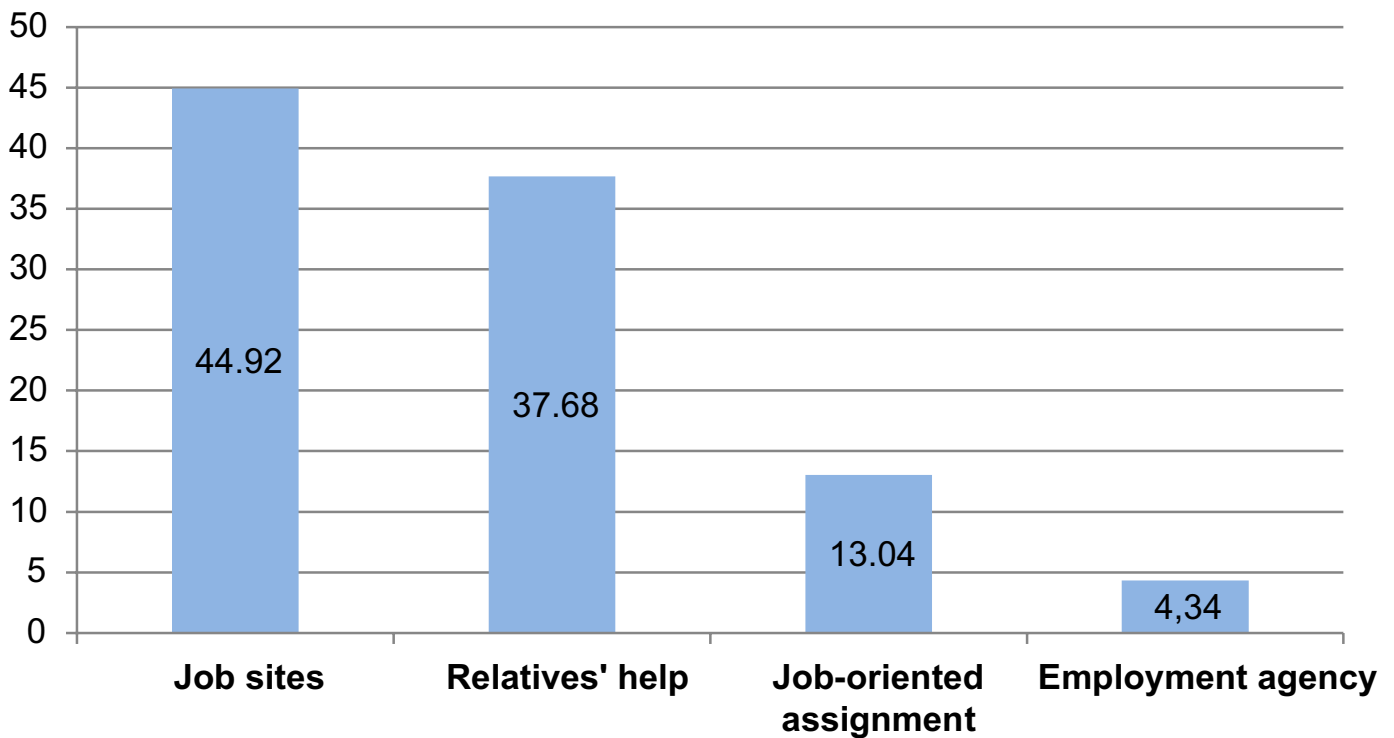


## Teacher Graduates' Employment Mechanisms



### TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Teacher education graduates in Ukraine: Current state of play

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## TEACHER EDUCATION & DEVELOPMENT | RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Teacher education graduates in Ukraine: Current state of play

Natalia Mospan<sup>1\*</sup>

**Abstract:** This paper presents an analysis of labour market outcomes for Ukrainian graduates with higher education in teaching, based on the survey 2015. Besides, the study investigates the issues of the source of tuition fee, transition period and employment sectors in the labour market. The evidence presented in this article indicates that teacher education graduates with national teacher higher education system are much more likely to be employed according to their qualification. They have a higher employment premium and face fewer difficulties in labour market integration. The empirical findings should contribute to understanding a current state of play in national labour market.

