INTERNATIONALIZATION OF ACTIVITY OF THE ACCREDITATION AGENCIES IN THE SPHERE OF EDUCATION

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Abstract

In Europe and Russia certain experience of accreditation in education is accumulated, the agencies, their unions and associations which are the guarantors of quality assurance are created. The problem of this research is the determination of the main directions of the international activities of the accreditation agencies in the countries participating in the Bologna Process. The objects of the research are actions for implementation of the international activities of the accreditation agencies of Russia and Germany. The methodology of research is: 1) on the basis of the analysis of the list of the events of different level held by "Russian Accreditation Agency" and the German agency "Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute/ACQUIN" and provided on their websites to mark out actions of the international level; 2) to classify and compare these actions for criterion of their orientation; 3) to show a high-quality originality of the international activities of data of the agencies in the context of the state and international recognition of quality of educational activities.

Research methods: analysis of references, content analysis, comparison, interpretation, generalization. The analysis of history of creation of the accreditation agencies has shown that creation in Russia in 1995 of Scientific information center of the state accreditation in the city of Yoshkar-Ola reflected world practice of activity of the specialized organizations for accreditation in education. Representatives of Russian Accreditation Agency participated in many scientific conferences and seminars abroad. Special attention is paid to accreditation of educational programs of foreign subsidiaries of the Russian higher education institutions and educational activities of diplomatic representations and consular establishments in the sphere of school education. The international activity of ACQUIN has been also directed to the accession to labor unions, networks and associations. The comparative analysis of materials showed that general tendencies in the international activities of the accreditation agencies of Russia and Germany are observed. Distinctions are that Russian Accreditation Agency doesn't participate in accreditation of educational programs of foreign higher education institutions. At the same time the Asian countries of the former USSR (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan) having a large number of agreements on cooperation in the sphere of science and education with Russia don't consider for themselves prestigious to obtain the Russian international accreditation for the purpose of integration in educational space of the Union of the Independent States (UIS) and address to the German accreditation agency. The leading Russian higher education institutions are also oriented to receipt of the international accreditation in the European agencies. They hope to attract foreign students, to increase export of educational services and to promote increase in competitiveness of Russia and its citizens in the world labor market.

Keywords: Education, the higher education, internationalization, Bologna Process, accreditation, international accreditation, accreditation agency.

1 INTRODUCTION

The process of rapprochement and harmonization of the higher education systems of European countries was aimed at creating a single European higher education area. The official start date of the process is considered to be June 19, 1999 – the day when was signed the Bologna Declaration. The decision to participate in a voluntary process of creating the European space of higher education was issued by representatives of 29 countries. To date, the process includes the participation of 49 countries that ratified the European cultural Convention of the Council of Europe (1954). The Bologna process is open to accession by other countries. The entry of European countries into the system of world relations in the field of education and science in the framework of the Bologna process in the end of the century brought the problem of providing external quality assurance of education and recognition of learning outcomes at national and international level. Some experience of accreditation
in the field of education have already gained in Europe. Agencies, their unions and associations became the guarantors of quality assurance. In 2003 Russia joined the Bologna process, requiring the implementation of a unified approach to approximation and harmonization of the higher education systems of European countries with the aim of creating a common European higher education area. At this time there were no special tools accreditation of educational programs in accordance with the European frame. However, some experience is still there.

Creation in Russia in 1995 of Scientific Information Center of the State Accreditation in the city of Yoshkar-Ola reflected world practice of activity of the specialized organizations for accreditation in education. The obtention by the Scientific Information Center of the status of the Federal state institution "The National Accreditation Agency in Education" ("Russian Accreditation Agency") was held in 2005, the Agency started to function in Moscow when you save the branch in Yoshkar-Ola. It marked the era of the development of new methods of accreditation in the logic of conformity of educational programs to educational standards in accordance with the implementation of the Bologna Declaration. Accreditation was subject to undergraduate (4 years) and master (2 years) program, while maintaining the Russian standard of specialist training in some specialties (5 years of studying). Currently, the educational and accreditation systems in Russia is undergoing a period of renewal [1, 2, 3].

The most important task of accreditation of expertise are organizational-technical and informational-analytical provision of the accreditation expertise of compliance of the content and quality of training of students of the Federal educational standards. Due to the fact that while in Russia there are Federal educational standards for higher education based on competence approach, and recently introduced Professional standards, which are based on characteristic features of professional activity of a specialist, there is a problem of the harmonization of these standards when conducting accreditation examination. This problem is associated with the desire of Russia to comply with international requirements in the field of quality education. Therefore, the study of experience of foreign accreditation agencies will be very helpful. Thus, one important aspect of the article is the task to show a high-quality originality of the international activities of data of the agencies in the context of the state and international recognition of quality of educational activities.

2 METHODOLOGY

The logic of the research is in that: 1) on the basis of the analysis of the list of the events of different level held by "Russian Accreditation Agency" and the German agency "Accreditation, Certification and Quality Assurance Institute/ACQUIN" and provided on their websites to mark out actions of the international level; 2) to classify and compare these actions for criterion of their orientation.

The empirical source of the study is the information provided on the websites of the accreditation agencies of the two countries – Russia and Germany. The choice of countries is due to the fact that their educational systems have much in common, historically.

To solve the research objectives, used research methods: analysis of references, content analysis, comparison, interpretation, generalization.

When using content analysis in relation to the analysis of the activities of the Agency ACQUIN semantic category of analysis is the term "country applying for accreditation", the unit of account was the number of educational programs accredited by the Agency.

