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Sociological Model of Social Partnership in Higher Education Institutions Management

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Abstract

Social partnership as a scientific category is characterized by multidimensionality, breadth of understanding, and interpretation. In the modern education system, social partnership is presented as one of the aspects of state-societal governance of educational institutions' activities. The development of socially oriented education has brought the issue of social partnership to the forefront, identifying new components of this process. In the context of society's well-being, social interaction becomes an effective mechanism for addressing social problems, especially those that arise in the educational sphere. This article aims to elucidate the main contemporary trends of social cooperation in higher education institutions (HEIs) and identify the specifics of various sociological models of social partnership in higher education. Methodology. During the research, the authors used abstraction, idealization, logical and linguistic, comparative, analytical, and bibliographic methods to study the scientific literature on social partnerships in higher education. Results. The research results have identified the vital theoretical aspects related to social partnership in HEIs and have explored the characteristics of different models of social interaction in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Social partnership, effective interaction of learning subjects, systematic cooperation, subject-to-subject relationship, social cooperation.

Introduction

Social partnership is a form of social interaction between various state institutions and community groups within a social community, which allows for the free expression of their interests and finding civilized ways to coordinate and implement them. In the modern education system, social partnership is represented as one of the aspects of state-societal governance of education. As it is known, the significance of education in contemporary society is determined by two tendencies: new scientific-information technologies and globalization of the world, leading to increased competition in all spheres of social life.

Globalization makes social orientation and balance of society's interests the basis of each state's educational policy. The social demand for the training and professional development of professionals who think creatively, critically, and reflectively, thus driving change, in turn, motivates the need for new leaders who creatively embrace leadership, new ideas, directions, and forms of educational activity. At the same time, the range of tasks requiring unconventional solutions and the development

of unique technologies is constantly expanding. In this context, there is a need to develop additional forms of cooperation in providing educational services. In the last decade, the process of involving the non-profit sector, in the form of non-profit organizations and community associations, in providing services to the population has gained momentum. The basis for effective interaction, where strong sides should emerge to achieve synergy in addressing social issues of society, is a social partnership, which involves the participation of various social groups in solving existing problems and encompasses the implementation of a complex set of mechanisms and technologies of interaction in the field of higher education.

The theoretical part of this study grounds the concept, components, and essence of social partnership in higher education.

The practical part of the research includes a comprehensive examination of the model of social partnership applied in the HEIs' management.

The authors made conclusions regarding the issues addressed based on the research findings. Notably, the authors emphasized that organizational interaction in higher education entails establishing a corporate management structure within the higher education system and coordinating activities among the key subjects of social partnership.

This study aims to characterize various aspects of managing the social partnership model in higher education institutions.

Literature review

The current educational social partnership model covers various economic and social development issues.

Social partnership in education primarily involves establishing market relations between educational institutions and employers as consumers of qualified personnel. The essence of such links means that, on the one hand, the education sector should train specialists per market needs and requirements for the quality of professional training in terms of the scope and structure of specialties sufficient to ensure the country's diversified economy. However, on the other hand, employers should actively participate in developing the educational strategy, monitor its quality, and contribute to financing educational institutions (Ndou, Mele & Vecchio, 2019), (Dvorský et al., 2019).

Research explorations in the field of contemporary interaction in the education sector demonstrate the presence of eclecticism. It combines and considers all stakeholders' interests in the educational process, which entails various configurations of their interaction. Literature analysis on the research topic reveals several perspectives on models of such interaction. For example, S. Billet, A. Clemens, and T. Seddon view social partnership as localized networks that combine local community groups, educational institutions, industry representatives, and the government to collaborate on local and regional issues and strategic social development (Billett & Seddon, 2004).

The transition from occasional communication to permanent cooperation can be seen as the most important achievement of the state, employers organizations, and trade unions in partnership with higher education (Murnieks, Klotz & Shepherd, 2020), (Aggarwal et al., 2019).

Modern educational trends indicate the emergence of an interaction process between the education sector and the labor market. The strategic objectives of educational environment modernization can only be achieved through continuous interaction between the education system and interested social partners. This process will rapidly develop and improve, as most business leaders understand that the success of any professional educational institution relies on enhancing managerial competence, training and upgrading the professionals' skills, and implementing new educational technologies (Chuang, Manley & Petersen, 2020), (Bobe & Kober, 2020), (Filali, Benabdelkrim & Hassainate, 2018).

