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QUALITY ASSURANCE MECHANISMS IN AZERBAIJAN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

SUMMARY

The article deals with the needs of higher education system in Azerbaijan to be expanded to a much greater scale to serve to the needs of youth. That is why the majority of higher education institutions are trying to come near the level of average institutions of higher education in the developed countries. The issue of accessibility of quality higher education needs are also addressed in this article.

Key words: education, quality assurance, higher education, quality management.

Education is one of the most strongly developing sectors in the world today. It is developing rapidly in the application of information technology in particular. Legislation can, therefore, lag behind the level of development of the education systems. Nevertheless, it should be noted that Azerbaijan's law on education creates the right conditions for the start and development of the educational process in the country.

The European Union has launched a process to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010. Azerbaijan committed itself to the goals of this process in May 2005 in Bergen, Norway, and is now hard at work bringing its higher educational institutions into the line with Bologna

requirements. After Azerbaijan signed on to the Bologna process, the country's The Ministry of Education developed a comprehensive action plan, calling for the modernizing of the higher education system, a transfer to the credit system, the elaboration of new diploma supplements in compliance with the UNESCO recommendations, and the recognition of international documents on higher education in Azerbaijan.

Under this action plan, a number of working groups composed of vice-rectors, deans and other qualified teaching staff has been set up in the pilot institutions where various components of the Bologna process such as transition to the credit system were carried out. The Ministry of Education has also helped to organize various awareness training programs and national seminars to ensure that the Bologna principles are adopted and adapted to local conditions.

We all know that the Bologna process has not been completely executed even in Europe's most developed countries. If it had, it would have been removed from the agenda of the European countries. For example, there are a number of issues in the Bologna system, which Europe is unable to settle.

Fifteen years have passed since Azerbaijan joined the Bologna process. Azerbaijan is gradually meeting the commitments assumed as part of the process. Despite Azerbaijan's participation in the Bologna process, it should be noted that some of its regulations are not mandatory. They all are recommendations. Azerbaijan accepts the six main principles of the Bologna system.

As we see Azerbaijan has recently made strategic steps on integration into global European space. This includes large-scale interaction with EC, and joining Bologna Declaration in spring 2005, and other steps. The process is reasonable enough - Azerbaijan is too distinct, in order to live separately: the world as well as the country very much loses in isolation.

It should seem to be very positive and advantageous process - integration of Azerbaijan into Europe. But no sooner

than he touched upon the sphere of highest distinctiveness of the nation - the spiritual sphere, to which, also, refer traditions of higher education (meaning Bologna Declaration), the resistance and fear to lose the last basis for national identity appeared at once. It is quite an explainable fear - it provides self-protection and tolerance of organism relative to unconsidered innovations.

And one of the principle points of Bologna Declaration is connected with the implementation of education quality control and provision system in every Institution of Higher Education.

It is possible to tell, that process of global European educational space foundation for Azerbaijan Institutions of Higher Education today is a serious reason for careful consideration of education level and quality. It is a hard, but an interesting way, it will require rethinking of many activity aspects of Institutions of Higher Education, Departments of Education and Science, and the Government.

But movement in this direction will allow Azerbaijan's non-formal integration into European space applying western social technologies within Azerbaijan conditions, filling them with their own content. It is not occasionally when on forums, related to higher education upgrading, it is possible to hear ideas that in Azerbaijan Institutions of Higher Education Bologna Declaration "is understood wider", than on the West. And this is our peculiarity.

The implementation of education quality control system - means introduction of innovative control technology. Specific emphasis is made upon implementation of quality control system as a technological process focused on incorporation of high-grade education mechanism provision into essential work processes at universities.

General quality management - is not simply an efficient control method, it primarily involves world view, system of human relations, organization philosophy. Therefore

application of quality control system is possible only on the basis of the process comprehension by all the personnel.

At the heart of quality control lies consecutive motion through Deming cycle, one of the founders of global quality management: plan - do - check – act (PDCA).

Here are determined eight quality management principles:
- the process management;
- social responsibility;
- orientation upon consumer;
- orientation on result and achievement of an objective;
- involvement, participation and motivation of the staff;
- advance of the corporative cooperation;
- continuous education of the personnel, innovations;
- reliable management.

The key principles among them are: management of the corporative cooperation development process, involvement, participation and motivation of the personnel and orientation on consumer.

Primary elements of global quality management are –
- involvement in work of all organization personnel,
- new relationship principles "manager - subordinate ",
- delegation of authority from top echelon toward middle and further,
- new ethic and economic incentives of good job,
- methods of psychological innovation perception barriers' negotiation.

Certain staff of Higher Education Institution assumes responsibility for quality of their work. And this organization decision making secures the university from external harsh, compulsory harmful effects.

