

Chapter 3. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND STAKEHOLDERS UNDER MARTIAL LAW AND IN THE CONTEXT OF POST-WAR RECOVERY

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Abstract. *This study examines the partnership between higher education institutions and stakeholders in the context of universities' growing role in the socio-economic development of local communities. The aim of the research is to substantiate the theoretical and methodological foundations of such interaction, define the principles of networked partnership, and systematize approaches to assessing stakeholder engagement, taking into account the social dimension of cooperation. The study employs a range of research methods, including interdisciplinary analysis of academic sources, methods of analysis and synthesis, and elements of systemic and comparative approaches. The application of these methods enabled clarification of the key concepts, systematization of scholarly approaches to partnership interaction, and definition of the principles of cooperation between higher education institutions and stakeholders.*

Based on the generalization of theoretical analysis results, a methodological approach has been proposed for diagnosing the level of stakeholder engagement. It involves evaluating three interrelated dimensions of interaction: organizational, communicational, and social. Particular attention is devoted to the social dimension of partnership, which enables the assessment of the potential impact of university–stakeholder cooperation on community development.

The findings confirm that effective interaction between universities and stakeholders contributes to the development of partnership networks, strengthens universities' social role, and fosters the creation of innovative educational ecosystems. At the same time, it should be emphasized that the

proposed approach serves as a conceptual foundation: it provides general methodological guidelines for evaluation and strategic planning but does not constitute a finalized, universal methodology. Its application requires adaptation to a particular university's values, the specifics of its activities, and the environment in which it operates.

The practical significance of the study lies in the possibility of applying this approach by higher education institutions to assess the effectiveness of stakeholder cooperation and to improve mechanisms of partnership interaction.

This study was conducted within the framework of the project "Institutionalization of Interaction Between Higher Education Institutions and Local Communities as a Factor in the Restoration and Preservation of Human Capital under Martial Law and During Post-War Reconstruction."

Keywords: *higher education institutions; stakeholders; partnership; principles of networked partnership; network cooperation; stakeholder engagement; social dimension of interaction; local communities.*

Introduction

The contemporary development of the higher education system is characterized by the growing role of universities as key social institutions that influence not only educational processes but also regional socio-economic development, human capital formation, and social stability. In this context, the activities of higher education institutions are progressively extending beyond the traditional functions of teaching and research, acquiring the features of open systems that operate on the principles of partnership, networked interaction, and the integration of resources from various social institutions.

These processes are particularly significant in the context of ongoing socio-economic transformations, especially during the period of martial law in Ukraine. Under such conditions, universities are required to adapt to new operational realities, ensure the continuity of the educational process, support academic communities, and address the socio-economic challenges faced by local communities. In this regard, effective interaction among higher education institutions, stakeholders, government bodies, employers, civil society organizations, local communities, and international partners is a critical prerequisite for their strategic development and for strengthening universities' social role.

In contemporary academic discourse, universities are increasingly perceived as active agents of societal transformation, performing not only educational and research functions but also the so-called "third mission," which concerns their social impact on communities and societal development. The implementation of this mission involves establishing sustainable partnerships with stakeholders, developing networked forms of cooperation, and adhering to the principles of openness, shared responsibility, and the integration of knowledge and resources. In this context, universities function as platforms for interaction among diverse social actors, facilitating knowledge dissemination, fostering innovation, and contributing to the development of social capital. At the same time, the actual operations of higher education institutions show that engagement with stakeholders is often fragmented or merely formal, and is not always grounded in the systematic application of principles of partnership and networking. In many cases, cooperation is limited to isolated communication activities or to stakeholder representatives' participation in specific educational or research initiatives, while the strategic nature of partnerships, resource integration, and the joint creation of social value remain underdeveloped.

Furthermore, in scientific research and the management practices of higher education institutions, attention is largely focused on the organizational or communicative aspects of cooperation with stakeholders, while the social dimension of such interaction – in particular, its impact on the development of local communities, the formation of social capital, and the strengthening of universities' role in societal development – remains insufficiently explored. Approaches to determining the level of stakeholder engagement in the university's educational, scientific, and social processes, as well as to evaluating the outcomes of such interaction, are also underdeveloped.

Consequently, a pressing research issue is the lack of a comprehensive methodological approach to assessing stakeholder engagement in higher education institutions that accounts for the principles of networked collaboration and the social dimension of partnership interactions. This necessitates the development of a scientifically grounded set of tools that will allow for determining the level and effectiveness of universities' interaction with

stakeholders, evaluating their social outcomes, and fostering the formation of sustainable partnership networks between higher education institutions, communities, and other social institutions.

The aim of this study is to substantiate the theoretical and methodological foundations of partnership interaction between higher education institutions and stakeholders, to define the principles of networked partnership, and to generalize approaches to assessing the level of their engagement, taking into account the social dimension of interaction and its impact on the development of local communities.

To achieve this objective, the study employs a set of interrelated scientific research methods. First and foremost, the method of interdisciplinary analysis of scientific sources was used, which allowed us to determine the extent to which the issue of interaction between higher education institutions and stakeholders has been explored in Ukrainian and foreign scientific literature, as well as to identify the main approaches to understanding the partnership and network-based interaction of universities with stakeholders.

Methods of analysis and synthesis were applied to clarify the content of the study's conceptual framework, specifically the concepts of "stakeholders," "stakeholder engagement," and "network interaction," as well as to substantiate the main conceptual provisions regarding the social dimension of universities' interaction with stakeholders. The use of these methods enabled the systematization of scientific approaches and the formulation of a set of principles for the interaction of higher education institutions with stakeholders.