One of the most common forms of social partnership in the education system is the functioning of councils at various levels. The councils serve as representative bodies composed of representatives from interested or invited parties. During council meetings, a range of shared problems are discussed,

and joint decisions are made to address them, which require the involvement of participants' resources. Thus, the council assumes the role of a "partnership intermediary" for the interacting entities (Martínez-González, et al., 2022), (Baggio et al., 2019), (Kleimola & Leppisaari, 2022).

The significant experience of developed countries in the field of social partnership in education is evidenced by the variety of such cooperation models. It is determined by the national and regional specifics of each country. In their studies, scholars adhere to the opinion that there is no single model of social partnership that would be suitable for educational institutions in all countries. In general terms, the developed models of social partnership in education can be classified as follows:

1. the "American" model is based on the cooperation of owners or heads of educational institutions;
2. the "German" model is based on the integration of employees of higher education institutions into the activities of other institutions based on collective contractual autonomy;
3. the "Scandinavian" model involves academic staff and students in joint educational projects. (Aggarwal et al., 2019).

A practical method of forming partnerships at the level of educational institutions is the social order. It reflects the general nature of the democratic system and a new vision of education as part of a market society. Most countries still poorly use the partnership type of social relations regulation in education. It needs to be strengthened accordingly to develop the social interaction skills of future professionals. Another way of establishing partnerships is through the "teacher-student-employer" interaction. Today, this interaction is being developed through new systems of contactless learning, as well as through self-improvement of curricula that increase the adaptability and activity of both students and educators. (Gasevic, Tsai & Drachsler, 2021).

Analyzing the experience of social partnership in education in developed countries, the societal effectiveness of educational services provision depends on the development of collaboration with higher education institutions at the community level. Also, it depends on the involvement of non-profit and commercial sectors of society in providing educational services at the management level of HEIs. Therefore, special attention deserves to be given to studying the process of managing educational institutions at the regional level (Barneontt, Archuleta & Cantu, 2019), (Mourato & Patrício, 2019), (Gasevic, Tsai & Drachsler, 2021).

Methodology

While conducting the research, the authors used induction, deduction, analysis, synthesis of information, and systemic-structural methods to practically clarify the most critical issues related to social partnerships in higher education institutions.

Results

When describing the state's role in regulating social and educational relations, there are two main models of cooperation in the educational sphere: bipartism and tripartism (Figure 1).