**Subjects:** Education; Education Policy & Politics; Higher Education Management

**Keywords:** employment; graduation; higher education; labour market; teacher education graduates; Ukraine

### 1. Introduction

Teachers play a crucial role in supporting the learning experience of young people and adult learners. Their profession has a vital role in advancing human potential and shaping future generations. Therefore, the European Union views the role of teachers and their career development as key priorities. In terms of EU policy processes, strengthening employability is a matter for discussion both within the *Education and Training 2020* and *European Employment Strategy*. It is a policy concern which is shared between the public authorities responsible for education and for employment. Our study of analytical reports of the European Commission, Eurostat data and research on the



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### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The author graduated from Gorlovka Pedagogical Institute of Foreign Languages, Ukraine (1996) and received PhD in Education from the Kyiv National Linguistic University, Ukraine (2009). The author has had a great experience of teaching English both national and international students. The author has been working at Boris Grinchenko Kyiv University at English Philology Chair since September 2010. As an associate professor, the author delivers lectures in English Theoretical Phonetics, Language Teaching Methods and Applied Linguistics. In Ukraine, the author is an author of articles in Teaching Methods and Higher Education. The author's present research interest is Higher Education and Labour Market Regulation in the EU as well as in Ukraine.

### PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Teachers play a vital role in advancing human potential and shaping future generations. Therefore, the European Union views the role of teachers and their career development as key priorities. Much attention is paid to the problems of graduates' transition from higher education to the labour market. In Ukraine, the process of teacher graduates employment is not controlled and even not monitored. University graduates say that they need help during a transition period, while looking for a job. Using a 2014–2015 survey in Ukraine, this study investigates the issues of the source of tuition fee, transition period and employment sectors of teacher graduates in the labour market. It should contribute to understanding a current state of play in national labour market needs in terms of teaching skills demand and supply.

graduates entering the labour market indicates that Europe is moving towards highly skilled economy that requires highly qualified workers (European Classification of Skills/Competences, Qualifications & Occupations, 2013).

Meeting the labour market needs and increasing employment of graduates is a prerequisite for building a highly developed economy in Europe. Each year an increasing number of graduates come to the labour market, whose level of training must meet the requirements of employers. Accordingly, the future success of the European Union economy depends on the availability of effective transition of graduates from higher education and vocational training to employment (European area of skills & qualifications, 2014).

In the European Union, much attention is paid to the problems of graduates' transition from higher education to the labour market (Mocanu, Zamfir, Lungu, & Militaru, 2012; Ward-Warmedinger & Macchiarelli, 2013). There are a number of analytical reports devoted to this issue: *Employers' perceptions of graduate employability*, *Employability and skills of higher education graduates*, *Participation of young persons in education and in the labour market* and others. It is believed that recent graduates are not immune to the economic downturn. They, however, were much better insulated from the risk of unemployment than those who enter the labour market with lower qualifications (*Employability & skills of higher education graduates*, 2014, p. 1). University graduates tend to find appropriate work twice faster than those with incomplete secondary education, and their chances to find highly paid job are higher. In Bulgaria, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia, for example, people with secondary education need in average a year more than university graduates to find appropriate work. The average job search takes from university graduates 5.1 months, compared with 7.3 months for graduates with intermediate level and 9.9 months for graduates with low-level qualifications (*Employability and skills of higher education graduates*, 2014, p. 2; Mocanu et al., 2012; *Participation of young persons in education and in the labour market*, 2012).

The monitoring of graduates employment, the duration of the transition period have great importance for the European Union. In the report, *Employability and skills of higher education graduates* is indicated that the employment rate for graduates has declined to 75.4% for five years from 2008–2013. Only in countries like Malta, Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom and Denmark, the employment rate of graduates has remained at or above ET2020 benchmark (*Education and Training 2020*) in 2013 (*Employability & skills of higher education graduates*, 2014, p. 1).

However, measuring the employment of graduates is not an easy task. It is clear that the speed and adequacy of employment of graduates in the years immediately after graduation will depend on the quality and relevance of skills and competence they acquired in higher education. In turn, 47% of graduate employers report that a lack of applicants with the right skills and capabilities is one of the major challenges they face in filling vacancies, even if they are generally satisfied with the skills by previously recruited graduates (*Employers' perceptions of graduate employability*, 2010). Employers believe that this problem can be solved through cooperation with universities in designing study programmes (*Employability & skills of higher education graduates*, 2014, p. 4). Consequently, higher education institutions, employers and employment services have to interact successfully in supporting the graduate employment.

