schedule	76.6	76.8	70
	Working conditions	46.6	39.8	50.3
3. Social security	Relationship with the immediate supervisor	83.1	86.5	84.6
4. Development and self-fulfillment	Content of work	75.3	75	76.9
	The social status that work gives	58.1	55.2	64.7
	Independence in work	77.1	83.9	84
	Possibility of self-fulfillment	63.8	61	70.4

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of a poll

Table 3. Changing the actual time spent on the educational process in a mixed / online mode

To what extent has the actual time spent on the following types of mixed / online work changed ?											
Interval values of change of norms of time	Time spent increased by:					Unchanged	Time spent decreased by:				
Name of the type of work	1-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-100%	0%	1-20%	21-40%	41-60%	61-80%	81-100%
	Percentage of responses (%)										
1. Preparation for lectures	37.5	26.9	17.7	11.2	6.7						
2. Preparation for seminars, practical (contact) classes	31.9	20.1	13.7	11.3	10.4						12.6
3. Preparation for online classes	12.9	30.2	21.8	15.1	10.6						9.4
4. Checking and accepting individual work	13.4	26.1	24.8		9.4	11.3				8.6	6.4
5. Guidance, review and defense of individuals tasks provided by the curriculum (course projects)	20.1	37.9		15.7	14.1				12.2		
6. Review of control (modular) work, performed during classroom classes and inside the distance learning system Moodle	15.1	38.9			13.7	10.6		11.3		10.4	
7. Review the results of tasks before classes remotely provided by the current curriculum of the subject	34.5	17.2	12	11.4	12.8	17.2				12.1	
8. Conducting consultations on academic disciplines during the semester		36.2	22		17.3	14.3			10.2		
9. Conducting examination consultations	20.1	37.9			15.7		12.2		14.1		
10. Management of practical training (production, technological, pedagogical, socio-psychological, educational, pre-diploma, research)	35.3	23.1	17.1		14, 3				10.2		
11. Carrying out final control (credit, distance exam, exam)	28.1	14.8		12.3	13.4			13.4	9.6	...	
12. Guidance, consulting, reviewing final qualification works (bachelor, master)	38.1	11.8		11.3	14.4		11.4				6.6
13. Development of methodological materials for carrying out seminars, practical work, laboratory classes, online classes, tests and independent work of students	16.1	33.3		13.6	13.7	12.8					10.5
14. Preparation of examination cards containing tasks and answers to them in the appendix to the set of cards	25.1	32.3		17.1	15.3	10.2					
15. Development of distance learning courses to support the education process in full-time and part-time forms of education		24.3	27.1	12.8	11.7	13.6					10.5

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of a poll

Table 4. Additional types of work of research and teaching staff, which appeared as a result of introduction of the mixed (traditional / distance) form of learning

Question	Name of the type of work	Percentage of responses (%)
What additional types of work appeared?	- development of tasks for students to perform online	24.8
	- connecting students to distance learning courses;	17.5
	- organization of reexaminations online;	22.4
	- filling in electronic recordss with the results of the current progress of part-time students and their exams;	13.4
	- maintenance of educational communications with students remotely (e-mail, online conferences);	15.4
	- modification of training courses for better representation online	6.5

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of a poll

Thus, the quality of working lives of teachers has the potential for improvement by properly managing their work schedules and workload and bringing their wages in compliance with the workload, in particular. The results of the study confirmed the need to give special attention to organizational and economic aspects of the work activity of teachers during ongoing quarantine restrictions. Taking those aspects into account will significantly improve the quality of the working lives of teachers and, accordingly, the quality of educational services in higher education.

Summary. To analyze the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic we conducted sociological research, questions for which we grouped according to various components of quality of working life – financial component, decent working conditions, social security, development, and self-fulfillment. Assessment of quality of working life of teachers becomes specific with the introduction of quarantine restrictions as there appeared some epidemiological determinants – features of teaching online, the prevalence of organizational and technical conditions of work, features of motivation of scientific and pedagogical workers, the risk of deterioration of the mental and physiological health, communicative isolation.

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