Data were visualized using the program EXCEL. After entering the data in the coding table all results were presented in form of simple histograms, which technically refined using the program Paint. For visualization of the results was also used geographic information programs and vector graphics editor CorelDRAW.

3 RESULTS

The desire of the Russian accreditation Agency to enter the system of international relations is accompanied by activities on several fronts. By order of the Ministry of education and science of Russia dated 25.04.2005 No. 126 FSBI "NAA" is included in the List of leading higher education institutions and organizations in realizing the development goals of the system of higher professional education in accordance with Bologna Declaration. The decision of tasks has caused the need for international cooperation, FSBI "NAA" with institutions and organizations to guarantee the quality of education at European and international levels with the aim of further use of the gained knowledge to improve the quality of Russian education.
International activity covers membership in International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, INQAAHE (2001); Central and Eastern European Network of Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education, CEE Network (2002); European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, ENQA (2006); as well as signing agreements with Higher Education Evaluation Centre – HEEC (China), Centre for Quality Assessment in Higher Education – SKVC (Lithuania), Foundation for International Business Administration Accreditation – FIBAA (Germany), Accreditation Agency Specialized in Accrediting Degree Programs in Engineering, Informatics, Natural Sciences and Mathematics – ASIIN (Germany). Representatives of Reaccreditation participated in many scientific conferences and seminars abroad. Particular attention is paid to educational programs accreditation of foreign branches of Russian universities and educational activities of diplomatic missions and consular institutions in the field of school education. On the Agency's website appeared first on information, with recommendations for foreign educational institutions, however, information that foreign universities or schools have been accredited, not detected.

International activities ACQUIN was also sent to join trade unions, networks and associations: The European Network for Quality Assurance (ENQA), the European University Association (EUA), the Central Eastern European Network for Quality Assurance (CEEN), the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ARQAANE).

Activities ACQUIN accreditation includes both German and foreign universities. In Fig. 1 shows the results of the content analysis.

![Figure 1. The distribution of the number of educational programs accredited ACQUIN](image)

As the histogram shows, the accredited Agency educational programs implemented in different countries. These countries can be presented in three clusters – Europe, Asia and Africa. European countries are represented most widely, the cluster includes 9 countries. The number of accredited programs of universities in Switzerland and Russia prevails. An equal number of countries represents Asian and African segments; however, the number of accredited programs is different. The highest activity demonstrates Kazakhstan (Fig.2).
As can be seen from the figure, at present already are accredited universities in seven regions of the 14 included in the administrative structure of Kazakhstan. This is a high assessment of the activities of the district administration who are trying to get international recognition. Mainly universities which are located on the East of the country have got the international accreditation. A detailed distribution is shown below (Fig. 3).

Figure 3 shows that the capitals are in the lead. They are the former capital of Almaty and the modern capital of Astana. It can be explained via traditional state policy to develop capital universities and to make money in development of big cities. The good result is shown by Karaganda and Pavlodar. For regional universities Kostsnay Taldy-Kourgan, Semey, Kokchtai accreditation at the international level is a significant success. In General, it shows that we see a tendency to alignment of quality of education at capital and regional universities.

Among the number of the accredited programs of universities there are significant differences (Fig. 4).
The count has shown that now Almaty is in the lead among the universities participating in accreditation. It is in the lead both on number of universities, and on number of the accredited educational programs. The greatest activity was shown by Al-Faraby Kazakh National University. The number of the accredited programs at this university surpasses the closest competitor – Taldy-Kuorgan university three times. The name of «the Second teacher» East – Abu Nasr Al-Farabi was assigned to the university 1991. His works, have rendered dramatic influence not only on progress of Turkish and Kazakh philosophy, but built the bridge for rapprochement of cultures of the West and the East. Not surprisingly, that the university has accredited humanitarian educational programs: history, philology, philosophy, psychology, social pedagogy, Islamic studies, Oriental studies, archaeology. Zhetysu State University of Taldy-Kourgan accredited not only humanitarian educational programs, but also physics, mathematics, computer science, information systems. It demonstrates existence of the qualified pedagogical shots in regional university of Taldy-Kourgan. In General, Kazakhstan pursues active policy on accreditation of educational programs abroad according to the Strategy of Development for the Republic of Kazakhstan [4].

4 CONCLUSIONS

The study found that the accreditation system in Russia and in Germany aim to develop international segments of their professional activities. They are united by the accession to the international organizations, networks, associations. However, international experience is different. Russia only creates conditions and prerequisites for the implementation of the accreditation of educational programs abroad. The coverage of countries and educational programs was examined on the example of one of the foreign agencies (ACQUIN) and shows the following. This Agency has a great experience, it accredits educational programs in Europe, Asia and Africa. The greatest interest for entry into system of the world communications in the field of education has shown Kazakhstan. In this country the State Program of education development is consistently carried out. As the result of the State Program this country plans to achieve high key indicator. The share of universities that passed independent national specialized accreditation according to international standards should be 30 %. At the same time the Asian countries of the former USSR (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan) having a large number of agreements on cooperation in the sphere of science and education with Russia don't consider for themselves prestigious to obtain the Russian accreditation as international for the purpose of integration in educational space of the Union of the Independent States (UIS) and address to the German accreditation agency. The leading Russian higher education institutions are also oriented to receipt of the international accreditation in the European agencies. They hope to attract foreign students, to increase export of educational services and to promote increase in competitiveness of Russia and its citizens in the world labor market.
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