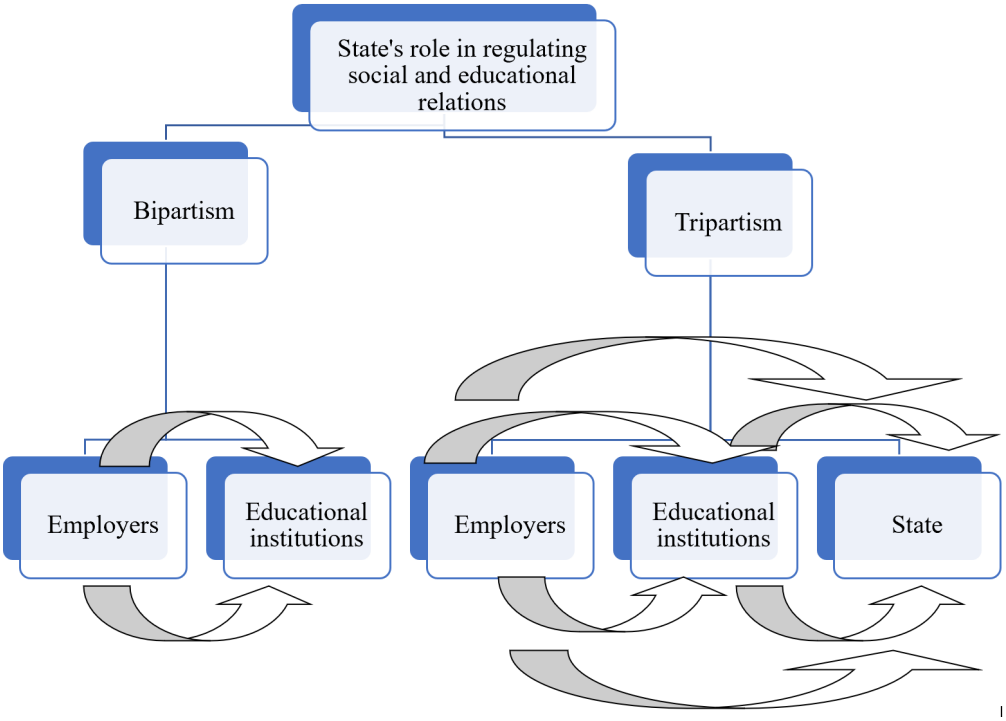

Figure 1. The models that characterize the state's role in regulating social and educational relations.
Source: Compiled by the authors (2023).

Today, an increasing number of interactions between participants in the educational process and other social actors should be based on establishing a pro-active stand of civic participation of managers, university teachers, and students. Future specialists will implement this stand in their professional and personal relationships. For the practical implementation of social partnership in education, scholars consider the feasibility of moving from a tripartism (employer - state - higher education institution) to a bipartism (employer - higher education institution) model of social dialogue in higher education.

Notably, in countries where the state's role in regulating the educational system is relatively small (such as the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and others), there is a practice of bilateral cooperation between partnership entities in higher education. Cooperation takes place between employers and educational institutions, with the state rarely intervening in such interactions but potentially serving as an arbiter or mediator in social conflicts or the event of gross violations of legislative or social norms.

Trilateral cooperation is more common in countries like France, Germany, Austria, and Ukraine. In addition to employer associations, educational institutions, and student associations, the state also plays an active role in conducting collective negotiations related to higher education cooperation. It acts as a mediator in collective negotiations or as an independent party through government bodies (typically the Department of Labor or other specially created executive bodies).

The main directions of social partnership between higher education institutions (HEIs) and civil society institutions include:

1. implementation of socially significant initiatives based on HEIs.
2. conducting consultations by non-governmental organizations with representatives of state authorities on educational issues and assessment of educational needs.
3. implementation of project activities within the framework of social order.

The analysis of the global experience of developed countries in the field of social partnership in education indicates the diversity of their models, influenced by each country's national and regional specificities (Table 1).

Table 1. The directions of the world experience gained by developed countries in the field of social partnership in education

Country	Experience in social partnership in education
USA	The model of collective negotiations stipulates that a so-called collective bargaining unit must be formed before they start
European countries	HEIs negotiate directly with employers
Germany	Involvement of education seekers in the management of HEIs through specially created bodies; The Academic Council, which is created in the HEI and is a consolidated body representing professors and students
Scandinavian countries	Involvement of university students in managing an educational institution
Germany, Sweden, Austria	Tripartism in the context of educational partnership
USA, Japan	A conservative model of educational partnership, which is based more on common legal awareness and goodwill of the parties and less on forced centralized management

Source: Compiled by the authors based on (Senoner, Netland & Feuerriegel, 2022), (Lim et al., 2022).

The analysis of the statistics on collective bargaining activities in the Ukrainian educational sector allows us to conclude that the regulation of collective bargaining activities is a rather powerful lever of management of higher education institutions. By the end of 2020, 1927 collective agreements were concluded in Ukraine, which is 3.2% more than the corresponding period of the previous year. However, the number of employees covered by collective agreements decreased to 6,720 thousand people in 2020, representing a 0.4% decrease compared to the previous year. Despite the significant number of collective agreements concluded in the higher education sector, there is a particular differentiation among the employees they apply to. As of December 31, 2021, the system of collective labor legislation did not cover nearly every fifth employee of higher education institutions and every third student.

Let us present the dynamics of the areas of regulation concerning cooperation agreements in the education sector to assess the trends of social cooperation in higher education (Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of the structure of regulation areas by agreements on the cooperation of educational institutions in Ukraine, %

Regulation area	2017	2020
Facilitating the educational process development, ensuring the successful employment of the graduates	19	21
Increase in the level of HEIs' income	3	2
Social protection of vulnerable groups	9	11

Social dialogue	26	22
Addressing the spiritual needs of students	4	3
Expanding bilateral cooperation between educational institutions	39	41

Source: Compiled by the authors based on (Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, 2023).

