

Quality assurance methods in Russia

In the history of the development of quality assurance (QA) in Russia we can mark three distinct periods: innovation period, European period and the period when accreditation policy simultaneously fulfilled the functions of control (obligatory state accreditation) and voluntary function.

The period between 1992-2003 was the period of establishing accreditation system, when on the basis of international good practice new technologies for collecting information, developing indicators and criteria for state accreditation procedure were developed.

The period between 2004-2009 was characterized by orientation towards the European standards and guidelines, adjusting the performance of educational institutions in accordance with European QA principles, including the establishment of internal quality assurance systems in educational institutions, learning outcomes, openness and transparency of accreditation decisions.

Finally, the period between 2009 and present time is characterized by the division of the functions performed by the state accreditation (the function of control over legislation compliance by HEIs) and the functions performed by voluntary accreditation (trust and excellence).

The last 5-7 years have witnessed new processes connected with the

development and introduction of new voluntary evaluation models of education quality system, and also structural changes in higher education.

First, the scope of higher professional education decreased due to the demographic crisis and new educational policy. We can observe the optimization processes of HEIs' network counting 900 HEIs.

Second, new categories of HEIs have been added to the structure of higher education: Federal Universities and National Research Universities which have been assigned a special mission of becoming a driving force of higher education development in modern Russia. They are expected to develop best practices and models in the spheres of management, methodology and content of educational process and research, to search for most effective ways of integration into the global educational area.

Third, the number of educational programmes which are delivered by HEIs is estimated as 25,000. Two-cycle system is being actively embedded in HEIs.

2012 was the pivotal moment in the state policy which was characterized by fundamental changes in the context of accreditation policy. Thus, it became the point in legal formalizing of several forms of voluntary accreditation, defining the requirements to organizations which are authorized to conduct such an accreditation. Russia is one of the countries where there is a distinct severing between an obligatory

form of accreditation (state accreditation) and voluntary forms (public accreditation and professional and public accreditation). This the context in which voluntary accreditation has proved itself to be an important though initial alternative to government regulation.

State accreditation, which is obligatory for all HEIs, is conducted by the state educational governing body and aims at the recognition of the quality of higher education as corresponding to the Federal State Educational Standards (FSSES). State-accredited HEIs are entitled to award diplomas. Besides the state accreditation status provides certain other rights and benefits that are of vital importance to the private sector, allowing non-state institutions to operate on equal terms with state HEIs. All the procedures and decisions depend on the state body and accreditation status is granted for 6 years.

The Federal Act „On Higher Education in the Russian Federation” of December 29, 2012 served as the impetus for clarifying voluntary forms of accreditation.

Public accreditation of educational institutions in Russia is conducted by non-governmental organizations. Those can be Russian, foreign or international organizations. The procedure of public accreditation, ways and methods of evaluation and also rights given to the accredited educational institution is set by the public organization itself.

Professional and public accreditation of educational programmes is provided by organizations established by public (non-governmental) bodies, professional associations and unions. Procedure, ways and methods of evaluation and also rights granted to the educational institutions offering the accredited educational programmes are set by the employers, the association of employers or by organizations which are authorized by them to execute this accreditation.

On the one hand, voluntary accreditation does not award higher educational institutions with the rights and privileges granted by state accreditation, but on the other hand it takes into account a higher level of expectations that public organizations and employers have and which contributes to the prestige of accredited programmes, their attractiveness for prospective students, as well as to their relevance from the perspective of employers. Voluntary accreditation is conducted by independent quality assurance agencies and, thus, is not influenced by the governmental educational authorities. Besides, the outcomes of public accreditation may be considered in the state accreditation procedures.

Voluntary accreditation does not duplicate state accreditation procedures and standards. Professional and public associations are eligible to establish their own standards for evaluation of educational programmes. Russian accreditation agencies develop

their standards and criteria on the basis of the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG – ENQA), as well as US standards (for example, the standards of the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology (ABET) for accreditation of engineering programmes) etc. This tendency is determined by Russia's involvement in broad European and global integration processes with the aim to harmonize the Russian higher education system with those of the other global quality assurance area to apply common principles relating to the content and structure of the educational process in HEIs, and, as a result, to use common standards for quality assurance in higher education.