In order to build a cohesion between higher education and the labour market, the European Commission implements various programmes, including: programme for the modernization of higher education systems to improve graduate employability; programme Erasmus + (Erasmus + ), to facilitate the exchange of students as tools for young people to get relevant experience and skills that employers are looking for (*Supporting growth & jobs—an agenda for the modernisation of Europe's higher education systems's*, 2011). *Lifelong Guidance Policy* aims to achieve social and economic goals, including improving the efficiency and effectiveness of higher education, training and transition into the labour market through its contribution to the reduction in dropout, preventing skill mismatches in professional sphere and increase productivity (*Lifelong Guidance Policy Development: A European Resource Kit*, 2012).

Among the most common mechanisms of regulation of higher education and labour market in the EU are regular surveys of graduates (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015a, pp. 196–207, 2015b, p. 42), which are an important means of obtaining information on the quality of education and employment effectiveness at the labour market. Thus, the European Union is trying to control the transition of graduates into the labour market and improve the conditions for their employment.

In Ukraine, this process is not controlled. University graduates say that they need help during a transition period while looking for a job. An important step to address this issue was the adoption of the new Law on higher education of Ukraine from N 1556-VII (2014). This law is very important for the development of higher education in Ukraine, as it carries many important changes. The new law establishes financial principles of higher education system, creates conditions for strengthening cooperation of government agencies and businesses with universities on the principles of autonomy in higher education. An important goal is to prepare competitive human capital for national high-tech innovation and development, self-identity, providing the needs of society, labour market and the state in skilled professionals (Sysoieva & Mospan, 2015). These changes are based on the following principles (Article 3): (1) independence of higher education studies of political parties, civic and religious organizations; (2) integration of Ukrainian higher education in the EHEA, subject to conservation and development achievements and progressive traditions of national high school; (3) promote public–private partnerships in higher education; (4) public support of universities, academies, institutes and colleges by means of providing benefits from taxes and other obligatory payments to HEIs. It is important to emphasize the principle of total economic integration, and integration of Ukrainian higher education to the EHEA (Law on higher education of Ukraine from N 1556-VII, 2014, p. 1). It means that through the integration of Ukrainian higher education to the EHEA, Ukraine will face the vital problems for EU, especially the problems of graduates' transition into the labour market and their employment.

## 2. Data and methods

Accordingly, the purpose of this article is to study the current situation of graduates of pedagogical universities in Ukraine because the teaching profession is less dependent on market transformation in society. The material research is based on the survey results and statistic data that are publicly available in the Internet. The survey was carried out at Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University, one of the major providers of teacher education in Ukraine, in 2015. It involves 72 teacher education graduates, including 18 bachelors, 18 specialists and 36 masters. The following issues were under our interest: the source of tuition fee, transition period, graduates employment mechanisms and employment sectors on the labour market.

Besides, for more information about the situation of graduates of pedagogical universities in Ukraine, there was used statistics, such as (Employment statistics of graduates of higher education institutions, 2015; Graduate Employment Statistics, 2014). Their authors affirm that this “information is based on more than 600,000 different resumes that are publicly available on the Internet” in Ukraine. Thus, broad data of teacher education graduates of the leading universities in Ukraine such as Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University, Oles Honchar Dnipropetrovsk National University, National University of “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy” and Kherson State University were used to examine the employment sectors of graduates and their status in the labour market in 2015. From the whole amount of graduates, presented in the statistics, the graduates of pedagogical qualifications chosen were: Foreign philology (42 graduates), Psychology (46 graduates) and Humanitarian sciences (40 graduates). Total sum—128 graduates. The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the survey data let us to get following findings.

## 3. Research findings

*Tuition fee source.* The study of the source of funding of education showed that most of the surveyed graduates—55.55% were trained for the state budget, the rest—44.44% for the expenses of physical or legal persons (by contract).

