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TRANSFORMATION OF THE INTERNAL QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM IN UKRAINIAN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS BASED ON SWISS EXPERIENCE

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Abstract

Relevance The article examines the challenges and prospects of transforming internal quality assurance systems within Ukrainian vocational education institutions in the context of European integration commitments, administrative decentralization, and the urgent imperative to rebuild human capital under martial law and post-war reconstruction. It is substantiated that the prevailing domestic model of internal quality assurance remains predominantly process-oriented and largely confined to institutional self-assessment. This operational paradigm engenders a substantial disconnect between formal compliance with regulatory benchmarks and the tangible demands of the labor market. The core scholarly problem resides in the deficiency of empirically grounded institutional mechanisms for systematically embedding employers and local territorial communities into internal vocational education quality governance procedures. The study analyzes Switzerland's established experience in vocational education and training (VET) quality assurance, which is underpinned by the concept of "collective partnership" (*Verbundpartnerschaft*), the regulatory agency of business associations, and a three-tiered quality management architecture.

Aim: To theoretically substantiate a transformation model for the internal quality assurance systems of Ukrainian vocational education institutions by adapting Swiss institutional mechanisms and operational quality assurance tools in vocational education and training.

Methods: Literature analysis within the Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC scientometric databases alongside Cedefop and ETF institutional repositories (covering 2020–2025) was deployed to determine the state of the art of the scholarly problem and formulate theoretical foundations for VET quality assurance; regulatory and legal analysis of Ukrainian and Swiss statutory frameworks was employed to examine the regulatory underpinnings governing internal quality assurance operations in vocational institutions; comparative-institutional analysis served to evaluate stakeholder engagement modalities and the division of regulatory competencies between labor market entities and vocational education providers; and systemic-functional modeling was implemented to conceptualize and construct an adaptive internal quality assurance model tailored to domestic vocational institutions.

Results: The investigation identified critical institutional gaps dividing the Ukrainian and Swiss VET quality assurance frameworks: the absence in Ukraine of sectoral quality commissions (analogous to the Swiss CODQ / B&Q bodies), an evaluative asymmetry that systematically overlooks the quality of enterprise-based work-based learning, and an insufficient degree of procedure digitalization. The institutional role of the Swiss Federal University for Vocational

Education and Training (SFUVET) within the continuous professional development and qualification certification infrastructure was substantiated.

Conclusions: It is demonstrated that transforming the internal quality assurance systems of Ukrainian vocational institutions from rigid administrative-inspection mechanisms into responsive, market-aligned models substantially reinforces their adaptability to post-war economic recovery imperatives. The structural efficacy of tools developed under the Swiss–Ukrainian DECIDE project is evidenced by the municipalization of vocational institutions and the expansion of regional vocational education networks. The practical significance of the findings lies in formulating evidence-based recommendations for refining internal quality assurance systems across domestic vocational institutions through the integration of Swiss advanced practices.

Keywords: vocational education, quality assurance, EQAVET, institutional audit, educational monitoring, DECIDE project, Switzerland.

Introduction. The contemporary stage of development of Ukraine's national vocational education system is unfolding amid a radical paradigm shift in public governance, driven by decentralization processes, European Union accession imperatives, and the acute challenges of martial law (DECIDE, 2020). Large-scale destruction of industrial and manufacturing infrastructure, geographic dislocations of the labor market, internal population displacement, and significant outward migration of skilled labor have generated an acute deficit in technical and vocational occupations essential for ongoing societal functioning and post-war economic reconstruction. Within this context, the capacity of Vocational Education Institutions (VEIs) to respond expeditiously and substantively to structured labor market demands constitutes a foundational prerequisite for national economic security (Zhou & Zhang, 2025).

The primary internal governance mechanism ensuring the alignment of the instructional process with societal and economic requirements is the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS). Pursuant to Article 41 of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" and official guidance issued by the State Service of Education Quality (SSEQ), an internal system is defined as a coordinated matrix of conditions, procedures, and interventions that guarantee the efficacy of educational and managerial processes while directly shaping the quality of student learning outcomes (State Service of Education Quality of Ukraine, 2026). However, empirical analysis of established IQAS operations within Ukrainian VEIs reveals a distinct operational contradiction (Mykolaiv Professional Lyceum of Construction and Services, n.d.). On the one hand, VEIs formally comply with regulatory mandates established by the Ministry of

Education and Science (MES) of Ukraine and the SSEQ by ratifying internal regulations, establishing monitoring task forces, and compiling annual self-assessment summaries. On the other hand, operational IQAS frameworks function largely as closed-loop systems in which the primary evaluators are internal instructional staff, and the overriding institutional objective remains regulatory licensing compliance and external institutional audit clearance rather than substantive labor market alignment. The prevailing IQAS architecture in Ukrainian VEIs predominantly assesses instructional processes within classrooms and on-campus workshops, systematically marginalizing the appraisal of work-based learning across enterprise workstations during practical apprenticeships or dual-study arrangements. Resolving this contradiction requires theoretical substantiation and empirical modeling of an adapted IQAS framework capable of shifting institutional practice from bureaucratic-administrative oversight toward dynamic, market-oriented quality governance (Lulkova, 2025). In this regard, the established practice of the Swiss Confederation provides valuable insights for comparative benchmarking.