The study employs elements of both the systems and comparative approaches. The systems approach enabled us to examine the interaction between higher education institutions and stakeholders as a complex, multi-level system encompassing the organizational, communicative, and social aspects of cooperation and operating on the basis of specific principles of partnership and networking. This approach enabled the identification of the roles and place of various stakeholder groups in the university's activities and exploration of their interrelationships.

A comparative analysis was used to examine existing approaches to assessing stakeholder engagement and to identify effective practices for universities' interactions with stakeholders in educational, scientific, and social activities.

Based on a synthesis of the theoretical analysis and the application of the aforementioned methods, a methodological approach to diagnosing stakeholder engagement is proposed, which involves assessing three interrelated interaction dimensions: organizational, communicative, and social. This approach allows for a comprehensive assessment of the nature and level of stakeholder participation in university activities and determines the effectiveness of implementing the principles of partnership and network-based interaction between higher education institutions and stakeholders.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that the proposed approach represents a conceptual foundation. It provides general methodological guidelines for evaluation, but does not constitute a finalized universal methodology. Its application requires adaptation to a particular university's values, its specific activities, and the environment in which it operates.

The chapter also incorporates the authors' research results, obtained through analysis of the theoretical and practical foundations of higher education institutions' interactions with stakeholders and the implementation of the stakeholder approach in university management. These findings allow us to view the interaction of higher education institutions with stakeholders as an important prerequisite for their strategic development, the strengthening of partnerships, and the expansion of areas of cooperation with local communities, as reflected in the author's previous publications (Vasynova, 2022; Vasynova, 2023; Vasynova, 2023). The identified methodological approaches lay the groundwork for further substantiation of a system of principles governing the interaction of higher education institutions with stakeholders and the development of tools to assess the level of their engagement.

The interaction of higher education institutions with stakeholders has been the subject of numerous studies. Ukrainian scholars emphasize the role of stakeholders in transforming the

educational process and ensuring its quality (Hevko & Borysov, 2020; Kovalenko, 2021; Trunina & Bilyk, 2021; Shevchenko & Khytyko, 2020; Popadynets, 2018). Their works highlight the stakeholder approach as a condition for the strategic development of universities and as a tool for enhancing competitiveness (Tereshchenko, 2025; Serhiyenko, 2025; Kononova & Us, 2025). Special attention is paid to university–community interaction under wartime conditions (Vasynova, 2022).

In international research, the stakeholder concept is viewed as a component of institutional development and university interaction with the external environment. Foundational contributions were made by Fassin (2009), Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff (2000), and Agasisti et al. (2019), who developed theoretical models such as the “triple helix” and examined the role of universities in regional development. Nabaho et al. (2022) and Labe (2024) explore the “third mission” of universities, emphasizing community engagement and communication mechanisms. Gogiashvili (2022) emphasizes universities' social responsibility, while Dereso (2021) proposes a practical model integrating educational, research, and social activities.

Recent studies further expand this discourse. Spânu et al. (2024) analyze the implementation of the “third mission” through community engagement; Koekkoek et al. (2024) examine university–community interaction in the Netherlands; Hinterleitner et al. (2025/2026) provide a systematic review of the role of universities in regional sustainability transitions; and De Groot (2025) highlights multi-stakeholder networks in higher education.

Traditionally, universities have fulfilled two missions: educational and research. At the end of the 20th century, the concept of the “third mission” emerged, signifying the active participation of higher education institutions in the socio-economic development of society. Universities are now seen not only as centers of education and science but also as agents of social transformation, interacting with stakeholders and contributing to solving pressing issues of territorial development. This underscores the importance of studying the forms and levels of stakeholder engagement and defining the social dimension of such interaction (Farnell, 2020).

Despite a significant body of research expanding the scope of issues related to the interaction between higher education institutions and stakeholders, this issue is cross-cutting and remains key to the development of the higher education system. It encompasses all levels of university operations, ranging from strategic management to operational activities. Furthermore, it reflects the need for a constant search for new forms and methods of partnership in the context of contemporary socio-economic transformations.

Research Results

In the current context of higher education system transformation, the interaction of universities with various stakeholder groups and local communities is particularly significant. The state of war in Ukraine has radically changed the country's socio-economic and educational landscape. According to data from the Unified State Electronic Database on Education, provided by the State Enterprise "Inforesurs" of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, the number of students in higher education institutions in 2022–2024 shows a downward trend compared to the pre-war period (Main Department of Statistics, 2025). This is linked both to migration processes and to limited opportunities for young people to pursue education under martial law. As a result, Ukrainian educational institutions have faced several systemic challenges: staff shortages, declining student enrollment, financial constraints, and the need to seek alternative sources of support. Despite these challenges, universities continue to serve as key centers of social stability, integration of internally displaced persons, and local community development, highlighting the need to strengthen collaboration with stakeholders and partner networks. The importance of such collaboration is also confirmed by strategic documents in higher education.

The Strategy for the Development of Higher Education in Ukraine for 2022–2032 emphasizes the need for systematic collaboration among higher education institutions, employers, government bodies, and the public as key stakeholders (On Approval, 2022). At the same time, the Standards and Guidelines

for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG-2015) emphasize the importance of actively involving internal and external stakeholders in educational processes. This approach contributes to improving the quality of education, ensuring its alignment with societal needs, and strengthening universities' role in supporting social cohesion, economic development, and innovation (Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area, 2015).

In these documents, stakeholders are viewed as a group of individuals and legal entities (staff, students, employers, partners, the state, the public) who influence the organization's activities or are directly dependent on its outcomes. It should be noted that every year, communication with these stakeholder groups is increasingly viewed by higher education institutions as one of the priority management tasks, and under martial law, its significance grows substantially, as it is precisely such collaborative interaction that facilitates the consolidation of resources, a prompt response to societal needs, and the formation and retention of the student body. These transformations have led to the emergence of a new concept: "stakeholder management" (Stakeholder Management) – the management of relationships with interested groups (The Concept of Stakeholders, 2026).