**Figure 1. Tuition fee source, 2014–2015.**

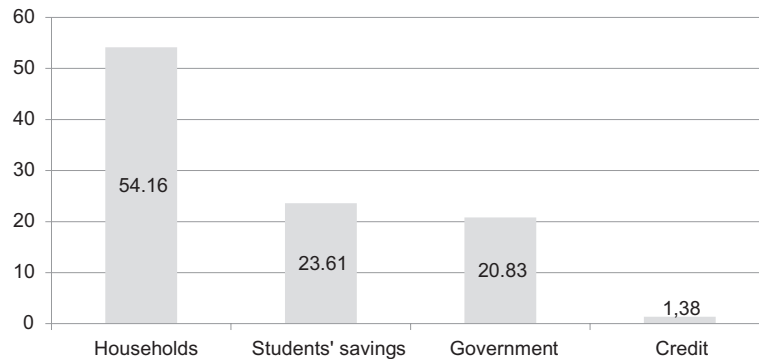


Figure 1 shows that a common source of tuition fee is funding from households (54.16%). The usage of students' own funds (23.61%) and funding from the government (20.83%) takes the second place. Although, taking a bank loan for higher education by students is still not common financing mechanism (1.38%). Students rely more on their parents' help and themselves than on bank loans.

*The occupational group during the study at higher education universities.* According to the survey, most respondents—79.16% worked while they were studying at university. It is difficult to determine the reasons for the position of graduates since it was not the purpose of the survey. We can only assume that the need to work was caused by students' desire to have their own money as well as the possibility to pay for education.

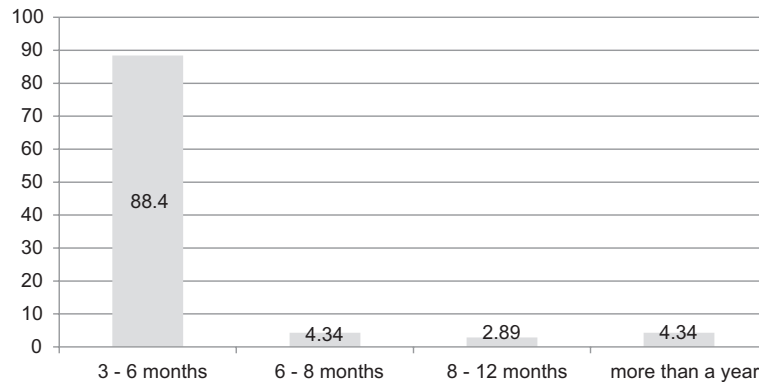
Exploring the occupational group where students worked while they were studying at the university found that most graduates (56.94%) worked according to their qualification—in education sector. This indicates that educational institutions employ students of pedagogical universities as prospective employees. Another less affordable area of work is a service sector—13.88%. The third place belongs to business sphere—5.55%, the restaurant and hotel spheres have the lowest rank—1.38%. So with the qualification of teachers of foreign languages, graduates can afford to look for more attractive working places in the fields of service and business.

The survey shows that only a small percentage (11.11%) of graduates of teaching universities in the 2014–2015 period have experience of studying or working abroad. This can be explained in different ways, but the main explanation is that the student exchange programmes, such as Tempus and Erasmus have not found sufficient use among these students. Confirmation to this can be other indicators that show that the majority of teacher higher education graduates (95.83%) are working in Ukraine, but only 4.16% of graduates have an experience of being employed in the European Union. On the other hand, these indicators reflect the employment situation: the availability of jobs and employment opportunity for teacher higher education graduates in Ukraine.

*Transition from university to labour market for graduates of teacher universities* is also positive, as evidenced by the response of most respondents (Figure 2). Among them, the majority (88.40%) have found a job quite quickly—from 3 to 6 months. 7.23% of graduates looked for work for a year and only 4.34% over a year. Moreover, a minority of them (26.08%) were unemployed and 39.13% of them had difficulty in finding employment after higher education.

