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TECHNOLOGIES AND TOOLS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF UNIVERSITY EDUCATION

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Abstract

There are many challenges for education in the modern world. High-quality education today requires understanding the fact that society is becoming more complex. It must constantly adapt to its needs in order to give reliable knowledge to students. The problem of the quality of education and its effective functioning has always been the subject of scientific and practical interest of teachers. Currently, it is acquiring special significance, since ensuring the quality of education is one of the main conditions for trust, mobility, student motivation, and attractiveness of higher education. The purpose of the study is to justify the technologies and tools to improve the quality of university education. The study defines the concept "quality of education" and ways to improve the quality of university education at the theoretical level. Based on the expert survey, a set of measures and processes to improve the quality of education is determined and characterization of the content of the regulations on the organization of the educational process to improve the quality of university education is given.

Keywords

University – Higher education – Quality of education – Educational process

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Introduction

In the new millennium, in the era of informatization and high technology, the competitiveness of countries in the world market heavily depends on the level of education of people, development of their creative forces, as well as their willingness and ability to relearn, acquire new knowledge, live, and work in an ever-changing world. A country's place in the world is determined by the level of its education and culture.

Therefore, understanding the new role of education and updating the concept of the quality of education should be ahead of the future and bridge the gap between the old and the new. The growing importance of quality as a fundamental category in recent years is confirmed by the fact that this concept has become integral to the activities of various organizations in almost all spheres of society. Quality is an indicator of high labor efficiency in society, a source of national wealth, and, importantly, a factor of overcoming social and economic crises¹.

Quality today is interpreted as compliance with certain standards, including in the higher education sector. This is due to the penetration of market relations into it and the emergence of crisis phenomena in the functioning of education systems².

Literature review

The analysis of the scientific literature showed that there are various approaches to the definition of the concept "quality of education".

M. P. Karpenko³ understands the quality of education as a balanced correspondence (of a result, process, and education system) to the established needs, goals, requirements, and norms (standards). The components of ensuring the quality of higher education, in the opinion of G. P. Shlykov⁴, are the organization of training, scientific and pedagogical personnel, material and technical base, educational environment, including the electronic one, educational achievements of students, management system, and results of scientific research.

A. G. Sergeev⁵ notes that the objects of studying the results of the quality of education can be students, teachers, and educational institutions. Each of these objects should be provided with its own parameters (criteria), measurement methods, and mechanisms, based on which a different result is obtained. In addition, such results are not combined and do not correlate with each other. The presence of these results is not the basis for managing the quality of education: the analysis of the results is carried out based on comparing them with the operationally given goals.

¹ M. S. Logachev y G. S. Zhukova, "Problems of Professional Education in Russia: Quality Monitoring of Educational Programs", *Revista Inclusiones*, num 7 Vol: Especial, (2020): 263-274 y V. V. Ryabov; V. V. Kirillov; R. G. Rezakov y N. I. Muzafarova, "International Practice of Professional Integration of People with Disabilities: Educational Programs", *Revista Inclusiones*, Vol: 7 num Especial (2020): 42-53.

² P. Ewell, "Twenty years of quality assurance in higher education: What's happened and what's different?", *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol: 16 num 2 (2010): 173–175.

³ M. P. Karpenko (Ed.), *Kachestvo vysshego obrazovaniia* (Moscow: Izdatelstvo SGU, 2012).

⁴ G. P. Shlykov, *Sistema menedzhmenta kachestva universiteta* (Moscow: Trek, 2006).

⁵ *Kachestvo vysshego obrazovaniia: uchebnoe posobie* (Vladimir: Izdaelstvo VIGU, 2017).

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S. V. Ratner⁶ notes that what is common for the quality of education at different levels of government is the creation of optimal conditions (personnel, scientific, methodological, material, financial, regulatory, sanitary, hygienic, etc.) for the full functioning and continuous development of an education system and educational institution, which significantly affects the quality of education.

T. L. Kliachko⁷ emphasizes that improving the quality of education is a necessary condition for improving the life of society, the basis for modernizing the economy, developing a culture of innovative thinking, and affirming the fundamental values of human life.