In international academic discourse, stakeholders are understood to be groups of entities that have their own interests, expectations, and needs regarding an organization's activities, and that are capable of influencing its operations or being influenced by it. Therefore, the concept of "stakeholders" is considered synonymous with the term "interested parties," as it encompasses all participants who are directly or indirectly connected to the organization's activities, are interested in its results, and can determine the direction of its development (What is Stakeholder Engagement, 2021). Consequently, stakeholders can play a significant role in achieving organizational success, particularly by helping to bridge existing "gaps" in the organization's operations and development.

In the context of a higher education institution's activities, this means the opportunity to reduce barriers and contradictions across its various work areas, namely educational, scientific, pedagogical, methodological, and administrative (The Concept of

Stakeholders, 2026). However, in our view, stakeholders should be seen not only as interested parties but primarily as partners of universities, since their support is key to realizing the higher education institution's mission and strategic vision. Under such conditions, the university's activities are based on the principles of partnership, which entail taking into account the interests of various stakeholder groups, aligning their expectations, and establishing a foundation for mutually beneficial cooperation.

University stakeholders are traditionally divided into two groups: external and internal. Based on an analysis of academic sources (Hevko & Borysov, 2020; Trunina & Bilyk, 2021; Vasiuk & Haievskaya, 2023; Vasynova, 2023), a systematization of stakeholders was carried out, which made it possible to identify key stakeholder groups that directly or indirectly influence the university's activities and the formation of its social dimension. The list includes stakeholder groups that participate in the implementation of the higher education institution's educational, scientific, and social functions or are interested in its results. A generalized structure of such groups is presented in Figure 1.

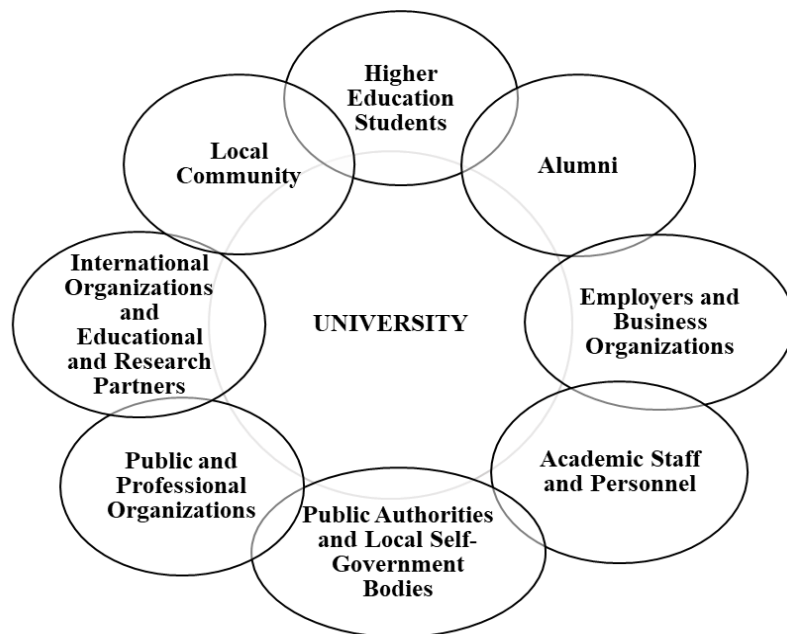


Figure 1
**Key stakeholder groups of the university
within the scope of the study**

Source: Authors' own work based on (Hevko & Borysov, 2020; Trunina & Bilyk, 2021; Vasiuk & Haievskaya, 2023; Vasynova, 2023).

As shown in Fig. 1, the interactions of a higher education institution encompass a wide range of stakeholders, among whom students, academic and teaching staff, employers, state and local government bodies, civil society organizations, business entities, and local communities are traditionally distinguished. These groups form a network of partnerships that ensures the fulfillment of the university's educational, scientific, and social mission.

At the same time, during periods of military challenges, the stakeholder approach takes on new meaning, as it allows consideration not only of traditional stakeholder groups but also of new categories emerging from societal transformations. These include internally displaced persons, particularly students and academic staff; local communities hosting displaced educational institutions; and international donors and organizations supporting the restoration of educational infrastructure and the development of educational programs.

International organizations and institutions play a distinct role in the contemporary educational landscape, serving as key partners for universities in implementing international educational and research programs, fostering academic mobility, and strengthening the institutional capacity of higher education institutions.

Given the above, stakeholders should be identified based on a combination of two key characteristics:

- having a stake in the outcomes of the higher education institution's activities;
- having the potential to influence its management decisions, educational processes, and strategic development.

However, it should be emphasized that influence alone, without a corresponding interest, is not sufficient grounds for classifying an individual or organization as a stakeholder. This takes on particular significance in the context of a higher education institution's interaction with the local community, where the synergy of interests and influences facilitates joint activities to develop human capital, increase social engagement, and address local issues. It is precisely the alignment of positions and the coordination of stakeholders' efforts that create the conditions for

achieving tangible social impact and sustainable community development.

Within the scope of this study, the university's interaction with stakeholders is viewed as a process of creating a supportive environment that fosters the development of innovative and socially oriented activities at the higher education institution.

In today's context, such interaction is increasingly interpreted through the lens of network governance, which involves horizontal coordination and partnership-based cooperation among various social actors.