Currently prospective students, employers and academic community, both within Russia and beyond, need impartial information on the quality of educational programmes in addition to the data relating to HEIs as a whole. Russia succeeded in launching a unique project „The Best Educational Programmes in Russia” focusing on recognition of educational programmes both by academic community, as well as by scientific, student, employer and government bodies.

The project has been implemented for the last four years by the National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA), the Guild of Experts in Education and the journal Accreditation in Education. It fulfills the functions of enhancement of higher education

system and has real results in the form of the reference book which is available to general public and published in electronic format both in Russian and English. One of the main objectives of the project is to identify the programmes which are recognized by the academic and professional communities as the most trustworthy and can therefore be recommended for employers, applicants and their parents.

The project makes use of the methodology of the on-line survey of academic and professional staff to evaluate the quality of programmes. The Internet-survey technology allows executing on-line large-spectrum sociologic surveys in the field of quality evaluation of the educational programmes in Russia.

The experts choose the most relevant indicators out of the recommended set according to which they identify excellent educational programmes. For this purpose the system of indices, which consists of 10 indicators, was developed. The system was designed with the help of certified experts and using the ‘Salmi formula’. The indicators were united into three criteria:

1. Concentration of talents: selection of the best school-leavers; prominent students' achievements; prominent scientists; successful graduates.
2. Sufficiency of resources: effective academic infrastructure (libraries, laboratories), excellent infrastructure of service, consistent efficient budgeting (state budgeting, grants).

3. Effective management: strong team of managers, effective organization of academic process, continuous perfection and demand for the study programme.

In 2014 the new criteria «achievements» was added for the expert vote, which allowed evaluating the level of educational activity in the delivery of each programme more thoroughly. It was suggested supplementing the survey of experts with the analysis of actual measurable achievements of educational programmes. As an illustration of such achievements there can be identified the results of the Unified State Exam and Federal Internet-Exam, the results of students' participation in international and national olympiads, personal grants, etc.

The results of the first two surveys showed that evaluation of quality of educational programmes was extremely demanded and involved more than 4000 independent respondents. The third survey 2012-2013 identified 2496 educational programmes, delivered by the HEIs, out of 36767 educational programmes as outstanding (6.8%). According to 2014 project results, 10 per cent of the programmes were recognized as the best. Each year the project gain more and more supporters and participants who actively express their opinions on the quality of educational programmes. So annually respondents choose from 6 to 10 per cent of programmes and these results are of a great significance for applicants and their parents. These are the

major groups who need information on the best programmes both nationwide and in particular regions of Russia to make a decision to enter the university. Besides, the results of the project are used by general public, including governing bodies and accreditation agencies.

Transparency of the survey results establishes credibility of the HEIs, serves as a stimulating mechanism for development of academic activity, assures positive social image of HEIs which deliver excellent educational programmes. It is the multifaceted in-depth programme evaluation based on the use of expert opinion that constitutes the primary focus of public accreditation.

The results of the project are directly used by the National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA). Educational programmes, which are recognized by professional, academic and scientific community, can apply for NCPA accreditation.

The National Centre for Public Accreditation (NCPA) was established in 2009. Since that time 251 educational programmes have undergone accreditation. 282 experts took part in external reviews of the educational programmes, including 101 foreign experts from 20 countries, 77 representatives of the academic society, 52 representatives of employers and 52 students.

Evaluations during the public accreditation procedures and the project results together provide the

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general public with sufficient and relevant information about the effectiveness of reviewed programmes, which makes public accreditation highly relevant to present day Russia.

There are many ways to use voluntary accreditation results in Russia. One of the options is ranking compiling. Ranking lists of accredited educational programmes and educational institutions can be compiled by employers or institutions, authorized by them.

As mentioned earlier, one of the priorities of the development of the national higher education system, particularly the area of federal and national research universities, is their placement in the world rankings and accreditation of their educational programmes by recognized foreign quality assurance agencies. Thus a set of legislative initiatives have been highlighted in Russia. The launch of 5/100 project focusing on appearing of five Russian universities in the global top 100 by the year 2020 made the topic of rankings as relevant as ever.

Importance of higher education for the global competitiveness of the national economics determines close attention to the questions of higher education quality which leads to a large use of world and national university rankings as instruments of information transparency.

