

Development of quality assurance in the higher education in Russia in the context of globalization

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The article analyzes the specificity and tendencies of development of system of quality assurance of higher education in the Russian Federation. Authors discuss challenging issues of development of public and professional accreditation system and independent assessment of the quality of education in the context of integration into the global educational space, the distinctive features of the Russian system of quality assurance.

Currently, the Russian educational system is focused on implementation of both internal and external mechanisms to evaluate the quality of education. The challenge is to diversify these mechanisms and ensure their complementarity. The vector of development of quality assurance in Russia as a whole complies with European standards and guidelines. In addition to state assessment mechanisms for independent evaluation and public accreditation are being developed. Given the specificity of the Russian educational space, the process of full integration into the global educational system will take 5-10 years.

Keywords: Accreditation, independent evaluation, quality of education

Introduction

Currently the education system of the Russian Federation is undergoing a radical restructuring in terms of integration into the Bologna process, adoption of a new law on education, introduction of new Federal state educational standards. Entered into force in the September 2013, the Federal law No.273-FL “On Education in the Russian Federation” of 29/12/2012, has significantly expanded the requirements for the quality assurance of education, has established principles for an independent assessment of the quality of education, structured levels of the education system and the Federal state educational standards.

Qualification system of higher education

The Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” introduced the multilevel system of training of specialists with higher education and set the following levels of higher education:

- Higher education - Bachelor’s level;
- Higher education - Specialist’s and Master’s levels;
- Higher education - Training of highly qualified staff.

Training of specialists with higher education involves the implementation of multilevel training focused on the “lifelong learning” principle. The education system is targeted to meeting the needs of every citizen in enhancing his educational level in the process of professional growth. A typical learning path is realized by the scheme “Bachelor - Master - Training of highly qualified staff”.

In some areas (e.g., in the sphere of Healthcare, Weapons and Military Equipment, etc.) there is no level of basic higher education (Bachelor) and training is conducted by the scheme “Specialist - Training of highly qualified staff.”

Each level of higher education provides an opportunity to receive a diploma of higher education characterized by granting different qualifications and the right for professional activity within the competencies defined by an educational standard.

The structure of higher education in Russia

Until 2013, the legislation identified the following types of educational institutions of higher education - institute, academy, university, and one of the objectives of state accreditation was to establish the type of each HEI. The Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” abolished this accreditation procedure and introduced a new structure for categorizing HEIs.

Currently, the law distinguishes a few institutions with a special status, they are:

- Lomonosov Moscow State University, St. Petersburg State University;
- Federal universities - 10 universities ;
- National research universities - 29 universities ;
- Federal state educational organizations of higher education which are included in the separate list of the President of the Russian Federation, who approve their own educational standards - 5 universities.

The purpose of introducing new categories of universities is the development of the higher education system, strengthening the links of higher education institutions to the economy and social sphere of federal districts (for federal universities), focus on the organization of the effective learning process, integration of education with scientific research (for national research universities). All these HEIs have the right to deliver educational programs of higher education according to the educational standards developed independently. Other universities offer educational programs in accordance with the federal state educational standards of higher education.

As of January 2014 there are 1179 educational institutions delivering programs of higher education in the Russian Federation. Among them are:

- State HEIs - 648;
- Municipal HEIs - 11
- Private HEIs - 520.

It should be noted that there are almost one thousand and five hundred branches of state (949) and private (533) HEIs.

However, despite the fact that about 40% of the institutions belong to the private sector, only 14.5% of the total number of students study there. In 2008, private institutions enrolled 17.2% of students.

Federal State Educational Standards of higher education

In the Russian Federation the requirements for the realization of all higher education programs - Bachelor’s programs, specialists’ programs, Master’s programs, programs for training highly qualified staff (post-graduate (graduate military course), clinical studies, assistantship-internship) are defined at the state

level. These requirements are established by the federal state educational standards (FSES). FSES are established for the programs of Bachelor, Specialist, Master and for the programs of training of highly qualified staff.

FSES include the requirements for the:

1. Structure of educational programs - requirements for the scope of parts of an educational program, the ratio of the compulsory part of the educational program, established by the state, and the field-oriented part established by HEIs;
2. Conditions of educational programs' delivery (personnel, financial, logistical and other conditions);
3. Outcomes to be obtained upon the completion of educational programs.

Leading universities, representatives of the academic community, employers are involved in developing FSES. Their work is coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.

Integrated groups of professions, specialties and fields of training

Federal state educational standards of professional education are developed with reference to professions, specialties and fields of training according to the appropriate levels of professional education.

List of specialties and fields of training, indicating qualifications awarded upon the acquisition of an educational program are approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.