The main reasons that negatively affect the level of collective negotiations in the education sector are the following:

1. financial and economic instability of the majority of educational institutions;
2. legal uncertainty regarding the mandatory nature of cooperation agreements;
3. passivity of the management staff in higher education institutions;
4. imperfections in the mechanism of monitoring the conclusion of agreements on social interaction in higher education.

The system of social partnership in higher education can function effectively only under the conditions of sufficient development of cooperation mechanisms among all interacting parties.

Within this study, the authors reveal the structure of the social partnership model in higher education from the perspective of the subject connections of social partnership (Figure 2), qualitative characteristics of social interaction practices (Figure 3), the relationships between institutional, organizational, and values aspects of social partnership in the management of higher education institutions (Figure 4).

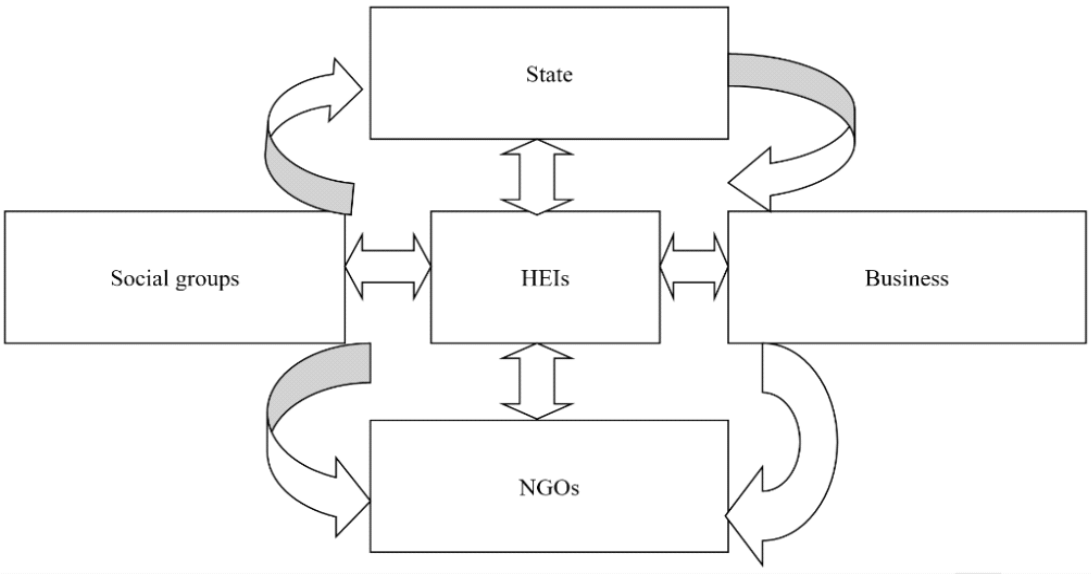

Figure 2. *Subject relations of social partnership's sociological model in higher education*
Source: author's elaboration (2023).

As seen from Figure 1, social partnership, in the broadest sense, is a cooperation between social groups, intersectoral interaction of the third sector (non-governmental organizations), the state, and business. Thus, in the modern sociological interpretation, the social partnership is defined as covering the entire spectrum of social problems of the partnership subjects.