*Teacher education graduates' employment mechanisms.* Among the most common graduates' employment mechanisms, there are informational (job) sites and help from friends or relatives. So, thanks to informational sites, the majority of graduates have been employed—almost 45%. Others (almost 39%) have found job, thanks to the help of their relatives. In Ukraine, there is still the saved practice of job-oriented assignment to study in higher education universities (“цільове направлення” (in Ukrainian)) when workers are sent to university by public or private organization. They get a special document (a job-oriented assignment) to be employed at a certain workplace after higher

**Figure 2. Transition period, 2014–2015.**



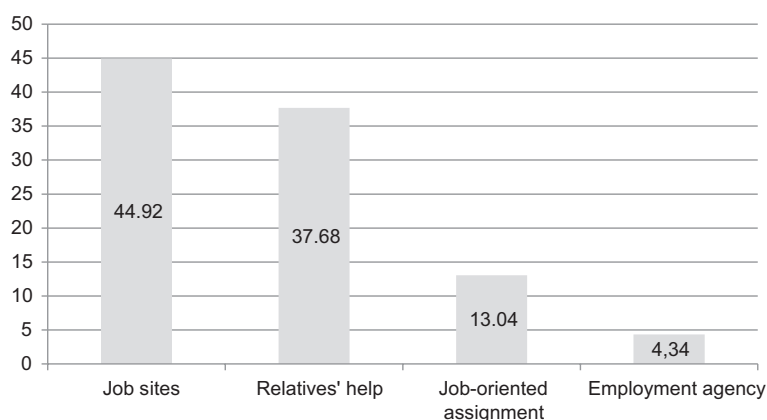
institution graduation. In this case, the workplaces are retained for students. The amount of such job-oriented assignments is regulated by the state order (75% in agricultural universities, 50% in railway transport, customs and pedagogical universities, 25% the others) and according to certain acts. After the graduation, these graduates have to work, usually for three years at a certain workplace. Accordingly, 13.04% of graduates have been employed, thanks to the job-oriented assignments. Only 4.34% of graduates used the labour exchange service (Figure 3).

Studying the common workplace type after the university graduation found that most graduates (70.58%) work in a teaching profession matching their education. Among them, nearly 29% have been employed at comprehensive schools, and about 10% of them—in higher education institutions. These figures indicate that comprehensive schools and gymnasiums are more likely to employ graduates of pedagogical universities than higher education institutions. However, the service sector occupies a significant place for the employment of university graduates—17.39%. Business sector employs 8.33% graduates. The smallest proportion of graduates (1.45%) is working in tourism and restaurant business (see Figure 4).

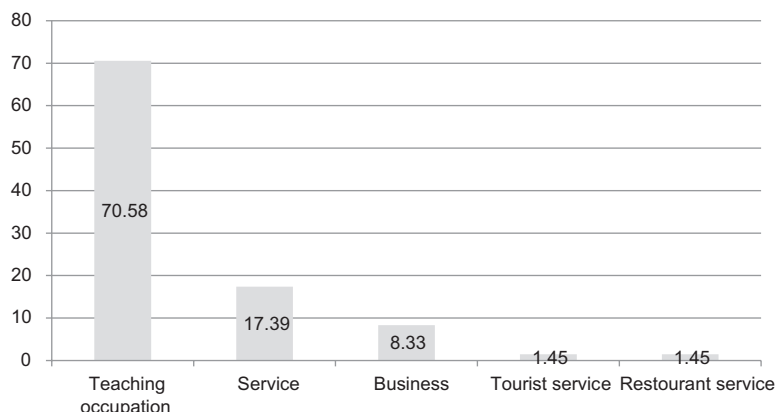
Analysis of career plans for the future showed that the majority of graduates (54.16%) plan to raise their professional level on their own. 30.55% are trying to continue their studies at the university, where 22.22% of them aim to obtain a higher level and 8.33% in order to get another qualification. Others—15.27% are planning to change jobs.

Among the countries where graduates plan to work next 3–5 years, Ukraine occupies the first place (72.22%), second place belongs to the European Union—20.83%, third place—USA (4.16%). The rest of the graduates plan to work in Russia (1.38%) and China (1.38%). Not surprisingly, Ukraine and the European Union at present are the most attractive labour markets for graduates of pedagogical

**Figure 3. Graduates' employment mechanisms, 2014–2015.**



**Figure 4. Common workplace type after university graduation.**



universities. The explanation can only be that Ukrainian graduates are more oriented to the European Union labour market than to other countries due to the European integration of Ukraine.

According to the data of Graduate employment statistics (2014) “parents, relatives or friends help graduate student teachers’ employment. According to the surveys, every third graduate receives a workplace thanks to the parents protection ‘a pull’. About 40% find work, sending their resume to employers, 10%–after on-the-job training” (Graduate employment statistics, 2014).