In this system, the university serves as a platform for integrating the resources, knowledge, and interests of various stakeholder groups, thereby fostering the development of partnership networks and the formation of innovative educational ecosystems (Joyce & Richard, 2020). Further development of this idea involves refining the mechanisms for implementing networked collaboration. In particular, a study by N. Vasyuk and L. Gaevska emphasizes that network governance involves establishing a system of institutional and organizational mechanisms that ensure effective interaction between government bodies and the public. In this context, the mechanism of network governance is viewed as a complex of legal, administrative, organizational, personnel, financial, and technical support for institutional activities, aimed at developing networked interaction among various participants in social processes (Vasyuk & Gaevska, 2023). In light of this, in higher education, network governance can be viewed as a model for organizing a university's interactions with stakeholders, grounded in the principles of partnership, openness, mutual responsibility, and joint decision-making. This approach contributes to strengthening universities as centers of social innovation, to the development of local communities, and to the formation of educational ecosystems within which educational, scientific, and social potential are integrated.

Reflection on the role and significance of stakeholders in organizational activities has served as the basis for the development of a number of contemporary theoretical approaches to managing stakeholder interactions. Among these, the

stakeholder approach, the concept of network governance, and the Triple Helix and Quadruple Helix models – which explain the mechanisms of partnership between universities, the state, business, and civil society – play a significant role (Freeman, 1984; Rhodes, 1996; Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000; Carayannis & Campbell, 2009).

Let us consider the main provisions of these approaches:

Stakeholder approach – managing interactions with stakeholders. The stakeholder approach is based on understanding an organization's activities as a system of interactions with various stakeholder groups that influence its functioning or are affected by its decisions (Freeman, 1984). In the context of higher education institutions, such stakeholders include students, employers, government agencies, local communities, civil society organizations, and international partners. Managing stakeholder engagement involves integrating their interests into the decision-making process, building partnerships, developing communication channels, and involving stakeholders in the implementation of the university's educational, research, and social initiatives.

Network governance – network management and horizontal coordination. The concept of network governance reflects a modern model of organizing interaction between different institutions, based on partnership, cooperation, and horizontal connections (Rhodes, 1996). Unlike traditional hierarchical management systems, network governance involves distributed responsibility, joint decision-making, and coordination among network participants. In higher education, this model facilitates the formation of partnership networks among universities, government agencies, businesses, and civil society organizations, enabling more effective implementation of educational, innovative, and social projects.

Triple Helix model – university–business–government interaction. The Triple Helix model describes an innovative system of cooperation between three key institutional sectors: universities, business, and government (Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000). In this model (Fig. 2), universities serve as centers for the generation of knowledge and innovation, business ensures their

practical implementation and commercialization, and the government establishes the regulatory and institutional conditions for the development of innovative activities (Wikipedia, 2026). The interaction among these sectors contributes to the formation of regional innovation ecosystems and strengthens universities' role in socio-economic development.

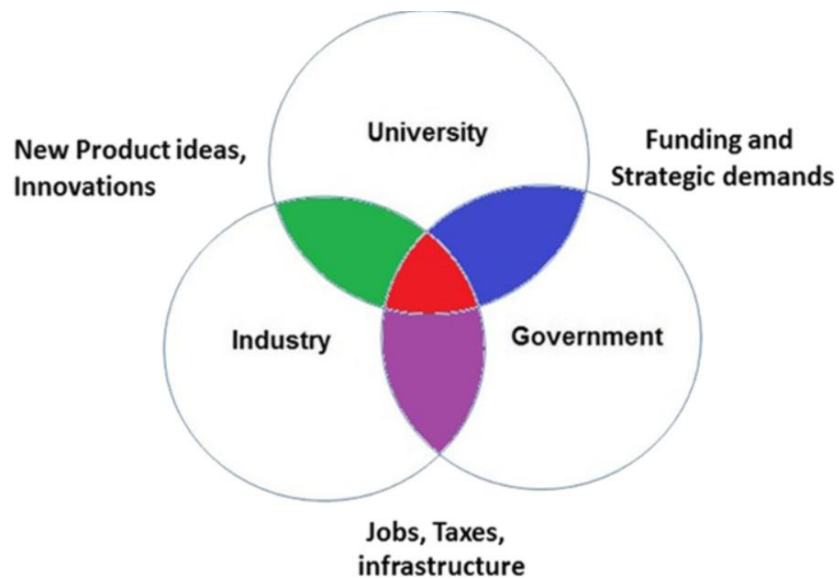


Figure 2
The Triple Helix Model

Source: Authors' own work based on (Wikipedia, 2026).

An innovative environment forms at the intersection of the three sectors, where knowledge, resources, and management mechanisms are integrated, leading to the creation of new products, infrastructure development, and economic growth.

The Quadruple Helix represents an expansion of this interaction to include the community and civil society. The Quadruple Helix model is an evolution of the Triple Helix concept and involves incorporating a fourth element – civil society and local communities into the system of innovative interaction (Carayannis & Campbell, 2009). This approach emphasizes the importance of engaging a broad range of social actors in shaping innovation policy, developing education, and generating knowledge. Within this model, universities are viewed not only as

educational and scientific institutions but also as active participants in socio-economic development, interacting with government agencies, business, and the community to create an innovation ecosystem (Fig. 3).