The Swiss Vocational Education and Training (VET) system is recognized globally for its high graduate employment rates, innovation capacity, and structural integration of the private sector into instructional design (Zhou & Zhang, 2025). Swiss systemic efficacy rests on the principle of "collective partnership" (Verbundpartnerschaft) uniting the Confederation, Cantons, and Professional Organizations (employer associations). Under this governance architecture, employers exercise decisive agency in curating curricular content, defining occupational standards, assessing competencies, and

administering quality assurance procedures across all three learning venues: vocational schools, host companies, and branch training centers (Lulkova, 2025). The transfer of Swiss institutional mechanisms into Ukraine's vocational education infrastructure is facilitated through the Swiss–Ukrainian project *Decentralization for Improved Democratic Education* (DECIDE), implemented by DOCCU and the Zurich University of Teacher Education (PHZH) with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). The deployment of the specialized "DECIDE: PROFTEX" initiative provides fiscal and methodological frameworks supporting the transfer of VEIs to communal municipal ownership, the modernization of regional networks, and the formation of localized career guidance and quality ecosystems within territorial communities (DECIDE, 2020).

Literature Review. The conceptualization of internal quality assurance occupies a prominent place in international academic discourse, bridging public administration, comparative pedagogy, organizational management, and labor economics. Literature reviews across Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, and institutional repositories of the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (Cedefop, 2012; Bainbridge, 2024) and the European Training Foundation (ETF) confirm a comprehensive body of fundamental and applied scholarship dedicated to VET quality management (Dudyrev et al., 2021; Besozzi, 2026; Bieber, 2010; Curto-Reverte et al., 2025; Rauner & Maclean, 2008; Hoeckel & Grubb, 2009; Wheelahan & Buchanan, 2012). A central theme in European scholarship between 2020 and 2025 has been the operationalization of Council Recommendations on the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for VET (EQAVET), alongside the strategic objectives articulated in the Osnabrück and Herning Declarations (Evangelista et al., 2026). Scholarly consensus indicates that EQAVET's core orientation centers on shifting institutional focus from terminal inspection toward continuous cyclical optimization underpinned by the Deming cycle (Plan–Do–Check–Act – PDCA) (Cedefop, 2005). Researchers emphasize systematic employer engagement in vocational education governance, collaborative school-business partnerships, and modern digital monitoring tools as essential prerequisites for modernizing internal quality

assurance systems within vocational institutions (Radkevych, 2023; Pryhodii et al., 2022).

Cedefop analytical reports emphasize that establishing coherent quality assurance systems across VET providers requires aligning systemic macro-level policies (national educational frameworks) with institutional micro-level practices. This alignment depends on transparent performance indicators reflecting student learning outcomes and subsequent labor market transition metrics (Evangelista et al., 2026; Akkerman & Bakker, 2011).

The Swiss VET paradigm is widely examined as an exemplary model of collective governance and dual apprenticeship (Bieber, 2010; Schultheiss & Backes-Gellner, 2024). Scholarly literature attributes the resilience of the Swiss model during economic downturns and its contribution to national competitiveness to its institutional architecture of "collective partnership." In contrast to liberal VET regimes (where market forces operate with minimal coordination) or bureaucratic state-driven regimes (where curricula are centrally prescribed), Switzerland maintains a tripartite compact between the Confederation, Cantons, and Professional Organizations (BIBB, n.d.). A distinct body of international literature addresses Swiss VET pedagogical-didactic instruments (Deissinger & Gonon, 2021). Studies highlight the practical utility of the "Competencies and Resources" model, which avoids abstract, knowledge-centric curricula by structuring instructional plans around authentic workplace situations wherein learners mobilize professional, methodological, social, and personal resources (BIBB, n.d.). Key analytical contributions also emerge from the Observatory of the Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET, n.d.). In its *Trend Reports* series, SFUVET outlines structural shifts within VET driven by Industry 5.0 and Society 5.0 imperatives. SFUVET researchers substantiate the necessity of digitalizing assessment procedures (Cattaneo & Felder, 2021; Walker & Barabasch, 2026) and implementing standardized digital competency frameworks for vocational educators and in-company trainers spanning 13 functional sub-domains (Zhou & Zhang, 2025). Furthermore, scholarship underscores the institutional significance of the EduQua certification standard as a recognized national quality benchmark for adult learning and VET providers (Hasler, 2025).