The data of teacher education graduates of the leading universities in Ukraine such as Taras Shevchenko Kyiv National University, Oles Honchar Dnipropetrovsk National University, National University of “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy” and Kherson State University were used to examine the employment sectors of graduates and their status in the labour market in 2015 (see Table 1).

Table shows that a small amount of teacher education graduates (18.75%) work in teaching profession matching their education. Perhaps this happens due to small salaries of employees in education sector. Not surprisingly, most respondents (42.97%) didn’t determine their employment sector (in the column “others”), which means that graduates with teaching professions can start their own business and extend the market of entrepreneurs. 10.16% of respondents work in mass media, 5.46% work in advertisement and service sectors. This figure indicates that the requirements of this

**Table 1. Employment sectors of teacher education graduates, 2015**

Sector	Qualification			Total (%)
	Foreign philology (%)	Psychology (%)	Humanitarian sciences (%)	
Education	9.52	19.05	27.50	18.75
Government sector	–	8.69	2.50	3.90
Mass media	16.67	4.35	10.00	10.16
Advertisement and service	9.52	2.17	5.00	5.46
Banking	2.38	2.17	–	1.56
Others sectors	42.85	50.00	35.00	42.97
Unemployed	19.05	13.04	20.00	17.18

sector to a certain extent meet these qualifications. Least of all respondents (1.56%) work in banking sector, which could have only one explanation—the qualification discrepancy to the employment sector. However, a small proportion (17.18%) of graduates of pedagogical universities is unemployed.

The investigation of the compliance of the employment sector with qualifications shows that “Philologists (foreign language)” work in education sector less (9.52%) than graduates of “Humanities”—27.50%. This can be explained by the specific qualification that forms a foreign communicative competence, which enables graduates of philological faculty to find job except education in mass media, advertising, services and banking sectors. However, these graduates have a larger share of unemployed: “Philologists (foreign language)”—19.05%, “Humanities”—20.00%. Perhaps they are too qualified for the positions and salaries offered by the labour market, or vice versa, their qualifications do not meet the labour market demands. This issue requires more detailed study.

#### 4. Conclusions

The quantitative and qualitative data investigation, collected from the survey of teacher education graduates of Borys Grinchenko Kyiv University and national statistics in Ukraine in 2014–2015, enables the following conclusions. The common source of tuition fee is funding from households and students’ personal funds. Bank loan is not a common mechanism for financing the education in Ukraine. While studying at the university, most students work in a teaching profession matching their education, as well as in the service sector and business. A very small proportion (11.11%) of pedagogical universities graduates (2014–2015) have experience of studying or working abroad. Transition period from university to the labour market for the majority (88.40%) of teacher education graduates lasts from 3 to 6 months. This means that they are quick enough to find work (mostly in education sector). The most typical employment mechanisms for graduates are information sites and their friends or relatives help and support. After graduation, the majority of respondents (70.58%) work in a teaching profession matching their education: comprehensive schools and higher education institutions. Service and business sectors also occupy a significant place for the employment of university graduates. Teacher education graduates prefer working in Ukraine, and a small number of them—in the European Union. In general, according to the survey, the current state of play for teacher education graduates in the labour market in Kyiv (capital city) is more positive.

We consider it necessary to conduct a similar survey of graduates, as it allows institutions to monitor the employment of its graduates and examine the conditions of their employment. In turn, on one hand, the results may contribute to the quality of educational services. On the other hand, the results may contribute to strengthening the link between higher education and the labour market in Ukraine.

The higher education institutions need information on labour market trends and conducting surveys of graduates is one of the ways to forecast labour market needs in terms of skills demand and supply. “In the majority of EHEA countries, labour market and skills forecasting is undertaken regularly at national level. In about one third of EHEA countries, regular labour market and skills forecasting is also undertaken at regional level, in addition to the national one” (European Commission/EACEA/Eurydice, 2015a, p. 198). The information from the regular surveys of teacher education graduates can be taken into accounts by the national government and stakeholders in higher education planning, especially to determine enrolment quotas or state-funded study places in teacher higher education study field. Conducting labour market forecasts at national level can contribute to policies influencing the employability of graduates both in Ukraine and in EHEA.



#### Supplementary material

Supplementary material for this article can be accessed here <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2016.1221192>

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