Currently, this list includes:

- 179 fields of training of higher education - Bachelor's programs;
- 181 fields of training of higher education - Master's programs;
- 96 specialties of higher education - Specialist programs;
- 190 fields of training of highly qualified staff.

Fields of training and specialties relating to a broad subject area, are grouped into so-called "integrated groups of professions, specialties and fields of training" (hereinafter IGS, e.g., "Natural Sciences", "Automatics and Operation", "The Humanities", etc.). Until 2013, classification of specialties and fields of training, included 29 IGS, today 55 IGS are distinguished.

The system of quality assurance in Russia

The structure of the quality assurance system for HEIs in Russia is defined by the Federal Law of the Russian Federation "On Education in the Russian Federation". For the purpose of the education quality assurance the following mechanisms are used:

- Licensing of educational activity;
- State accreditation of educational activity;
- State control (supervision) in the sphere of education;
- Independent evaluation of the education quality;
- Public accreditation of organizations engaged in educational activity;
- Professional public accreditation of educational programs;

- Self-evaluation of an educational organization.

Characteristics of these mechanisms are given in Table 1, their interrelation - in the Figure 2.

Introduction of the new Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” entailed significant changes in quality assurance of higher education in general and in the procedure of state accreditation of HEIs in particular. These changes include:

- Transition from institutional accreditation of HEIs to accreditation of educational programs by IGS with regard to the level of education (Bachelor, Master, specialist, postgraduate);
- Enhancing the role of employers and the public in quality assurance mechanisms through the development of professional public and public accreditation and the use of their outcomes in state accreditation;
- Increasing the transparency of information about the quality of HEIs’ activity through annual self-evaluation reports published on official web-sites.

External quality assurance procedures used by the National Accreditation Agency

The main external quality assurance procedure used for evaluation of higher education institutions in the Russian Federation is state accreditation.

State accreditation of HEIs is aimed at the establishment of the compliance of the content and quality of students’ training with the requirements of the federal state educational standards (mandatory requirements for educational programs’ delivery, namely to their structure, conditions and acquisition results).

The National Accreditation Agency (NAA) is one of the primary organizations participating in the procedure of state accreditation of HEIs in Russia.

Under the Russian legislation the state accreditation of HEIs is conducted by the Federal Service of Supervision in Education and Science (Rosobrnadzor) - the federal executive power body. One can distinguish several stages in the procedure of external evaluation of higher education institutions.

Development of the state accreditation indicators

The indicators of state accreditation of educational institutions’ activity are developed by NAA and are subject to the agreement with the federal executive body - Rosobrnadzor. The set of indicators is accompanied by a methodological manual designed to support the work of experts. The indicators should be clearly linked to the requirements of the federal state educational standards and be updated if necessary with regard to the development of the education system of the Russian Federation.

The accreditation indicators are common for all higher education institutions of Russia, regardless of their location, founder and legal status.

Self-evaluation of a HEI

Self-evaluation is an independent activity performed by an organization to verify its work and for its own benefit. The main objective of self-evaluation is to ensure the efficiency of all activities at all levels of management. Self-evaluation of an educational organization is aimed at the periodic evaluation of the system of HEIs’

internal quality assurance and precedes the external review procedure of the educational organization.

A self-evaluation report is published annually on the web-site of the educational organization for information of the general public including the results of self-evaluation. The structure of the self-evaluation report is approved by the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation.

The list of indicators that are subject to self-evaluation is formed so that to allow for focusing on the main elements of the educational organization's activity and determining its strengths and weaknesses. Based on the self-evaluation results educational organizations can provide short-term and long-term planning of their activities.

Self-evaluation results are taken into account when conducting external review. Annual performance of the self-evaluation procedures will allow assessing the dynamics of the changes in the activities of an educational organization.

External review of a HEI (a site visit by an expert panel)

External review of a HEI is conducted by a panel of experts, the composition and the head of which is approved by the order of Rosobrnadzor. The expert panel visiting the HEI includes the necessary number of experts depending on the complexity of the conducted review. The head of the expert panel is selected from the list of experts included in the register of certified experts. The duration of a site visit, as a rule, is 5 days.

In accordance with the requirements of the Law "On Education in the Russian Federation" the external review is conducted by experts who have passed a formal procedure for recognizing the competence (certification of experts). All the information on certified experts is included in the database of experts, which is used when nominating expert panel members.

The expert panel always comprises specialists in each educational program undergoing evaluation.