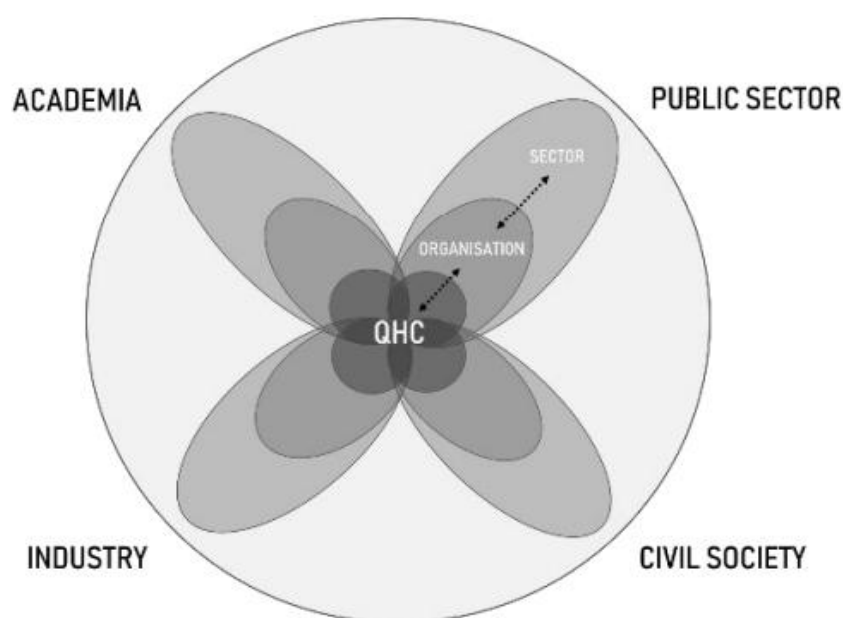


Figure 3

The Quadruple Helix model of interaction among key sectors of the innovation ecosystem

Source: Authors' own work based on (Carayannis, 2019).

The implementation of the Quadruple Helix model is based on a number of key principles, including:

- collaboration and co-creation – combining the efforts of various stakeholder groups to jointly solve complex socio-economic problems and stimulate innovation;
- open innovation – facilitating the exchange of ideas, experience, and resources among universities, businesses, government agencies, and civil society organizations;
- social responsibility – taking into account ethical aspects and principles of sustainable development, and orienting innovation activities toward the public good;

- knowledge sharing – disseminating knowledge, experience, and best practices across different sectors of society. The Quadruple Helix model expands upon the traditional concept of interaction between universities, business, and government by adding a fourth element: civil society. The intersection of these sectors forms a shared innovation space where knowledge generation, partnership development, and innovation creation occur.

Stakeholder approach, network governance, Triple Helix, and Quadruple Helix constitute interconnected conceptual frameworks that define contemporary approaches to managing organizational interaction with stakeholders. Their common methodological foundation lies in recognizing the multilevel structure of social relations, the necessity of horizontal coordination, and the integration of resources from different sectors to ensure innovative development.

Within these models, universities are considered key institutions that combine educational, scientific, and social functions, act as centers of knowledge generation and innovation, and establish partnership networks with governmental structures, business, and civil society. This perspective positions universities as systemic nodes in the innovation ecosystem, where knowledge, resources, and governance mechanisms are integrated to ensure sustainable socio-economic development.

In the context of the practical implementation of partnership interactions, it is important to adhere to general principles for engaging stakeholders in educational institutions' activities. According to W. Joyce & J. Richard, effective engagement with stakeholders should be based on a set of guiding principles that ensure the coherence of joint actions and contribute to the achievement of strategic goals for educational development (Joyce & Richard, 2020). In particular, the key principles of stakeholder engagement include:

1. Proactive communication by educational institutions with stakeholders. Faculty and administrators of educational institutions must provide stakeholders with the necessary information and analytical data to enable the formation of

productive partnerships aimed at improving the effectiveness of the educational process.

2. Alignment of partnership activities with educational goals. All interactions with stakeholders must be directly linked to achieving strategic goals for educational development and improving the quality of student training.

3. Joint and responsible participation of partners. Effective interaction requires the active participation of all parties in implementing joint initiatives, while each partnership participant's roles and responsibilities must be clearly defined.

4. Transparency of information exchange. Data on performance results and achievements must be open, reliable, and understandable to all participants in the partnership.

5. Shared values and a common vision of outcomes. All partnership participants must act in line with shared values, focusing on achieving the agreed-upon strategic outcomes.

6. Results-Orientation and Use of Evidence-Based Data. The implementation of partnership initiatives must be based on data analysis and aimed at achieving specific results, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of management decisions and the quality of educational processes.

These principles underscore the importance of systematic, transparent interaction between educational institutions and stakeholders, which aligns with contemporary approaches to developing partnership networks and network governance in education.

Implementing such approaches contributes to the formation of a community educational ecosystem that unites educational institutions at various levels, local governments, businesses, civil society organizations, and other social institutions around a common goal – the development of human capital and the provision of lifelong learning.

A synthesis of scholarly approaches to stakeholder engagement and an analysis of current trends in the development of partnership networks in higher education have enabled the formulation of a framework of principles for partnerships (Table 1)

Table 1

System of Principles of Network Partnership between Higher Education Institutions and Stakeholders

<i>Principle</i>	<i>Description of the Principle</i>	<i>Expected Outcomes</i>
Strategic Partnership	Establishing long-term mutually beneficial relationships between the university and key stakeholder groups	Development of sustainable partnership networks and strengthening of an innovative educational environment
Transparency and Openness	Ensuring access to information about the university's educational, research, and innovation activities	Increased trust, improved communication efficiency, and enhanced institutional accountability
Mutual Benefit	Orienting cooperation toward creating shared value for all partners involved	Sustainable and mutually beneficial partnership relationships
Adaptability	Ensuring universities' flexible response to changes in the labor market, society, and the economy	Greater relevance and responsiveness of educational programs
Integration of Knowledge and Resources	Combining the scientific potential of universities with the practical expertise of business and the institutional capacities of government	Development of innovative solutions and strengthening of knowledge transfer
Network Interaction	Building horizontal connections between universities, business, government, and civil society	Formation and development of innovative ecosystems
Social Orientation	Directing partnerships toward addressing societal challenges and supporting community development	Strengthening the social mission and societal impact of universities
Inclusiveness	Ensuring the participation of diverse stakeholder groups in university interaction processes, considering their needs, capacities, and sociocultural characteristics	Broader stakeholder engagement and increased equity and accessibility of partnership initiatives

Source: Authors' own work based on (Carayannis & Campbell, 2009; Carayannis & Campbell, 2019; Dereso, 2021; Labe, 2024; Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000, etc.).

between higher education institutions and stakeholders (Carayannis & Campbell, 2009; Carayannis & Campbell, 2019; Dereso, 2021; Labe, 2024; Etzkowitz & Leydesdorff, 2000, etc.), which takes into account the specific features of how universities operate in today's innovative and socially oriented educational environment.