Ukrainian scholarly discourse regarding VET quality assurance systems has evolved primarily around the execution of the Law of Ukraine "On Education" (2017) and MES Order No. 509 dated May 6, 2021 (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2021). National research and methodological guidance from the SSEQ detail protocols for administering internal self-assessments of educational and managerial operations. Domestic studies address VET quality assurance trajectories across the European Union (Radkevych, 2023), student achievement assessment architectures, academic integrity enforcement, pedagogical evaluation, and continuous professional development. Concurrently, diagnostic evaluations by the World Bank, the ETF, and project records from DECIDE highlight persistent systemic limitations in Ukraine's vocational quality assurance design (DECIDE, 2020). Scholars and practitioners note that domestic VEIs operate within fragmented administrative verticals where fiscal allocation, curricular design, and quality auditing are divided among the MES, regional state administrations, and local territorial communities (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024). Empirical assessments confirm that internal reviews conducted under Order No. 509 often remain descriptive exercises lacking valid instruments to measure workplace training quality directly at enterprise workstations (Mykolaiv Professional Lyceum of Construction and Services, n.d.). Despite substantial scholarship on individual facets of vocational reform and documentation of the Swiss dual model, an empirical and conceptual gap remains: the field lacks a systemic framework modeling the institutional transfer of Swiss "collective partnership" tools (CODQ, SFUVET, EduQua) to support Ukrainian VET internal quality systems under conditions of decentralization and post-war reconstruction. In particular, the institutional potential of "DECIDE: PROFTEX" initiatives specifically regarding the establishment of Sectoral Councils for Vocational Education Quality and the end-to-end digitalization of student achievement monitoring remains underexplored (DECIDE, 2020).

Aim: To theoretically substantiate a transformation model for internal quality assurance systems within Ukrainian vocational education institutions through the adaptation of Swiss

institutional mechanisms and operational VET quality assurance instruments.

Methods: Literature analysis across Scopus, Web of Science, and ERIC databases, supplemented by Cedefop and ETF institutional repositories (2020–2025), was deployed to delineate the state of the art and establish the theoretical foundations of VET quality governance; regulatory analysis of Ukrainian and Swiss statutory frameworks was conducted to evaluate statutory provisions governing internal quality assurance within vocational institutions; comparative-institutional analysis was utilized to benchmark stakeholder participation mechanisms and statutory divisions of responsibility across labor markets and educational systems; and systemic-functional modeling was implemented to conceptualize and construct an adaptive internal quality assurance model tailored to Ukrainian vocational institutions.

Results and Discussion. In accordance with MES of Ukraine Order No. 509, the internal quality assurance framework encompasses four core areas for institutional self-assessment of educational and managerial operations:

- Educational environment of the VET (assessing the provision of safe, non-hazardous learning and working environments; establishing inclusive and barrier-free infrastructure; evaluating the physical-technical condition of classrooms, specialized laboratories, and workshops; verifying the availability of digital equipment; and maintaining a supportive socio-psychological organizational climate);
- Student assessment system (verifying the existence of transparent, publicly accessible criteria, rules, and procedures for evaluating academic performance; ensuring evaluative objectivity and systematicity; monitoring learner progression; and enforcing academic integrity principles across all participants in the educational process);
- Pedagogical activity of instructional staff (analyzing the professional competencies of teachers and vocational training masters, evaluating the efficacy of instructional planning, monitoring the adoption of innovative and digital pedagogical technologies, assessing participation in continuous professional development and enterprise internships, and fostering subject-to-subject pedagogical interaction with students);

- Managerial processes of the vocational education institution (evaluating the quality of strategic institutional development planning, the efficacy of human resource management, operational transparency and public disclosure notably official website maintenance the utilization of ICT-based management systems, and the structural development of the IQAS itself) (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2021).

An analytical review of the practical implementation of this regulatory order reveals that VEIs routinely issue annual administrative decrees appointing working and monitoring groups, adopt internal IQAS regulations, conduct area-specific self-assessments (e.g., student performance and instructional evaluations), draft summary analytical briefs, and compile remediation action plans. Concurrently, a deeper examination of operational practices uncovers fundamental structural constraints and systemic challenges:

- *Closed-loop evaluative bias*: Monitoring is conducted almost exclusively by internal VEI personnel (teachers, methodologists, and school administrators), introducing subjectivity and incentivizing institutions to obscure deficiencies in anticipation of external institutional audits by the SSEQ;

- *Absence of quality control across work-based settings*: The prevailing IQAS model thoroughly audits the intra-institutional educational environment while lacking standardized instruments to assess the instructional quality of work-based learning and apprenticeships hosted by external enterprises where students typically spend between 40% and 60% of their total curricular hours;

- *Process-driven compliance over employment outcomes*: The system prioritizes procedural compliance, documentation audits, and physical infrastructure checks rather than empirically measuring the alignment of acquired student competencies with modern industrial workflows and enterprise technical specifications.