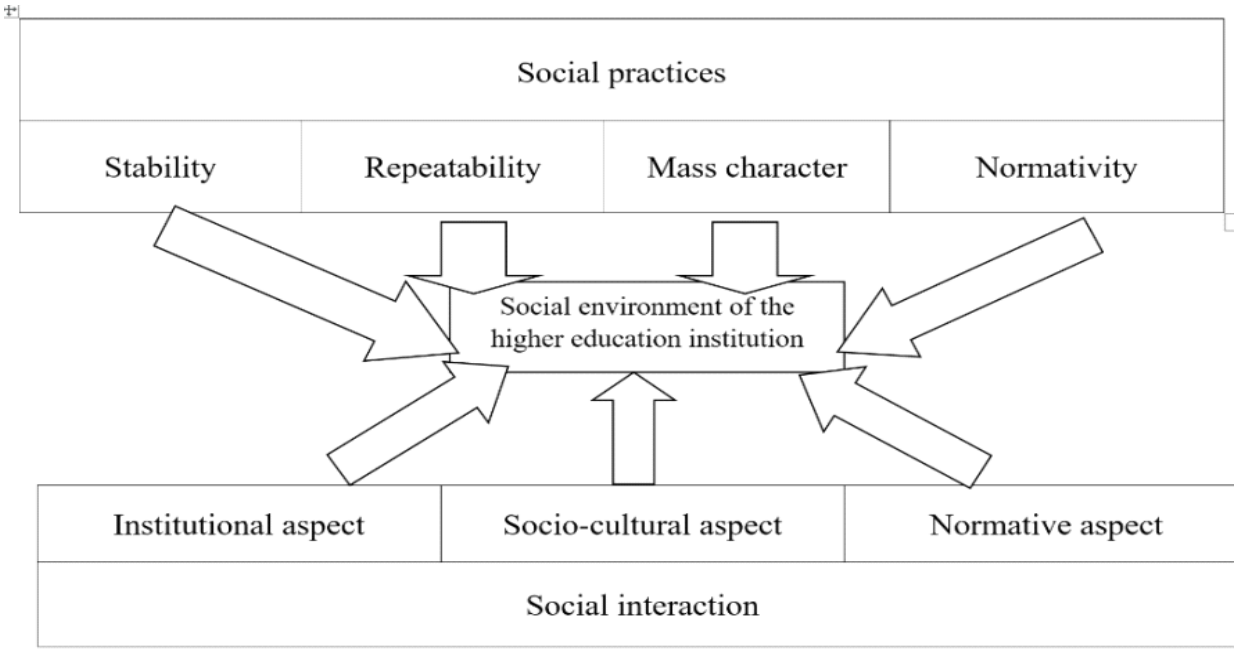

Figure 2. Qualitative features of social practices as key components of the sociological model of social interaction in HEIs management
Source: author's elaboration (2023).

As shown in Figure 2, the generalized essential provisions of social practice in HEIs management are a set of specific repeated actions of individuals, groups, and communities in real time and space that ensure the stable functioning of social institutions.