Academic rankings serve numerous purposes. They satisfy consumers' demand for easy-to-read information about the image of HEIs, encourage competition between the HEIs, serve

as a logic reason for distribution of financial resources in the higher education sector and differentiate educational institutions and educational programmes.

Many countries (Germany, Great Britain, USA, Japan, China, Spain and others) have big experience in the development of university rankings. International practices of ranking development are undoubtedly of great interest for Russia.

In 2013, in the perspective to contribute and improve the competitiveness of Russian HEIs, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation initiated the project of the national ranking of leading world and Russian universities. Development of the national ranking version is considered to be one of important tools enabling five Russian universities to enter top-100 in World University Ranking by 2020. According to the project plan it is planned to develop the methodology of comparative assessment of national and world HEIs activities, methodology of ranking development, interaction mechanisms with foreign universities and experts, expert councils for assessment of reputation characteristics, ranking promotion campaign, etc.

The important question that has to be put when developing the national ranking is how to provide correlation of criteria of the national ranking with international ones, work out the methodology of comparative assessment of HEIs' performance, consideration of

valid statistical data and expert assessment, etc.

Comparative analysis of different accreditation forms and rankings on the basis of certain parameters such as function, form, engaging stakeholders to the procedure, methodology and decision is represented below.

Currently different stakeholder groups, from high-ranking state officials to employers, are showing considerable interest in the development of voluntary accreditation in Russia.

The question of recognizing the results of voluntary accreditation and other significant results such as

ranking lists, Federal exam's results, Olympiads and etc. is still relevant and open with respect to the accreditation system in Russia. Especially when speaking about the balance between accountability and enhancement in accreditation system the important issue is how to combine both obligatory and voluntary forms of accreditation, the accountability and improvement functions in one national quality assurance scheme.

Over the past twenty years accreditation policy has undergone important changes. Accreditation system of Russia is relatively young in comparison

Table 1: Comparative analysis of accreditation forms and ranking in Russia

QA instruments/ comparative parameters	State accreditation	Public accreditation	Professional and public accreditation	Ranking
Function	accountability	enhancement	enhancement	improvement
Form	compulsory	voluntary	voluntary	voluntary
Object of evaluation	educational programmes	HEIs	educational programmes	HEIs
Stakeholders	governing bodies	non- governmental organizations	non-governmental organizations, professional associations and unions	different referent groups: employers, students, alumni, academic society, etc.
Methodology	document analysis mainly, site-visit	external review, site-visit	external review, site-visit	indicator or factor analysis on the basis of open information

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with other systems but has specific features which reflect national quality assurance system. As mentioned earlier, the need for introduction of voluntary forms of accreditation was specified quite recently due to the major structural reforms initiated.

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MOTOVA, G. N.; PYKKO, R. *Russian Higher Education and European Standards of Quality Assurance. European Journal of Education: Special Issue: Russian Higher Education and the Post-Soviet Transition*, 2012, 47, 1, s. 25–36.

9. ročník konference Quality Assurance Forum: Changing education? QA and the shift from teaching to learning

Barcelona, 13. 11. 2014

V polovině listopadu proběhla v Barceloně konference o kvalitě vysokoškolského vzdělávání s názvem *Quality Assurance Forum: Changing education*, která se zaměřila na proměnu

MATVEEVA, O. A. The concept of excellence in assessment system of higher education quality: theoretical and practical aspects. *Kazan Pedagogical Journal*, 2014, 105, 4, s. 118-127

NAVODOV, V. G.; MOTOVA, G.N.; MATVEEVA, O. A.; RYZHAKOVA, O. E. "Best educational programs of innovative Russia" as a system of educational programs monitoring. *Vestnik of Volga State University of Technology, Series Economics and Management*, 2014, 22, 3, s. 15–30.

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vzdělávání a posun směrem od *teaching k learning* (viz níže). Konferenci pořádala Evropská asociace univerzit (*European University Association*), jejíž náplní je spolupráce evropských univerzit ve prospěch rozvoje vysokoškolského vzdělávání v Evropě. Cílem konference bylo reflektovat dosavadní vývoj v Evropě v oblasti zajišťování a rozvíjení kvality vzdělávání (*quality assurance, quality enhancement*) a poskytnout vysokoškolské komunitě platformu k rozvíjení evropského