In contrast to Ukrainian statutory practice, the regulatory model of VET quality assurance in Switzerland is anchored in the foundational principle of "collective partnership" (*Verbundpartnerschaft*), which systematically integrates three institutional pillars (Lulkova, 2025):

1. The Confederation (represented by the State Secretariat for Education, Research and Innovation – SERI): provides strategic and legislative steering, ratifies national VET Ordinances for each of the more than 230 recognized occupations, guarantees federal recognition of diplomas, and finances approximately 25% of the public VET architecture (BIBB, n.d.);

2. The Cantons (26 sub-national jurisdictions): oversee operational execution and statutory inspection of the VET system at the cantonal tier, inspect enterprise apprentice workstations, grant training authorizations to host firms, register apprenticeship contracts, and directly manage vocational schools (wbv Media GmbH & Co. KG, 2016);

3. Professional Organizations (employer associations, trade unions, and industry groups): determine curricular content, formulate qualification frameworks and educational plans, delineate core occupational competencies, organize inter-company courses, and administer terminal qualification procedures (BIBB, n.d.).

To overcome the structural misalignment separating vocational curricula from enterprise skill requirements, Sectoral (Tripartite) Councils for VET Quality are established as permanent consultative, advisory, and coordinating bodies operating at the regional or institutional tier, governed by the continuous improvement Deming cycle (Plan–Do–Check–Act – PDCA). The functional model of the Sectoral Council for VET Quality encompasses the following structural blocks:

- Target/Objective block: defines the overarching strategic mission eliminating structural and qualification deficits between educational offerings and regional labor market demands through institutionalized stakeholder consensus;

- Methodological block: operationalizes competency-based, stakeholder-driven, and process-oriented approaches grounded in four core principles: tripartite parity, transparent qualification criteria, institutional provider autonomy, and the dynamic adaptability of elective curricular modules;

- Subject/Actor block:
 - *Employers and corporate partners* articulate market-driven competency descriptors, validate occupational standards, provide enterprise training facilities, and conduct summative qualification assessments;

- *Educational institutions* adapt modular study plans, develop micro-credential trajectories, and deliver pedagogical and methodological scaffolding;

- *Public authorities* establish regional procurement quotas aligned with regional Smart Specialization strategies, ensure legal-regulatory safeguards, and co-finance infrastructural modernization;

- Substantive-operational block: spans the complete training lifecycle: predictive labor-market forecasting, skills gap identification, co-design and annual revision of up to 30% of variable curricular components, coordination of dual-form delivery and enterprise mentorship schemes, and execution of independent assessments through practical demonstration exams;

- Resource-infrastructure block: pools physical, human, and digital capital across partners: public-private training-and-practice centers, pools of certified corporate mentors, and integrated digital platforms for monitoring graduate employment trajectories;

- Evaluative-outcome block: evaluates structural performance against three clear empirical metrics: graduate in-field employment rates ($\geq 80\%$), reduced workplace onboarding/adaptation periods (down to 1–2 months), and sustained private-sector co-investment in institutional infrastructure ($\geq 20\%$ in fiscal or material capital).

At the federal tier, the primary institutional mechanism for safeguarding VET quality is the Commission for Occupational Development and Quality (CODQ / B&Q) (BIBB, n.d.). Under Swiss statutory law, a dedicated CODQ is established for every VET Ordinance, comprising delegates from SERI, the Cantons, and relevant trade associations. The central mandate of each CODQ is to conduct mandatory quinquennial reviews of curricular plans to ensure alignment with technological disruptions and labor market transformations. When emerging industry developments demand updated competencies such as greening skills or digital proficiencies the CODQ submits formal requests to SERI for expedited statutory adjustments (BIBB, n.d.). Pedagogical quality is maintained directly across three interdependent learning venues:

- The vocational school: provides general education and core professional theoretical instruction (1–2 days per week);

- The host enterprise: facilitates practical, hands-on skill development within authentic industrial environments under the guidance of certified in-company trainers (3–4 days per week);

- Inter-company courses (branch training centers): organized by industry associations to deliver foundational cross-enterprise competencies that specialized individual firms cannot comprehensively provide (BIBB, n.d.).

Methodologically, Swiss VET curriculum design rests on the "Competencies and Resources" model (BIBB, n.d.). Under this framework, curricula do not merely specify theoretical instructional hours; they delineate typical professional workplace situations. Successfully resolving these operational challenges requires the learner to mobilize an integrated set of cognitive, procedural, and behavioral resources: domain-specific expertise, practical capabilities, methodological skills, and social-personal orientations (BIBB, n.d.). An additional institutional layer of external quality certification is provided by EduQa (Hasler, 2025). As the premier Swiss national quality label for adult continuing education and VET providers, EduQa certifies institutional compliance across six criteria: educational offerings, customer communication, instructional delivery, faculty qualifications, internal quality management efficacy, and governance leadership (Hasler, 2025).

The Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET), established in 1972 as the Swiss Pedagogical Institute for Vocational Education, occupies a central position within this institutional architecture (SFUVET, n.d.). Operating as the country's sole national higher education institution dedicated to VET, with campuses across the three main linguistic regions (Bern, Renens, and Lugano), SFUVET functions under the Confederation and receives federal funding exceeding CHF 42.2 million (SFUVET, n.d.). By legislative mandate, SFUVET carries out four primary institutional responsibilities:

1. Delivering initial pedagogical qualification programs for vocational school faculty and technical college instructors, alongside specialized certified courses for enterprise trainers and qualification commission examiners;

2. Providing continuous professional development through modular qualification programs, including the Certificate of Advanced Studies (CAS)

in "Digital Learning," aimed at fostering innovation and quality across VET institutions;

3. Conducting empirical research across core domains: teaching and learning in VET, labor market transitions, and system governance;

4. Acting as a national occupational development center by offering expert advisory services to trade associations for occupational analysis, qualification standards design, and assessment protocol development (SFUVET, n.d.).

Amid digital transition and Industry 5.0 / Society 5.0 imperatives, SFUVET acts as the primary integrator of technological innovation into VET quality assurance. The institution conceptualized and deployed the National Digital Competence Framework for VET Professionals based on the European DigCompEdu model, encompassing 4 overarching domains and 13 functional sub-competencies (Zhou & Zhang, 2025). Through its dedicated Observatory, SFUVET publishes cyclical *Trend Reports* forecasting evolving labor qualification demands driven by artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality (VR/AR), and micro-credentials (Zhou & Zhang, 2025).

The Swiss–Ukrainian project *Decentralization for Improved Democratic Education* (DECIDE), initiated by the DOCCU NGO in partnership with the Zurich University of Teacher Education (PHZH) and supported by the Swiss Confederation through SDC, represents a major international program supporting vocational education modernization and administrative decentralization in Ukraine (DECIDE, 2020). In direct support of vocational systemic reform, DECIDE partnered with the MES of Ukraine (2024) to launch the specialized "DECIDE: PROFTEX" initiative, backed by a Swiss financial commitment

exceeding UAH 80 million (approximately CHF 2 million) (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024). The initiative delivers strategic, consultative, and capacity-building assistance across national, regional, and municipal governance levels:

- Facilitating the municipalization and transfer of state-owned VEIs to the communal ownership of regional councils and amalgamated territorial communities, thereby establishing decentralized governance and localized workforce procurement quotas;

- Reorganizing regional Scientific-Methodological Centers for VET into modern regional agencies for educational innovation, strategic consulting, and quality governance;

- Designing and implementing regional VEI network configurations that reflect local demographic realities, territorial economic profiles, and municipal business needs;

- Building unified career guidance ecosystems within partner communities by integrating general secondary schools, VEIs, families, regional authorities, and employer networks to raise the social prestige of vocational education among youth.

Through these DECIDE interventions, internal quality assurance systems within Ukrainian VEIs acquire renewed strategic purpose, moving beyond inward-facing compliance exercises to become core components of decentralized municipal governance (DECIDE, 2020; Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024). To systematize cross-national structural differences and chart institutional transformation pathways for Ukrainian VEIs, a comparative-institutional analysis of the two systems across eight key operational parameters is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Comparative Institutional Analysis of Vocational Education Quality Assurance Models in Ukraine and Switzerland

Comparative Parameter	Ukrainian VEI IQAS Model (MES Order No. 509, Art. 41 of the Law "On Education")	Swiss VET QA Model (BBG, SERI/SFUVET Frameworks, EduQua)
1. Statutory and Regulatory Framework	Law "On Education", Law "On Vocational Education", Order of the Ministry of Education and Science No. 509	Federal Vocational and Professional Education and Training Act (VPETA / BBG), VPETO Ordinance, Sectoral Quality Commissions (CODQ / B&Q)