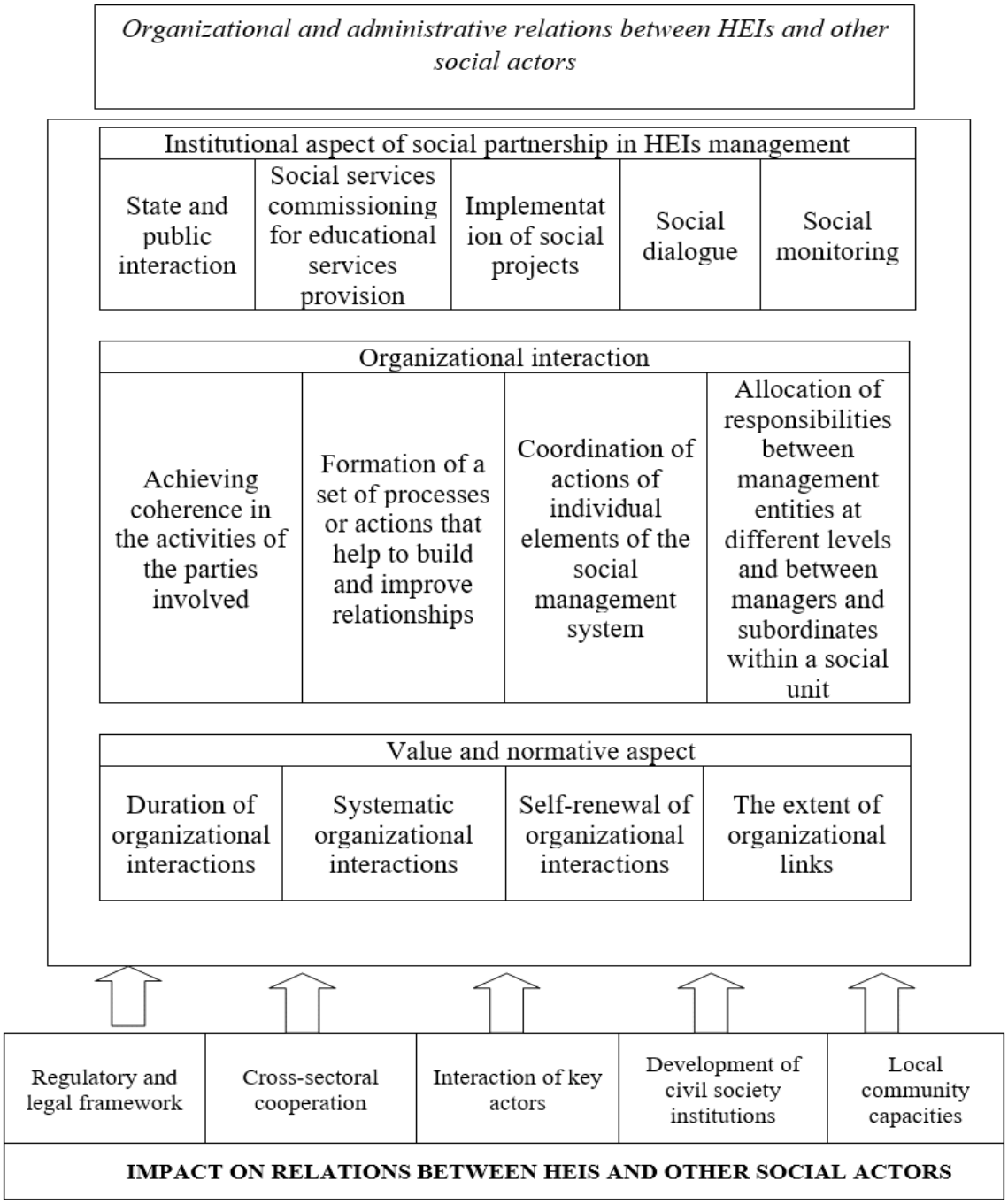

Figure 3. *System of relations of institutional, organizational, and value aspects of social interaction in higher education institutions management.*
Source: author's elaboration (2023).

As seen from Figure 3, social partnership as a mechanism for managing social service institutions functions as a specific social practice, comprising institutional aspects, organizational interaction, and value-normative components that reflect the functional characteristics of social interaction. An indicator of the development of corporate interaction in social partnership is the administrative and managerial relationships characterized by their duration, systemic nature of organizational cooperation, self-renewal, and breadth of organizational connections.

Discussion

Social partnership is a system of relations between employees, employers, government authorities, and local self-government aimed at harmonizing the interests of employees and employers in regulating production and other relations directly related to their interests. In a broad sense, social partnership refers to the social, collectively distributed activity of various social groups that leads to positive results beneficial for all participants of this activity (Odit-Dookhan, 2018), (Beerkens, 2018), (Cano, Murray & Kourouklis, 2022), (Heinicke & Guenther, 2020).

Social partnership is a consensus-based interaction that involves achieving the goal and realizing the interests of social actors by bringing their positions closer together and reaching an agreement without pressure from any of the partnership's parties (Senoner, Netland & Feuerriegel, 2022), (Lim et al., 2022), (José et al., 2022).

Specific values and normative systems characterize social partnerships in the management of higher education institutions. They are determined, on the one hand, at the level of the regulatory framework governing the activities of HEIs and social partnership, and on the other hand, through the culturally-based value models of social interaction accepted in society as a whole and in the field of education in particular (Cui, French & O'Leary, 2021), (Hazen et al., 2018), (Moscardini, Strachan & Vlasova, 2022), (Kumar, Shukla & Passey, 2021).

In the authors' opinion, the most characteristic feature of the current stage of social development is the social partnership based on the principles and values of civil society. It can be generally seen as a collaborative activity with shared goals and values, voluntariness, and mutual responsibility for cooperation outcomes.

In this understanding, the proposed forms of social partnership by S. Billett, A. Clemens, and T. Seddon are considered adequate:

1. Enacted partnerships initiated by external actors.
2. A specific community initiates community partnerships to seek resources for problem-solving.
3. Negotiated partnerships are formed through the initiative of various partners to align interests and provide mutual support (Billett & Seddon, 2004).

Undoubtedly, the types and strategies of social partnership have a specific character depending on the directions of the cooperation, interested parties, and the tasks of such interaction. They can be combined and even have controversial aspects (Astahova et al., 2019).