The proposed framework of principles reflects the comprehensive nature of higher education institutions' interactions with stakeholders and guides universities toward developing long-term partnerships with various stakeholder groups. Its implementation helps strengthen universities' role as open social institutions that actively engage with business, government, and civil society.

These principles emphasize the importance of systematic, transparent, and mutually beneficial cooperation between universities and stakeholders, which aligns with contemporary approaches to developing partnership networks and network governance in education. The principle of inclusivity is particularly important, as it entails considering the diverse needs and capabilities of various stakeholder groups, including internally displaced persons, representatives of local communities, local government bodies, and the public sector.

The result is an open and inclusive system of partnership between the university and its stakeholders, which helps strengthen the social legitimacy of the higher education institution and enhances its ability to respond to contemporary societal challenges.

This results in a networked model of interaction, within which the university serves as a platform for pooling the knowledge, innovations, and management practices of various social actors. This approach creates the conditions for a community educational ecosystem that fosters human capital development, supports innovative activities, and promotes the socio-economic development of regions.

Such a system typically includes:

- institutions of preschool, general secondary, vocational, and higher education;

- local government bodies;
- businesses and employers;
- civil society organizations and cultural institutions;
- community residents who participate in lifelong learning.

Within such a system, the university serves as a vital hub that integrates educational, scientific, social, and innovative resources, fostering the formation of partnership networks among educational institutions, local government bodies, businesses, and civil society.

The practical implementation of these principles involves using a range of organizational, communication, and project-based collaboration tools. These include establishing advisory and expert councils with stakeholder representatives, concluding partnership agreements and memoranda of cooperation, involving representatives of communities, employers, and civil society organizations in the development, review, and updating of educational programs, and implementing joint educational, scientific, and socially oriented projects. An important role is played by the organization of public events, namely, roundtables, forums, strategic sessions, training sessions, and public discussions, which ensure open communication and foster trust among participants.

An additional tool for developing networked collaboration is the use of digital platforms and electronic communication resources, which expand professional contacts, maintain a constant dialogue with stakeholders, and enable prompt responses to the needs of the community and the labor market. The application of these tools and measures helps strengthen partnerships, improve the efficiency of intellectual, organizational, and social resources, and enhance universities' roles as active participants in the development of local communities and regional innovation ecosystems.

In the scientific literature, the key outcomes of such collaboration include the integration of knowledge with practical activities, the strengthening of collective action, and the

development of shared social responsibility (Joyce & Richard, 2020), specifically:

1. The combination of knowledge with practical activity involves integrating the scientific potential of universities with the practical experience of business and the managerial resources of state and public institutions. In today's environment, implementing educational and social initiatives requires an interdisciplinary approach and the integration of expertise at various levels, enabling the translation of strategic intentions into practical actions and ensuring the sustainable development of projects.

2. Strengthening collective action involves coordinating the efforts of various stakeholder groups to achieve common goals. Networked collaboration facilitates the consolidation of resources, the pooling of expert potential, and creates a foundation for implementing new partnership initiatives in the field of educational and innovative activities.

3. Fostering shared social responsibility involves developing partnerships between universities and stakeholders, which creates opportunities for jointly shaping social value. Such collaboration helps raise participants' social responsibility and increases universities' involvement in addressing pressing issues facing local communities.

In our view, the significance of these advantages lies in their reflecting the practical outcomes of effective interaction between higher education institutions and stakeholders and in demonstrating the potential of networked cooperation as a key factor in the development of modern universities. The implementation of such forms of interaction contributes not only to improving the effectiveness of universities' educational and scientific activities but also to strengthening their role as active participants in socio-economic transformations. In this context, the development of networked interaction has a broader impact on the functioning of higher education institutions and their participation in the socio-economic development of society.

A synthesis of research findings and an analysis of universities' partnership practices with stakeholders reveal additional benefits of networked collaboration, including:

- improved quality of educational programs through the involvement of employers and other stakeholders in shaping educational content;
- expanding opportunities for innovative activities and knowledge transfer;
- increasing universities' adaptability to changes in the external environment and labor market needs;
- strengthening universities' participation in the development of local communities;
- forming innovative ecosystems through collaboration between universities, business, the state, and civil society.

Thus, the implementation of partnership principles contributes to a comprehensive effect, manifested in the improvement of the quality of universities' educational and research activities, the development of an innovative environment, and the strengthening of their role in the socio-economic development of society. For the practical implementation of these approaches, it is advisable to use stakeholder relationship management tools, such as a stakeholder map.

It is worth noting that some of the advantages listed above are conceptually linked to the principles of partnership outlined in Table 1, as they reflect the practical outcomes of their implementation. In particular, the principle of integrating knowledge and resources manifests itself in the combination of scientific and practical experience, the principle of networked interaction – in the strengthening of collective action, and the principle of social orientation – in the formation of shared social responsibility. Together, this creates the conditions for the development of innovative educational ecosystems and the strengthening of universities' role in the development of local communities.

Implementing these approaches, particularly the principles of partnership, requires the use of appropriate tools for managing stakeholder relationships. In the practice of strategic and project management, various tools are used to plan and organize interactions with stakeholders. One such tool is the

Communication Matrix, which the International Institute of Business Analysis (IIBA) recommends using (Karlina, 2023). The Communication Matrix allows for structuring the stakeholder engagement process, identifying communication channels, responsible parties, and the frequency of information exchange (Table 2).