2. Governance Architecture	Hierarchical-administrative / Top-down (MES of Ukraine – State Service of Education Quality – VEIs)	Collective partnership / <i>Verbundpartnerschaft</i> (Confederation, Cantons, Professional Organizations)
3. Curriculum and Content Development Entities	Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, Scientific-Methodological Centers for VET, VEIs	Professional and trade associations via Commissions for Occupational Development and Quality (CODQ / B&Q)
4. Evaluative Venues / Assessment Settings	Predominantly inside VEIs (classrooms and on-campus instructional workshops)	Tripartite venues: vocational school, host enterprise (training firm), branch training centers (inter-company courses)
5. Assessment and Diagnostic Tools	Institutional self-assessment across 4 core areas, regulatory documentary audits	Situational-competency matrices, standardized qualification procedures (final practical examinations)
6. Quality Digitalization Level	Predominantly paper-based / Fragmented digital documentation workflows	Comprehensive digital frameworks (DigCompEdu), integrated LMS, dynamic electronic competency portfolios
7. Employer Engagement Modality	Episodic / Peripheral (program endorsement, participation in State Qualification Attestation commissions)	Systemic / Foundational (defining curricular standards, delivery of work-based learning, qualification testing)
8. External Quality Validation Modality	State Service of Education Quality Institutional Audit / Institutional Attestation	Voluntary external quality certification (EduQua, ISO 9001:2015, Q2E)

Source: compiled by the author.

Empirical research findings substantiate the presence of three major institutional gaps in the domestic practice of developing the IQAS within Ukrainian VEIs:

- *Regulatory formalism:* VEIs remain predominantly focused on generating bureaucratic regulations and administrative decrees rather than ensuring the tangible impact of the quality assurance system on graduate competitiveness;
- *Structural evaluative asymmetry:* The IQAS systematically assesses the performance of VEI instructional staff but lacks regulatory leverage and

standardized evaluative criteria for appraising in-company mentors;

- *Standards obsolescence and deficits:* Occupational standards are formulated and revised at an excessively slow pace, lagging substantially behind the evolving demands of the regional labor market in stark contrast to the dynamic Swiss CODQ mechanism (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2024).

The diagnostic matrix delineating these institutional gaps and the strategic vectors for overcoming them through institutional transfer is presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Transfer Matrix of Swiss Best Practices for Bridging Institutional Gaps in Ukraine's Vocational Education Quality Assurance System

Identified Institutional Gap in Ukraine	Implications for Educational Quality in Ukrainian VEIs	Transfer Instrument Derived from Swiss Best Practice (VET / DECIDE)
Deficiency of regulatory business engagement in curriculum development	Curricular obsolescence, profound misalignment with modern labor market technologies and industrial workflows	Institutionalization of Sectoral Quality Councils within VEIs (analogous to Swiss CODQ / B&Q bodies)

Systemic neglect of work-based learning quality at partner enterprises	Suboptimal efficacy of in-company practical training, deficit of standardized enterprise training conditions	Implementation of standardized enterprise training-workstation monitoring benchmarked against cantonal inspection criteria
Suboptimal digital competency across VEI instructional and pedagogical faculty	Inability to systematically deploy contemporary digital diagnostic instruments and integrated LMS platforms	Operationalization of the DigCompEdu competence framework and adoption of modular SFUVET certification pathways
Governance fragmentation across regional and local community jurisdictions	Inefficient fiscal allocations, programmatic redundancy, and duplicate occupational profiles within regional networks	Deployment of DECIDE project governance tools: decentralization/municipalization of VEIs to territorial communities and regional network optimization

Source: compiled by the author using materials from DECIDE (2020).

A comprehensive integration of domestic statutory requirements (Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 509), the European EQAVET framework, Swiss quality assurance paradigms (CODQ, SFUVET, and EduQua certification), and systemic interventions designed

under the Swiss–Ukrainian DECIDE project enables the conceptualization of a transformed IQAS model for Ukrainian VEIs, wherein core institutional self-assessment vectors are recalibrated toward meeting regional labor market imperatives (Table 3).

Table 3

Transformation Model of IQAS Components in Ukrainian VEIs Based on the Adaptation of Swiss Experience

IQAS Component	Baseline Scope (MES Order No. 509)	Transformed Scope (Integrating Swiss Best Practices)
Educational Environment	Safety, inclusive access, on-campus VEI instructional workshops, and specialized classrooms	Integrated VEI educational environment + certified and audited training workstations at partner enterprises
Assessment System	Academic grading criteria, academic integrity, internal institutional monitoring within the VEI	Situational-competency assessment matrices, student e-portfolios, enterprise-based qualification examinations
Pedagogical Activity	Faculty qualifications, professional development, and continuing education of VEI teachers	Performance appraisal of VEI teachers + standardized training and certification of in-company mentors
Management Processes	VEI institutional strategy, transparency, human resource management, internal documentary audit	Tripartite governance (VEI + Territorial Community + Sectoral Quality Council), external ISO / EduQua certification

Source: compiled by the author

A comparative analysis of the substantive components of the Internal Quality Assurance System (IQAS) in Ukrainian Vocational Education Institutions (VEIs) demonstrates a qualitative paradigm shift from a closed institutional model (Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine No. 509) toward an open, dual-oriented ecosystem underpinned by Swiss best practices, namely:

- *Expansion of the educational environment:* The traditional focus on the internal physical and technical infrastructure of VEIs is augmented by the

establishment of an integrated learning-and-production environment. Environmental quality is now validated through the formal accreditation and auditing of enterprise training workstations directly within partner businesses, ensuring rigorous compliance with contemporary industrial standards and operational protocols.