In the context of the educational sphere and contemporary educational theory, the following types of partnerships are relevant:

1. Project partnerships within a specific educational project.
2. Problem-oriented partnerships - collaboration aimed at solving specific problems.
3. Ideological partnerships are based on shared perspectives and interests.
4. Ethical partnerships focused on addressing ethical issues (Carnwell & Carson, 2008).

At the micro level, from an activity-based approach, social partnership in an educational institution, for example, results from joint efforts and is achieved through loyalty, coping strategies, and readiness for effective communication (Majboroda, 2021).

In the context of the conditions faced by educational institutions, the identification of loyalty from educational stakeholders becomes crucial for optimizing educational management. Therefore, emotional commitment, a sense of affinity when shared values are embraced, and orientation towards overcoming difficulties and achieving successful outcomes are emphasized. In this regard, coping

strategies, which significantly impact critical situations, are actualized at the intersection of sociology and psychology.

Problem-oriented and emotion-oriented directions of social interaction enable the successful implementation of social partnership within the HEIs (Higher Education Institutions) management framework. Furthermore, by considering the effectiveness of cooperative communication, the social partnership is elevated to the level of its fundamental goals and objectives.

Traditionally, the paternalistic relationship "teacher-student" has been considered the basis of educational activities. However, in today's digitalized education system, a balanced partnership foundation has emerged for further development of higher education (Heinicke & Guenther, 2020). An essential component of professional development is multifaceted social collaboration and learning the fundamentals of social partnership, ethics, and mediation in cooperation. Today, educational programs should enable students to practically engage in partnerships among teachers, students, and other societal actors. One of the most effective methods of cognitive activity in the socio-pedagogical sphere is the case-study method. It involves analyzing and resolving typical problem situations that arise during collaboration (Billett & Seddon, 2004).

The effectiveness of social partnerships in higher education institutions is enhanced when the government implements active social policies. It also develops consensus-based forms of democracy and institutions of civil society that ensure the representation of students' and educational institutions' interests. When educational organizations and learners have sufficient authority and enjoy proper credibility in society, the effectiveness of social partnerships in higher education institutions is elevated (Heinicke & Guenther, 2020).

The sociological model of social partnership in the management of educational institutions is based on the theoretical understanding of the concept of social cooperation. The interaction among the subjects of social collaboration has a social nature, both in practical and procedural terms. It can be viewed through the prism of the category of social practice. The institutional aspect of social partnership as a social practice in managing social service institutions lies in reproducing essential forms of state-civil interaction as the foundation of social partnership. The aspect of organizational interaction is reflected in the structural approach to the functioning of the mechanism of social cooperation in the management of educational institutions. Corporate interaction in social partnership includes establishing an organizational management structure within the educational system and coordinating activities among the critical subjects of social partnership in the management of higher education institutions (Yanqing, Guangming & Edwards, 2020), (Germain-Alamartine et al., 2021), (Hou et al., 2022).

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the scientific literature on the research topic and the questionnaire survey results, social partnership has become widespread in education and other public spheres and is playing an increasingly important role in solving urgent problems of both local communities and the state as a whole. Moreover, cooperation between higher education institutions and other public actors is a model of individual professional interaction, a necessary condition for successfully forming a pedagogical and industrial cooperation system.

After considering the features and essence of cooperation within higher education institutions, development indicators and characteristics of existing models of social partnership, as well as analyzing the prospects for its further development, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Social partnership in higher education is a type and system of relations between HEI leaders, students, their future employers, and other stakeholders in the social sphere, within which the coordination of socio-labor relations is ensured within the educational system.
2. The most developed system of social partnership in HEIs currently exists in Germany, Austria, and Sweden, while it is somewhat less developed in the United States and Japan.

3. The foreign experience shows that the degree of social partnership development in HEIs depends on several factors:

a) the degree of democratization of educational institution management;

b) the standard of living for the majority of the population;

c) psychological conditions and cultural traditions in society.

Considering social partnership as an integrative quality of the education system allows for the connection of interests of different groups in a socially divided society and the formation of students' attitudes towards cooperation in the surrounding environment through the acquisition of relevant knowledge and skills, serving as the basis of education.

The tools for preparing future specialists include developing an active civic position system and supporting students' participation in the civic life of society.

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