

QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR JOINT EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

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Abstract. The article studies the development of quality assurance systems for joint educational programs on the example of ten leading universities in Russia (with the status of a federal university) and a similar number of European universities. The content-analysis showed the degree of use of European standards ESG in universities, as well as the practical application of various quality assurance tools.

Keywords: joint educational programs, quality assurance system, ESG ENQA standards and recommendations.

INTRODUCTION

Joint educational programs as part of transnational higher education began to develop rapidly since the 1980s. XX century based on the increased mobility of students and teachers, the growth in the number of higher educational institutions and educational programs at different levels, the development of new forms and technologies for the implementation of educational services (opening foreign campuses, the introduction of distance and e-learning, etc.). Note that the main driver of the development of transnational higher education in general, and joint programs in particular, is the massiveization of higher education and the development of a distance format for receiving educational services. Thus, the admission of students to higher education institutions at the global level in 2000 was 97 million people, and in 2025, according to forecasts, it will reach 263 million people.

Since the mid-90s of the twentieth century. higher education is included in the framework of the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS). In this context, transnational education has become a commercial product that increases international trade in educational services.

Along with this, cross-border education has come to be seen as a tool for finding talent around the world. In the scientific works of European scientists, it is noted that increasing the mobility of students and graduates of universities in the European Union is considered as an important factor in strengthening the highly intellectual labor market in the context of the development of a knowledge-based economy. The scientific literature substantiates the thesis that global competition for talents is becoming the most important condition for the development of

human potential in the country. And student mobility is one of the most effective options for attracting talent. At the institutional level, attracting foreign students helps to improve the quality of higher education at universities and the level of research in PhD programs.

The theoretical background of the research presents a various range of foreign and Russian researchers: Abella, M., Machado Dos Santos S, Stella A., Gu J., Parey M., Waldinger F., Kuptsch C., Pang E., Lepori B., Oleinikova O.N., Starozhuk E.A., Vatolkina N.Sh., Evelyn Chiyevy Garwe, Lovemore Gwati, Harvey L., Cardoso S., Rosa M. J., Stensaker B., e.t.c.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Quality is a dynamic concept that is constantly changing. So, if in the 80-90s of the twentieth century. the focus was on the concepts of "fitness-for-purpose" and "value-for-money", then at the beginning of the XXI century. in connection with the development of the Bologna Process in Europe and the increasing attention to the specific results of higher education, quality is seen as comparability and consistency. In this regard, comparable criteria and methodology for quality assurance (ESG standards and recommendations) have been developed for the participants in the Bologna process.

Scientists S. Cardoso, M. J. Rosa and B. Stensaker proposed three approaches to quality assurance in higher education: 1) quality as culture; 2) quality as conformity; and 3) quality as comparability and sustainability.

Brennan and Shah presented four types of quality assurance in higher education institutions (Table 1).

Table 1. Classification of types of quality assurance in higher education institutions

Type	Focus
Academic quality assurance	Educational program, curricula and disciplines
Managerial quality assurance	Institutional policies, systems and procedures
Pedagogical quality assurance	People skills and competencies
Employment/ output Focused quality Assurance	Outputs, characteristics of graduates, educational outcomes

Teachers play a key role in higher education. They are responsible for the design, implementation and quality assurance of educational programs. Therefore, the opinion of teachers about quality and its provision is very important.

An important result of this study: 80% of joint programs are based on activities implemented within the internal quality assurance systems existing in the partner university (including fixing the results of intermediate certification, feedback from students and alumni); external international quality assurance and accreditation are rarely used.

Different stakeholder groups may have different understandings of the content of education quality. Thus, according to R. Mishra, students can define the quality of education as the quality of

their learning experience, their parents - as the return on investment in education. The university can view quality in terms of compliance with the requirements of educational authorities. Also, graduates, employers and society may have their own ideas about the quality of education.

The modern classification of joint educational programs is presented by Oleinikova O.N. Starozhuk E.A., & Vatolkina N.Sh. suggest integral classification of joint educational programs:

1. The program of two (or more) diplomas is a joint educational program, based on the results of the development of which, each partner university issues a diploma of education.

2. The program of double (joint) diplomas, based on the results of the development of which a single diploma of education is issued on behalf of all partner universities

3. The program of one diploma is a joint educational program, based on the results of the development of which the diploma is issued only by the basic university. May be accompanied by a certificate from partner universities or on behalf of a consortium of universities.

The main characteristics of joint programs are the following seven blocks:

1) the institutional structure of the partnership - from weak interaction to strategic partnership;

2) design and implementation of programs - from fragmented approach to real integrity;

3) student mobility - from one-time visits to structured trajectories;

4) recognition of studies received abroad - from non-recognition or partial to full recognition;

5) types of qualifications and degrees - joint or double diploma, certificate;

6) program management - from individual (isolated) management of a separate program to full integration into institutional arrangements;

7) quality assurance - internal and external subsystems.

The continuous growth in the number of universities and other providers of national and cross-border higher education significantly actualizes the issues of quality assurance.

In order to assess the level of formation of quality assurance systems within the framework of international joint programs of leading Russian universities in comparison with foreign universities, we conducted a study using the content analysis method. The choice of Russian universities is due to the following factors:

- the status of a federal university;

- the presence in the university development program of the task related to the formation (improvement) of the system of ensuring the quality of education;

- availability of international joint programs.