- *Practice-oriented validation of learning outcomes:* Assessment is systematically transformed from academic performance monitoring into a robust instrument for validating authentic professional competencies. The deployment of situational-

competency tasks, the digitalization of individual student trajectories via e-portfolios, and the administration of final qualification examinations within genuine industrial settings minimize the misalignment between vocational education standards and employer requirements.

- *Institutionalization of in-company mentorship:* The pedagogical locus expands beyond the internal faculty of VEIs. Quality assurance of human resources encompasses not only continuous professional development for vocational educators and workshop trainers but also mandatory, standardized psychological-pedagogical training and certification for in-company mentors (analogous to the Swiss *Berufsbildner* model).

- *Governance modernization and external standardization:* The management framework pivots from classic internal administration toward a multilevel public-private-civic and sectoral partnership (VEI – territorial community – Sectoral Council for Vocational Education Quality). The integration of international management standards (ISO 9001, EduQua) establishes transparent auditing protocols and elevates the investment appeal of VEIs for business stakeholders.

Conclusions. The interpretation of the identified interdependencies and the developed IQAS model for VEIs enables the articulation of core scientific conclusions regarding causal relationships within vocational education quality assurance processes:

- *First*, a direct causal link was established between the institutional agency of employers and the quality of vocational education. The findings demonstrate that engaging employers exclusively during summative certification (the prevailing practice in Ukraine) yields no tangible impact on instructional quality. Only the institutionalization of permanent standing bodies analogous to Swiss Commissions for Occupational Development and Quality (CODQ) or Sectoral Councils for Vocational Education Quality generates a feedback loop compelling the IQAS to continuously align educational environments and pedagogical competencies with technological advancements (BIBB, n.d.).

- *Second*, empirical insights from the Swiss-Ukrainian DECIDE project corroborate that devolving VEI ownership to municipal and communal jurisdictions establishes conditions under which territorial communities cease treating VEIs merely as physical property liabilities and instead recognize them as strategic assets for investment mobilization and unemployment mitigation. This provides local

self-government authorities with an impetus to actively participate in IQAS modernization and co-finance the instructional and infrastructural base of VEIs (DECIDE, 2020).

- *Third*, transitioning to a competency-and-resource-based model obliges vocational teachers and practical training instructors to transition from "transmitters of knowledge" to "facilitators of personalized educational pathways" (BIBB, n.d.). The operationalization of DigCompEdu standards and modular curricula benchmarked against the Swiss Federal University for Vocational Education and Training (SFUVET) model serves as a direct driver for enhancing graduate occupational readiness (Zhou & Zhang, 2025).

- *Fourth*, the practical implementation of the proposed model must account for the following structural constraints:

- *Security and martial law constraints:* Ongoing military operations and persistent missile threats across Ukrainian regions hinder the continuity of in-company dual training and on-site practical sessions in VEI workshops, necessitating the adaptation of IQAS protocols to hybrid and distance-learning formats.

- *Institutional readiness of the private sector:* The Swiss framework matured over a century and is anchored in the robust self-governance of business associations. In Ukraine, the willingness of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to commit resources to Sectoral Councils for Vocational Education remains uneven, requiring targeted incentive structures (e.g., tax deductions, mentorship cost reimbursement).

- *Legislative gaps:* Fully institutionalizing key operational elements notably the mandatory certification of workplace trainers and granting Sectoral Councils the statutory authority to adjust elective components of curricula hinges on the comprehensive enactment of all statutory provisions of the new Law of Ukraine "On Vocational Education" (2025).

The investigation yields the following practical policy recommendations:

- *To the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the State Service of Education Quality of Ukraine:* It is recommended to formally institutionalize the legal status of Sectoral Councils for Vocational Education Quality, and to amend the Methodological Recommendations on IQAS Functioning to broaden the evaluative criteria governing work-based learning quality assessment. A high-priority objective is the formulation and

ratification of the National Standard for Digital Competencies of Vocational Educators, aligned with the European DigCompEdu framework.

- *At the institutional level of Vocational Education Institutions:* VEIs should update their institutional IQAS regulations by formally integrating representatives of corporate partners and local self-government authorities into quality monitoring committees, thereby bolstering evaluative objectivity and stakeholder engagement. Furthermore, institutions should transition toward digital diagnostic instruments for assessing practical learning outcomes leveraging student e-portfolios and competency assessment matrices to capture vocational proficiency more comprehensively.