The review of a HEI during its accreditation is conducted in the following areas:

- Organizational and legal provision of the education process and the system of management;
- Structure of students' training;
- Content of education and training (structure and content of educational programs, information and methodological support of the education process, the organization of the education process);
- Quality of specialists' training (level of training, final certification of graduates, the HEI's internal quality assurance system and its effectiveness);
- Conditions of the delivery of educational programs (teaching staff, research work, facilities and equipment (including classrooms, laboratories), international activity).

The main subject-matter of the external review is to evaluate the education process, and to make sure that the content and quality of graduates' training meet the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standards.

The evaluation of correspondence of the content of graduates' training to the requirements of the federal state educational standards is conducted by way of

comparing the working curricular of educational programs with the federal state educational standards.

The analysis of the correspondence of the quality of graduates' training to the requirements of the federal state educational standards is based on the assessment of individual achievements of students and graduates, review of the fund of assessment tools of the educational organization, assessment of student learning outcomes with the help of the assessment tools used by the educational organization (in case the fund of assessment tools of the educational organization is recognized as satisfactory in the course of its review) and/or students' surveys.

Each expert prepares a report on the outcomes of the review of the educational programs assigned to him. The head of the expert panel generates a conclusion according to the external review outcomes.

The conclusion of the external review is handed in to NAA for its analysis, and then to Rosobrnadzor. Rosobrnadzor sends a copy of the conclusion to the educational organization for information as well as publishes its electronic copy on its website in the Internet for informing the general public.

The HEI studies the results of the external review and can comment on their content. The HEI has the right to withdraw its application for state accreditation at any stage of the process before an accreditation decision is made.

In accordance with the legislation a HEI is entitled to apply for re-accreditation not earlier than a year after it was refused of state accreditation.

Preparation of the HEI's documents for the Accreditation Board meeting

NAA summarizes all the received information about the HEI (conclusions and external experts' reports, the outcomes of external review, the results of questionnaires and surveys of students and employees of the educational organization) and prepares in a concise and compact form the analytical materials which present *the HEI's performance results*, the results of external review and allow for making a reasonable decision. Their form makes it possible to ensure the transparency, clearness and accountability of the decision making procedure.

Making a decision on the state accreditation of a HEI

A decision on the state accreditation of a HEI is made at the Accreditation Board meeting. The Accreditation Board (commission) is a deliberative body attached to the Federal Service of Supervision in Education and Science. Members of the Board are representatives of education management bodies, of HEIs, and employers. In line with international practice the Accreditation Board also includes representatives of student organizations.

Endorsement of the accreditation decision and awarding the State Accreditation Certificate

The decision on accreditation of the HEI is endorsed by the order of Rosobrnadzor, which is published on the website of Rosobrnadzor. The annex to the order contains a list of accredited professional education levels with reference to each integrated group of professions, specialties and fields of training the basic professional educational programs declared for state accreditation relate to.

On the basis of the order NAA prepares layout sheets of state accreditation certificates awarded to HEIs. The information about the certificates is entered in the Register.

Conclusion

Currently, the Russian educational system is focused on implementation of both internal and external mechanisms to evaluate the quality of education. The challenge is to diversify these mechanisms and ensure their complementarity.

The vector of development of quality assurance in Russia as a whole complies with European standards and guidelines. In addition to state assessment mechanisms for independent evaluation and public accreditation are being developed.

Given the specificity of the Russian educational space, the process of full integration into the global educational system will take 5-10 years.

References

Federal law No. 273-FL “On education in the Russian Federation” of 29/12/2012

Appendix

TABLE 1. QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

NAME	AUTHORIZED ORGANIZATIONS	SHORT DESCRIPTION	OUTCOME
Licensing of educational activity	Federal Service of Supervision in Education and Science	Determination of the compliance of the educational process conditions offered by an educational institution with the state requirements (availability of classrooms, equipment, textbooks, educational qualifications of the faculty and other conditions for implementing educational programs indicated in the Annex to the activities). In case such compliance is confirmed the educational institution shall receive a license to carry out educational activity. The annex to the license specifies a list of educational programs the institution may deliver. The license is valid: indefinitely. An inspection control over the fulfillment of license regulations shall be periodically carried out.	Granting a license (permission) for carrying out educational activity. The license gives a right to carry out educational activity on educational programs indicated in the Annex to the license.
State accreditation of educational activity	Federal Service of Supervision in Education and Science	Confirmation of the compliance of the educational activity on basic educational programs delivered by an HEI with the federal state educational standards. Based on the results of the external review conducted by independent experts.	If a positive decision on state accreditation is made a HEI receives a state accreditation certificate with the application indicating a list of accredited IGS and levels of education. State accreditation certificate is issued for a period of 6 years. State accreditation certificate shall confirm the right of a HEI for issuing its graduates state format documents on the appropriate level of education and make a claim for receiving budgetary funds for students' training.
	Accreditation Board (commission) of Rosobrnadzor	Making a decision on granting state accreditation / refusal of state accreditation based on the review of information and analytical materials prepared upon the results of external review.	
	National accreditation agency	Organizational, technical, information and analytical support of the state accreditation procedure.	
	Expert panels	Temporarily created structures performing external evaluation of HEIs' activities.	
	Commissions of federal districts on quality evaluation of higher education	Commissions on quality evaluation of higher education have been created since 2014 in each of the eight federal districts of Russia. Commissions are composed of the heads of higher education institutions of the federal district, representatives of employers' associations, leaders of student organizations, representatives of federal and regional state authorities. The main task of the Commission is the monitoring of HEIs and district branches, as well as the performance analysis of higher education institutions involved in licensing and accreditation.	