Table 2

Communication Matrix

<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Meeting/ Report Title</i>	<i>Purpose</i>	<i>Communication Method</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Person in Charge</i>

Source: Authors' own work based on (Karlina, 2023).

Thus, the communication matrix facilitates planning stakeholder engagement, while the stakeholder map allows for the systematization and analysis of the participants in the partnership network.

Alongside communication planning tools, tools for identifying and systematizing stakeholders are of great importance. One such tool is the stakeholder map, which is used to identify, systematize, and analyze key stakeholder groups. In the practical activities of higher education institutions, a stakeholder map is developed to identify the main groups and institutions that can influence the university's performance or, conversely, be influenced by it.

This map allows you to organize information about stakeholders, identify their interests and levels of influence, and establish collaboration priorities. The process of creating a stakeholder map involves several sequential steps:

1. Identification – compiling a list of all groups, organizations, and institutions that are relevant to the company's operations.
2. Research – analyzing their interests, positions, and means of influence.

3. Visualization – creating a visual representation that illustrates the relationships between stakeholders and the organization's key objectives.

4. Prioritization – identifying the stakeholders who have the greatest impact on success and are most critical to addressing current issues (The Concept of Stakeholders, 2026). This process helps the organization understand whom to prioritize working with and how to build effective communication and partnerships.

In this context, there is a need not only to identify and group stakeholders but also to determine the actual level of their engagement in the university's educational, scientific, and social processes. That is why the next step in our research is to develop a methodology for analyzing stakeholder engagement, enabling us to move from conceptual analysis to the instrumental measurement of interaction effectiveness.

Experts emphasize the advisability of beginning the organization of the educational space (academic year) by assessing the level of stakeholder engagement in the educational process, thereby enabling the timely determination of interaction directions and increasing their effectiveness. Based on an analysis of Ukrainian and foreign scientific works (Popadynets, 2018; Popadynets, Andrusiv, Shtohryn & Galtsova, 2020; What is Stakeholder Engagement, 2021; The Concept of Stakeholders, 2026), a list of questions for diagnosing the level of stakeholder engagement in the university's activities was systematized and summarized:

1. Have the main stakeholder groups of the university been identified?
2. Has a stakeholder matrix (interests, needs, level of influence) been created, and is it periodically updated?
3. Are the specific characteristics of different groups taken into account when planning interactions?
4. Have responsible individuals or departments been designated for communication with stakeholders?
5. Have procedures been developed for involving stakeholders in educational, research, and social activities?

6. Are the results of interactions documented (meeting minutes, agreements, reports)?
7. Are their needs and expectations taken into account when making management decisions?
8. Are measures developed to respond to stakeholder inquiries?
9. Is the effectiveness of cooperation with stakeholders evaluated?
10. Has the frequency of reporting to stakeholders been established?
11. Is the level of their engagement monitored?
12. Is national and international experience in university-stakeholder engagement studied and taken into account?
13. Do stakeholders have access to up-to-date information about the university's activities, projects, and initiatives?
14. Is regular communication provided regarding performance results, social initiatives, and partnership projects?
15. Is the information transparent, understandable, and accessible to various groups?
16. Are consultations, meetings, and joint events held with stakeholders?
17. Have opportunities been created for stakeholders to participate in the implementation of joint projects?
18. Are there mechanisms for submitting proposals, comments, or initiatives from stakeholders?
19. The proposed approach is simple to apply and convenient for practical use. Assessment is carried out by recording a positive ("+") or negative ("-") response to each proposed question, enabling quick determination of which components of stakeholder engagement are implemented at the appropriate level and which require improvement.

To interpret the results, it is advisable to use the approach proposed in the study by I. Popadynets, U. Andrusiv, M. Shtohryn,

and O. Galtsova (Popadynets, Andrusiv, Shtohryn & Galtsova, 2020), where the level of stakeholder engagement is determined by the total score:

11–18 points – high level of engagement (stakeholders feel significantly involved in the activities of the university, institute, or department);

6–10 points – moderate level of engagement;

0–5 points – low level of engagement, indicating a predominantly formal nature of interaction.

Thus, the existing list of questions sufficiently reflects the organizational level of interaction (questions 1 through 12) and the communication level (questions 13 through 18). At the same time, it does not fully address the social dimension, particularly the potential impact of the university's stakeholder cooperation on local community development. This component is conceptually significant for achieving the objective of our study. Therefore, it is advisable to supplement the methodology with a separate set of questions to analyze stakeholders' social engagement and determine the potential impact of their interactions with the university on the development of the local community. Some of the key questions within this section could include the following:

1. Are stakeholders involved in the implementation of socially significant initiatives by the higher education institution aimed at the development of the local community?

2. Do community representatives participate in determining the priority areas for joint projects?

3. Do stakeholders' suggestions influence the content of educational programs, research, or social initiatives focused on community needs?

4. Does collaboration with stakeholders contribute to increasing the social engagement of young people and community residents?

When defining the set of issues, it is important to consider a university's values, the nature of its activities, and its operating environment; therefore, this set cannot be considered universal or exhaustive.

Thus, it is advisable to structurally divide the proposed methodology for assessing the level of stakeholder engagement in the activities of a higher education institution into three interrelated components:

1. Organizational block – covers issues related to stakeholder identification, the formation of a system of interaction, and the management of partnership relationships.

2. Communication block – reflects the characteristics of information exchange, the transparency of the university's activities, and the level of stakeholder involvement in joint events and consultations.

3. Social block – aimed at determining the impact of the university's interaction with stakeholders on the development of the local community, social initiatives, and the promotion of civic engagement.