- *To local self-government bodies (regional councils and territorial communities):* Local

authorities should embed key performance and support indicators for communal VEI internal quality assurance into municipal territorial socio-economic development strategies. Simultaneously, establish joint financial and non-material incentive funds with business partners to reward top-tier in-company mentors providing workplace training within real-world production settings.

Prospects for further empirical inquiry reside in the development of qualimetric instrumentation to evaluate the systemic performance of transformed internal quality assurance models, alongside the delineation of national occupational standards for in-company mentor training tailored to high-tech, strategic sectors of Ukraine's post-war economy.

Conflict of Interest

The author certifies that no conflict of interest (financial, professional, or personal) exists that could have influenced the objectivity of the research results or conclusions. The integrity of the double-blind peer review process was ensured through a mandatory declaration of the absence of conflict of interest submitted via the journal's editorial system. This protocol guaranteed complete author anonymity and the independence of the expert evaluation throughout the entire editorial cycle.

Declaration on the Use of Generative Artificial Intelligence.

During the preparation of this manuscript, the author used Microsoft Copilot for searching and verifying bibliographic data, organizing materials, calculating derived indicators, preparing figures, and language editing and formatting of the text. The conceptual model, empirical data, scientific conclusions, and interpretation of the results are the authors' own. Following the use of the tool, the entire manuscript was reviewed and edited by the author, who take full responsibility for its content and scientific accuracy. Artificial intelligence is not a co-author of this work.

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ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ ВНУТРІШНЬОЇ СИСТЕМИ ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ ЯКОСТІ В ЗАКЛАДАХ ПРОФЕСІЙНОЇ ОСВІТИ УКРАЇНИ З УРАХУВАННЯМ ДОСВІДУ ШВЕЙЦАРІЇ

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Реферат:

Актуальність. У статті висвітлено проблеми та перспективи трансформації внутрішньої системи забезпечення якості в закладах професійної освіти України в контексті виконання євроінтеграційних зобов'язань, децентралізації державного управління та нагальної потреби у відбудові людського капіталу в умовах воєнного стану й повоєнного відновлення. Доведено, що чинна модель внутрішнього забезпечення якості є переважно процесно-орієнтованою та зводиться до самооцінювання. Це створює розрив між

формальним дотриманням стандартів і реальними запитами ринку праці. Висвітлено, що ключова наукова проблема полягає у відсутності обґрунтованих інституційних механізмів інтеграції роботодавців та місцевих громад у внутрішні процедури управління якістю професійної освіти. Проаналізовано досвід Швейцарії у сфері забезпечення якості професійної освіти і підготовки, який базується на концепції «колективного партнерства», регуляторній ролі бізнесу та тривірному контролю якості.

Мета: теоретичне обґрунтування моделі трансформації внутрішньої системи забезпечення якості освіти в закладах професійної освіти України шляхом адаптації швейцарських інституційних механізмів та інструментів забезпечення якості професійної освіти і підготовки.

Методи: *аналіз літератури* у наукометричних базах Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC та репозиторіях Cedefop і ETF (2020–2025 рр.) – для визначення сучасного стану наукової проблеми та теоретичного підґрунтя забезпечення якості професійної освіти і підготовки; *нормативно-правовий аналіз* законодавства України та Швейцарії – для з'ясування регуляторних засад функціонування внутрішніх систем забезпечення якості в закладах професійної освіти; *порівняльно-інституційний аналіз* – для зіставлення механізмів залучення стейкхолдерів та розподілу повноважень між суб'єктами ринку праці й професійної освіти; *системно-функціональне моделювання* – для обґрунтування та побудови адаптивної моделі внутрішньої системи забезпечення якості у вітчизняних закладах професійної освіти.

Результати: виявлено ключові інституційні розриви між українською та швейцарською системами забезпечення якості професійної освіти і підготовки: відсутність в Україні галузевих комісій із якості (аналог швейцарських CODQ), асиметрія оцінювання з ігноруванням якості навчання на виробництві, низький рівень цифровізації процедур оцінювання. Обґрунтовано роль Швейцарського федерального університету професійної освіти (SFUVET) у системі підвищення кваліфікації та сертифікації.

Висновки: доведено, що трансформація внутрішніх систем забезпечення якості освіти в закладах професійної освіти України з суто адміністративної контрольної системи на ринково-орієнтовану модель підвищує адаптивність закладів професійної освіти до потреб повоєнної економіки. Ефективність інструментів швейцарсько-українського проєкту DECIDE підтверджена передачею закладів професійної освіти в комунальну власність та розбудовою регіональних мереж. Практичне значення результатів дослідження полягає у формуванні рекомендацій щодо вдосконалення внутрішніх систем забезпечення якості в закладах професійної освіти на основі використання прогресивного досвіду Швейцарії.

Ключові слова: професійна освіта, забезпечення якості, EQAVET, інституційний аудит, освітній моніторинг, проєкт DECIDE, Швейцарія.

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