Every Higher Education Institution, let it be - technical, pedagogic or classic university - adapts principles of total quality management to their specific conditions and

peculiarities. And it is quite right, as implementing of new social technologies, appeared on the West, Azerbaijan universities seek, primarily, to preserve their unique traditions, that preserves human environment and spiritual atmosphere, created within decades.

The leading way of quality control system implementation in education was drawn up in Azerbaijan by redbrick universities, which is quite explicable: quality management is always correlated with structuring and technologizing of processes.

Today this work involves classic and pedagogic universities. Here we can expect appearing of new social technologies, working on the basis of changes in psychosocial climate of Higher Education Institution staff, as university's "intellectual product" quality directly depends on people, who participate in its "release", on the university staff.

All the universities in the Republic of Azerbaijan can be divided into several groups due to the work over education quality assurance technology introduction:

1) Universities, which have received International Quality Certificate;

2) Universities, which are preparing to certification of their quality system;

3) Universities, which have developed their quality system, but don't seek to certify it;

4) Universities, starting introduction of separate elements of quality control system

5) Universities, simply approaching this process.

It is interesting, that availability of certified quality system not necessarily testifies that the quality system really acts in the university. Moreover, whether to certify their quality system or not is up to the university, today the government does not make such a demand.

Speaking of education quality, there are marked four principal factors, which provide it:

1) Volumes of investments in education,

2) Qualification of teachers,

3) Quality of graduates,

4) Content of education.

Much more interesting is to think over the fact, that universities, accumulating intellectual and spiritual potential of the region, doubtlessly can themselves change the situation with education quality. And it is necessary to use quality management technologies here.

All the universities, working on implementation of quality management system, can be divided on two more groups:

1) Universities, where for several years efforts are made to create Quality System (QS) but, as a whole, too little have been done, at the best case some kind of QS elements are used, but there is no proper system. Here the group, engaged in quality, generally, leaves for theory, from time to time trains on courses or opens QS courses and teaches others. QS exists in such universities diagrammatically and schematically mainly on paper.

2) Universities, where Quality Management System (QMS) technologies are really implemented.

Having analyzed our QS foundation experience and the experience of other universities, we can mention following general topical moments of this process:

1) A real concernment of top-management, i.e. the rector and first pro-rector in QMS introduction is essential.

2) The problem of integration of intellect, i.e. comprehension by the first top-management, that introduction of education quality assurance technology requires, primarily, assimilation of innovative knowledge, new smart technology by the executives.

But both material and spiritual expenditures connected with forming of quality control system involves investments for university.

3) Management style changeover. Introduction of technologies, providing certain measurable education quality level, also means replacement of authoritarian elements of

university control style by technologic ones. People, mastered advanced control technologies, start to control processes in enterprises.

Goals in HE momentum in the education sector in Azerbaijan are observable:

1) Education Law was adopted.

2) The national development concept "Azerbaijan 2020: Look into the future".

3) The State Strategy on Development of Education in the Republic of Azerbaijan.

We can assume that the top challenges for Azerbaijan Higher Education Institutions are today:

• Short-Term Goals – further development of the Education Abroad Program (on going transition)

• Mid-Term Goals – development of local HE Institutions

• Long-Term Goals – First-class Education in Azerbaijan

Key Priorities of HE Reforms since for the last five years are:

• The formation of "SABAH" (talented students) groups

• Work out the indicators system defining the effectiveness of activities of HEIs

• Priority of majors for the country's social-economic development

• Review the education programs (standards) for bachelor's and master's degrees in order to provide advanced capacity preparation

• Start pilot academic credits for youth from low income families;

• Establishing advanced and transparent management model

• Establish accreditation system of educational establishments in order to protect learners' rights and define the compliance of teaching with state standards.

It is impossible to introduce QS until those, who start this process, understand the IDEA of the quality, the idea of QS. That's the thing.

Lack of good ideological activity at the beginning of QS introduction is the main reason of the process "thrashing" within years in universities.

We have created Management and Quality Assurance Department at the university.

First we tried to explain and develop the QMS concept and thoroughly investigated what the Quality Management System is.

We decided first to work out QS model on one of faculties, then to expand it with regard to obtained experience on other departments.

Thus, The University Management aims to reach every employee of the university in the course of Quality Management System introduction and to change university corporate culture in the direction of work on university education quality.

РЕЗЮМЕ

Рассматриваются современные современные подходы к описанию нужд высшего образования в Азербайджане расширенным в гораздо большем масштабе для удовлетворения потребностей молодежи. Поэтому большинство высших учебных заведений пытаются приблизиться к уровню средних высших учебных заведений в развитых странах. Проблема доступности качественных потребностей высшего образования также рассматривается в этой статье.

Ключевые слова: образование, гарантия качества, высщее образование,управление качеством.