With regard to the interpretation of results, the above-outlined approach should be taken into account, focusing on the number of questions identified in the questionnaire (analysis protocol). Each question serves as an indicator, which is assessed according to the principle "+" (practice is implemented) or "-" (practice is absent or implemented episodically) (see Table 3). The sum of positive responses constitutes a quantitative measure of stakeholder engagement, enabling the identification of strengths and weaknesses in cooperation and outlining directions for its improvement. The results obtained allow for a general picture of stakeholder involvement and for determining further steps to enhance collaboration mechanisms.

It should be emphasized that, in defining the set of questions, it is important to consider a particular university's values, the specifics of its activities, and the environment in which it operates. Therefore, the proposed list cannot be considered universal or exhaustive. It represents a conceptual framework that provides general methodological guidelines but requires adaptation to specific conditions and objectives.

Thus, the methodology combines a structured set of indicators, a simple evaluation system, and the ability to interpret results both at the general level and within individual blocks

(organizational, communicational, social). This ensures its practical applicability while leaving room for further development and refinement depending on the context.

Table 3

Level of stakeholder engagement in university activities

No. Item	Self- assessment question	Block	Indicator	Stakeholder 1 +/-	Stakeholder 2 +/-	Stakeholder 3 +/-

Source: Authors' own work based on (Popadynets, Andrusiv, Shtohryn & Galtsova, 2020)

In our view, the proposed approach enables not only quantitative assessment of stakeholder cooperation, but also identification of problematic areas for further managerial response and improvement of partnership mechanisms. The methodology may be applied as a tool for the university's internal self-assessment, as well as an analytical basis during strategic planning of stakeholder relations. Its use contributes to the systematization of information on the nature of stakeholder interaction, the identification of strengths and weaknesses of cooperation, and the outlining of directions for further enhancement of partnership and network interaction mechanisms.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that the proposed toolkit serves as a framework or conceptual basis for evaluation. It provides general methodological guidelines but does not constitute a finalized or universal methodology. Its application requires adaptation to a particular university's values, the specifics of its activities, and the environment in which it operates.

It is important to note that the developed list of questions reflects the implementation of key principles of interaction between higher education institutions and stakeholders, in particular: strategic partnership, transparency and openness, mutual benefit, adaptability, integration of knowledge and resources, network interaction, and social orientation. Thus, the proposed system of questions can be viewed as a tool for

operationalizing these principles and for assessing the level of their practical implementation in the university's activities.

Conclusions

The study found that collaboration between higher education institutions and stakeholders is a key factor in their strategic development, enhancing competitiveness, and strengthening universities' social role. In the current context of higher education system transformation, particularly during a period of martial law, such interaction takes on special significance, as it helps consolidate resources, build partnership networks, and increase universities' involvement in addressing socially significant issues facing local communities.

Based on an analysis of scientific sources and contemporary theoretical approaches (stakeholder approach, network governance, the Triple Helix and Quadruple Helix models), the paper substantiates the rationale for considering the interaction between higher education institutions and stakeholders as a multi-level system of partnerships encompassing various stakeholder groups: students, employers, government bodies, civil society organizations, local communities, and international institutions.

A synthesis of scholarly approaches to stakeholder engagement and an analysis of current trends in the development of partnership networks in higher education have enabled the formulation of a system of principles for effective interaction between higher education institutions and stakeholders. Adherence to these principles ensures an open, collaborative, and mutually beneficial nature of cooperation, promotes the integration of knowledge and resources, fosters networked interaction, and strengthens the social orientation of universities' activities. As a result, sustainable partnerships are formed that support the development of innovative educational ecosystems and align the interests of key stakeholder groups with universities' educational, scientific, and social activities.

The study proposes a methodological approach to diagnosing the level of stakeholder engagement in higher education institutions' activities, which involves evaluating

interactions across three interrelated dimensions: organizational, communicational, and social. The organizational dimension reflects the presence of managerial mechanisms for stakeholder interaction; the communicational dimension indicates the level of openness and intensity of information exchange; and the social dimension highlights the potential impact of university–stakeholder cooperation on community development and civic engagement.

At the same time, it should be emphasized that this approach represents a conceptual foundation. It provides general methodological guidelines for evaluation but does not constitute a finalized or universal methodology. Its application requires adaptation to a particular university's values, the specifics of its activities, and the environment in which it operates.

The self-assessment procedure is based on the principles of strategic partnership, transparency and openness, mutual benefit, adaptability, integration of knowledge and resources, network interaction, and social orientation, which allows for the evaluation not only of the existence of interaction but also of its qualitative characteristics.

Supplementing existing approaches to assessing stakeholder engagement with a social set of questions expands the toolkit for analyzing universities' interactions with stakeholders and accounts for their contribution to the implementation of the university's social mission. The proposed methodology is flexible, easy to use, and can be applied both at the university level as a whole and to analyze the interactions of individual structural units or stakeholder groups.

The novelty of the proposed three-component approach lies in its expansion of the traditional framework for assessing stakeholder engagement by adding a social dimension alongside the organizational and communicational ones:

- the organizational dimension makes it possible to evaluate the presence of managerial mechanisms and procedures for stakeholder interaction;
- the communicational dimension captures the level of openness, transparency, and intensity of information flows;

- the social dimension introduces a new emphasis on the impact of university–stakeholder cooperation on community development and the formation of civic engagement.

Thus, the novelty consists in the creation of a framework model that integrates internal (organizational and communicational) and external (social) aspects of interaction. This enables not only the assessment of managerial and communicational practices but also the consideration of the broader societal effects of university–stakeholder partnerships. In this way, the proposed approach serves as a conceptual foundation for multidimensional diagnostics, combining managerial, informational, and social perspectives, which makes the evaluation more comprehensive and relevant to contemporary conditions.

Prospects for further research lie in developing a comprehensive set of tools for empirically measuring higher education institutions' interactions with stakeholders, particularly by creating matrix mapping models of stakeholders that account for the social dimension of partnership interactions and their impact on the development of local communities.

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