State control (supervision) in the sphere of education	Federal Service of Supervision in Education and Science	State control (supervision) in the sphere of education includes the federal government control over the quality of education and federal government supervision in the citizens' rights in the sphere of education. The federal government control over Rosobrnadzor performs scheduled and the quality of education is understood as the activity unscheduled regulatory and supervisory focused on evaluating the compliance of educational inspections of organizations carrying out activities and training of students on state-accredited educational activities aimed at ensuring educational programs with the requirements of federal the rights of citizens for education. In state educational standards by way of organizing and case of violations of legislation in the conducting inspections of the education quality. The sphere of education, educational federal government supervision in the sphere of education organizations are issued the instruction to is the activity aimed at the prevention, detection and rectify discovered violations. suppression of violations by HEIs of the requirements of the legislation on education by way of organizing and conducting audits of organizations. Frequency of state control (supervision) in the sphere of education shall not be more than once every 3 years.	Ensuring the compliance with the requirements guaranteeing the citizens' rights in the sphere of education. Rosobrnadzor performs scheduled and unscheduled regulatory and supervisory activities aimed at ensuring educational programs with the requirements of federal the rights of citizens for education. In state educational standards by way of organizing and case of violations of legislation in the conducting inspections of the education quality. The sphere of education, educational federal government supervision in the sphere of education organizations are issued the instruction to is the activity aimed at the prevention, detection and rectify discovered violations. suppression of violations by HEIs of the requirements of the legislation on education by way of organizing and conducting audits of organizations. Frequency of state control (supervision) in the sphere of education shall not be more than once every 3 years.
Public accreditation of organizations engaged in educational activity	Russian, foreign and international organizations	Recognition of the level of a HEI's activity as compliant with the relevant criteria and requirements of the Russian, foreign and international organizations. The procedure of public accreditation, evaluation forms and methods applied during this accreditation, as well as the rights granted to an accredited organization are established by an organization carrying out public accreditation.	Gaining by a HEI of public recognition, special rights established by an accredited organization. The outcomes are considered during state accreditation.
Professional accreditation of educational programs	Employers and their associations as well as their authorized organizations	Recognition of the quality and level of training of graduates who have mastered an educational program delivered by a HEI as compliant with the requirements of professional standards, labor market requirements for specialists, workers and employees of the corresponding specialization. The procedure of professional public accreditation of professional educational programs, forms and methods of assessment during this type of accreditation, as well as the rights granted to an educational organization delivering accredited professional educational programs, and (or) to graduates who have mastered such educational programs are established by an employer, employers' association or their authorized organization that conduct such accreditation.	Educational program being recognized by employers. The outcomes are considered during state accreditation.
Self-evaluation	HEIs	Self-evaluation is conducted in order to ensure the availability and transparency of the information about a HEI's activity. Self-evaluation is annually conducted by an educational organization as on the 1st of April of the current year. The self-evaluation process includes the evaluation of control (supervision) in the sphere of educational activities, organization's management system, education content and quality of students' training, organization of the educational process, graduates' being in demand, the quality of personnel, teaching, library and information support, logistics, internal education quality assurance system, as well as the analysis of the performance indicators of the organization subjected to self-evaluation. Self-evaluation report shall be published on the website of a HEI till April 20 of the current year.	A self-evaluation report is prepared and published on the web-site of a HEI till April 20 of the current year. Self-evaluation report is used when conducting state accreditation and state self-evaluation process includes the evaluation of control (supervision) in the sphere of educational activities, organization's management system, education content and quality of students' training, organization of the educational process, graduates' being in demand, the quality of personnel, teaching, library and information support, logistics, internal education quality assurance system, as well as the analysis of the performance indicators of the organization subjected to self-evaluation. Self-evaluation report shall be published on the website of a HEI till April 20 of the current year.