

QUALITY ASSURANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION: NATIONAL TRENDS OF DEVELOPMENT AND ACCREDITATION IN KAZAKHSTAN

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The article deals with current trends of development of quality issues in higher education. Due to the introduction of latest educational strategies in Kazakhstan higher educational institutions have to develop its quality assurance and develop change management systems in order to know how to cope with reforms. Accreditation is considered as one of the most effective tools for measuring quality. Accreditation criteria and requirements can be taken for creation systems for building internal quality system. Current educational standards have to be replaced by national quality standards.

Keywords: international developments, change management, quality assurance, accreditation, quality standards

Recent international developments, including entering of Kazakhstan into international educational space determine the aims and main emphasis for higher education policy due to new challenges. The introduction of a market economy is a precondition for reconsidering the content of higher education. Curricula and their content have to be reviewed from the perspective of best world practice, strengths, weaknesses of research, compared to institutions worldwide, are to be analyzed, and the necessary strategies for an increasingly intensive completion are to be created.

It is a predominant task for institutions of higher education to develop, in accordance with their respective responsibilities, the necessary measures so as to ensure and improve the quality of research and academic teaching.

The educational market has dramatically changed and requirements to the quality of graduates have been increased so that the job market requires very well trained graduates in specialized professional areas, and the market itself in its turn have become very integrated.

So these problems and their solutions require development of quality standards applying to issues of scope, structure and contents in the areas of educational programs, training and research. It has to bring about decisions on the key parameters for contemporary policies of higher educational institutions aimed at improvement and development of its quality.

Strategic policy

Currently, the education system of our country, as well as in the whole world, actualized the issue of quality of education. Quality is traditionally perceived as an abstract category (currently there are over 2,000 definitions of quality), but the current policy of education, particularly educational strategies of different

education systems of the world are trying to determine a practical *mechanism* for achieving quality, identify *methods* for measuring the quality and use of specific *tools* of measuring quality of education.

Change is an ever-present feature of organizational life, both at the operational and strategic level. Therefore, in any organization it is important to know how to manage the changes required. Change management as defined by Moran and Brightman [4] is the “process of continually renewing an organization’s direction, structure, and capabilities to serve the ever-changing needs of external and internal customers”. In the Message of President N. Nazarbayev to the People of Kazakhstan “[1], the state has been formulated strategic objective, which must continue to modernize the system of education and ensure qualitative growth of human capital in Kazakhstan, train specialists of a new generation, with modern thinking corresponding to the relevant requirements of a labor market [2].

The analysis of international practice shows that every HEI is doing diverse and extensive work on QA around the world. In general, the world practices put a student at the center and students’ survey is considered as the key factor in university development. Most of Western universities have strong relationships with employers that can also provide information on quality of graduates. It is also important to note the role of each teacher who is looking for ways to self-improvement of quality of courses, introduction of new innovative strategies in teaching. Universities of the world take educational programs through evaluation of professional associations, where the university receives recognition on the quality of programs and gets feedback on the quality of graduates from employers.

Evaluation and internal monitoring processes are vital to the ongoing improvement of the education provided by institutions. The best way to ensure quality is to develop a system of internal quality control and external assessment by peers. Improper management of the change process can cause resistance to innovative assessment practices. To minimize this occurrence, evaluation and monitoring of the change process is essential [3].

Quality through accreditation

While taking educational programs through accreditation, components, organizational processes and institutional elements may affect the quality of educational programs. From this perspective, the quality of higher education institution with all its components and activities, representing a very complex process depends on the actors involved and the stakeholders in the educational program. The contribution of each member within the institution and the external environment also determines the quality, where the quality of results of the educational process can also be measured by successful achievement of graduates after they join the professional environment.

Thus, the accreditation assessment, as the effective tool for measuring quality, defines the logics and effectiveness of the educational process, starting from the formation of its tasks, the implementation of these tasks, which play an important role in the accreditation, including its strategic objectives, priorities and degree of integration of the results into the society.

The very process of preparing for accreditation effectively helps to analyze the university, to carry out an internal self-assessment in accordance with the requirements for assessing the quality of educational programs. This practice has an effective influence on the critical review of existing educational programs of the University and provides an opportunity for dramatic qualitative changes and to improve compliance with current requirements of HEIs.

Accreditation in the field of education is used to *recognize and validate the quality of* educational programs, as a tool to measure the quality.

It should be understood that accreditation is not rating. This is a tool that makes it possible to measure quality and assess for evidence of programs quality that meet required standards, which are set by associative professional bodies, composed of representatives from academic and professional institutions.

At present, the need for accreditation of educational programs and institutional assessment in international agencies justified by the fact that Kazakhstan's higher education institutions must meet the quality standards set by international *professional* societies. This makes it possible to provide quality in accordance with the requirements of the labor market.

To do this, universities need to establish close links with industry. Curriculum should be developed in conjunction with professionals from industry.

In order to develop a system that ensures quality assurance, it is necessary to develop culture of *quality* that involves active participation of all professionals from academic community in quality, critically perceive self-esteem, responsibility for the quality of professionals at every level and sector, providing objective feedback ties and reactions, desire to share good practice and improvement of management of the whole process of university activities. Kazakhstan's education strategy is trying to adequately respond to modern challenges in education by taking universities through international accreditation.

In the process of accreditation higher educational institutions of Kazakhstan, on the example of international practice study in detail the operation of quality assurance systems for various HEIs where the system of internal and external evaluation of educational programs makes it possible to recognize the quality of the university. Analysis of international experience in quality and requirements for accreditation give the university an opportunity to critically examine and review degree programs and use them to update and upgrade, and thus improve the system of training in general. There are number of ongoing projects related to quality assurance and accreditation within Tempus as DOQUP [6] and CANQA [7] that may effectively help to enhance quality and international recognition of HEIs of Kazakhstan on global level.

The accreditation assessment conducted by agencies is not an *inspection*, but it *assists in improving the quality of* university programs or activities institutionally. Accreditation or recognition of quality of educational programs or institutional evaluation requires *quality assurance, support and development systems*.

The concept of quality assurance in higher education may be the scientific and theoretical, methodological vision, defining goals and objectives, structure, content

and key strategic tools of its development as one of the key components to improve the quality of education.

The concept involves the transformation of not only quality education, but also develop a system for monitoring and improving quality through critical analysis and recommendations for further improvement. The purpose is to give flexibility and adaptability of the learning process and methods for assessing the quality of students' knowledge in accordance with the requirements of the labor market, bringing the training system in line with the direction and dynamics of social and professional activities of the future specialist.

Conclusion

In world practice, the system of quality assurance includes the assessment of university management, quality of each educational programs in accordance with the requirements of the market, each teacher has their own search for ways to improve the program, defines innovative teaching strategies. Quality of education also requires creation of new quality control system where the teacher and the student would have been an active part of the system.

Kazakhstan is still following *state overall educational standards*. Due to the change

of the market, these standards have to be changed to the next phase of its development, and therefore it is recommended to introduce *standards of quality*. The challenges of modern higher education institutions require adequate reaction, which, above all, is defined by the labor market. Universities should create a modernized model of training, study international practice and introduce modern technologies of quality.

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