The choice of European universities is due to the following reasons:

- availability of international joint programs.

- entering the TOP-100 according to QS (World University Rankings);

- the priority of tasks related to the formation (improvement) of the education quality assurance system.

The author assessed educational programs posted in the section "Information about the educational organization" on the official websites of Russian universities and sections on the quality of education of foreign universities.

Categories and units of content analysis for universities are allocated in accordance with the key elements of the quality assurance system, on the basis of which the protocol was drawn up (Table 2).

Table 2 - Content analysis classifier

Analysis categories	Analysis units	Account unit
Focus on the implementation of an international joint program (JP)	Availability of JP	+/-
	Link to ESG ENQA standards and guidelines in key university documents	+/-
	Link to document "European Approach for Quality Assurance of Joint Programs" in key documents of the university	+/-
Organizing Quality assurance	Indication of the development of a culture of quality	+/-
	Statement of responsibility (officials) for quality	+/-
	Availability of a specialized structural unit for quality / responsible person	+/-
	Indication of the need to adapt the quality assurance system at the faculty level	+/-
Quality assessment and student engagement	Indication of student participation in quality improvement activities	+/-
	An indication of the systematic nature of quality assurance activities	+/-
	Evaluation of educational programs	+/-
Education quality assurance tools	Rating assessment of students' knowledge	+/-
	Independent assessment of the quality of training of students	+/-
	Case studies of different stakeholder groups	+/-
	Internal audits	+/-
	Professional and public accreditation of educational programs	+/-
	International accreditation of educational programs	+/-

RESEARCH RESULTS AND THEIR DISCUSSION

Content analysis made it possible to establish that the vast majority of federal universities in Russia implement international joint educational programs (8 out of 10 universities), and to one degree or another are guided by the standards and recommendations of ESG ENQA (7 universities). However, the European approach is not mentioned in university documents. A qualitative analysis showed that ESG standards are presented mainly in the context of external accreditation of educational programs.

Unlike European universities, the key documents of the reviewed Russian universities do not explicitly mention the development of a culture of quality and student participation in quality improvement activities. In other words, a technocratic and centralized approach to quality assurance with a low emphasis on “soft” aspects and total involvement in systematic work to improve the quality of education prevails in domestic practice. This is also confirmed by the fact that, on the one hand, the universities have defined responsibility for quality (in 7 universities), there is a specialized unit for quality (in 6 universities) and a review of quality assurance processes at the institutional level is carried out, and on the other hand, in the documents of universities there is no mention of the need to adapt the system at the level of educational units (taking into account the specifics of the program). Five universities evaluate educational programs; the practice of evaluating individual courses is not common. There are no clear criteria for assessing quality in the documents, only general criteria for state accreditation are indicated.

Next, we identified the composition of the collateral instruments. All universities use a rating assessment of knowledge, sociological surveys of students to assess their satisfaction with studying at a university, and professional and public accreditation. International accreditation is also widespread in universities (9 universities). Most universities also use tools for independent assessment of the quality of training of students (7 universities) and sociological surveys of teaching staff to assess their satisfaction with professional activities at the university (6 universities). And alumni polls are less common (3 universities). Four universities operate a certified quality management system and conduct internal audits. One institution uses self-assessment according to the EFQM model.

In educational programs developed taking into account the requirements of the Federal State Educational Standard 3 ++, we identified the following quality assurance tools: systematic survey of employers (10 universities); international quality certification and accreditation with the involvement of professional international associations and agencies (9 universities); conducting a survey of graduates (6 universities); development of a strategy to ensure the quality of graduate training (3 universities); examination of assessment tools by external experts - employers, teachers of related educational fields, specialists in the development and certification of assessment tools (2 universities); monitoring the quality of the implementation of the training program (1 university); use of WorldSkills standards in student certification (2 universities); regular self-examination and comparison with other educational organizations with the involvement of representatives of employers (1 university).

Content analysis conducted for European universities showed the existence of separate quality assurance procedures for international joint programs (8 universities), the use of ESG standards (9 universities) and the European approach (3 universities). Unlike Russian universities,

the key documents of universities mention the need to develop a culture of quality (8 universities) and student participation in activities to improve the quality of education (9 universities). Education quality assurance systems are more decentralized, with documents from eight universities indicating the need to adapt the quality assurance system at the faculty level. An important place is given to the assessment of processes at the institutional level, program and the level of individual courses (9, 10 and 10 universities, respectively). Most universities have clear criteria for assessing quality (8 universities). The universities surveyed use a wide range of quality assurance tools: a survey of students, including foreign students, teachers, employers and graduates (10 universities); self-assessment (10 universities); international accreditation (10 universities); external review (10 universities), etc. British and Belgian universities use External Examiners (3 universities).

CONCLUSION

The comparative analysis showed that universities in the framework of international joint programs primarily use ESG ENQA standards. The European approach is used in only three EU universities surveyed. The range of implemented quality assurance tools in Russian and European universities is generally comparable (with some greater diversity in EU universities). However, the use of the considered quality assurance tools is not tied to specific terms, which indicates their possible non-systematic application. The quality assurance systems of Russian universities are more centralized and more inclusive of the institutional level. European universities are focused primarily on the formation of these systems at the program level.

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