According to researchers⁸, support for the quality of education occurs at three levels, including the national, individual, and university curriculum levels. Tasks such as supporting higher education institutions, developing institutional policies, and ensuring the quality of the internal system are being addressed at the national level. The program level provides for the assessment and improvement of the plan, content, and working methods. The individual level includes initiatives to help educators achieve the mission. At this stage, it is worth encouraging innovation and supporting the improvement of student education and professionally oriented education. It is important to note that all levels are interconnected and essential.

Researchers believe that one of the important aspects is also the effective development of the curriculum and the regulations of a variety of learning contexts. This includes guided independent learning, project learning, experimentation, and group coeducation⁹. Moreover, according to K.-L. Krause, the support of the high quality of education and programs is a key task of education, which provides the improvement of education at the discipline and university levels¹⁰.

Researchers¹¹ note that the modern work of teachers involves a wide range of actions that can improve the quality of the educational process, student education conditions, and content of the program. Elite institutions prefer hybrid forms of work, which include various initiatives and projects, in particular, the creation of centers for the

⁶ S. V. Ratner, "Voprosy povysheniia kachestva obrazovatel'nogo protsessa v vuse", *Innovatsii v obrazovanii* num 9 (2011): 34-37.

⁷ T. L. Kliachko, *Vysovy professional'nogo obrazovaniia* (Moscow: Izdatelskii dom "Delo" RANKHiGS, 2014).

⁸ L. M. Struminskaia, "Vnutrivusovskii monitoring kachestva obrazovaniia", *Professionalnoe obrazovanie v sovremennom mire* num 4 Vol: 19 (2015): 65-75 y M. Iacovidou; P. Gibbs y A. Zopiatis, "An explanatory use of the stakeholder approach to defining and measuring quality: The case of a cyriot higher education institution", *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol: 15 num 2 (2009): 147-165.

⁹ R. N. Azarova, "Podkhody k oraganizatsii innovatsionnoi deiatelnosti v vuse kak uslovie sovershenstvovaniia kachestva obrazovaniia", *Ekonomika, statistika i informatika* num 2 (2011): 3-8; A. Amaral y M. Rosa, "Recent trends in quality assurance", *Quality in Higher Education*, num 16 (2010): 59-61 y J. Newton, "A tale of two "qualitys": Reflections on the quality revolution of higher education", *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol: 16 num 1 (2010): 51-53.

¹⁰ K.-L. Krause, "Addressing the Wicked Problem of Quality in Higher Education: Theoretical Approaches and Implications", *Higher Education Research and Development*, Vol: 31 num 3 (2012): 285-297.

¹¹ L. Harvey y J. Williams, "Fifteen years of quality in higher education", *Quality in Higher Education*, Vol: 16 num 1 (2010): 3-36.

development of teaching and advanced training is becoming increasingly popular. Great importance is given to activities related to professional growth and development, for example, advanced training of teachers.

Moreover, according to researchers¹², the latest trends are the introduction of bonuses for improving the quality of education, changing the criteria for selecting personnel for work in a higher education institution, constant support for innovative and integrated teaching methods, creating a community of educational practices and environments, expanding opportunities using modern equipment, and constant support for the success of students, for example, counseling and mentoring.

Teachers more often use modern methods of organizing and managing training and study the working methods of managers and marketers. An important point in improving education is projects involving self-assessment of experiments, comparative analysis of practices, and expert analysis.

The hypothesis of the study: the quality of the establishment and further continuous updating substantial component (quality of educational, scientific, methodical, regulatory, and reference resources), level of the technological component of the ICT infrastructure and services, and compliance with organizational component requirements (introduction and compliance with corporate standards of the institution) are technologies and tools to improve the quality of higher education.

Methods

During the study, a set of theoretical and empirical methods was used:

- theoretical methods: content analysis – analysis of the theoretical foundations of the process of improving the quality of university education; system analysis – systematization of study results;

- empirical: an online expert survey of representatives of the university community (35 people), 20 teachers and 15 graduate students.

At the first stage of the study, the analysis of the scientific literature on the problem of technological tools for improving the quality of university education was carried out.

At the second stage of the study, a set of measures and processes for ensuring the quality of education was determined and characterization of the content of the regulations on the organization of the educational process to improve the quality of university education was given (fig. 1).

¹² R. K. Yeo, "Service Quality Ideals in a Competitive Tertiary Environment", *International Journal of Educational Research*, num 48 (2009): 62–76 y J. Cullen; J. Joyce; T. Hassall y M. Broadbent, "Quality in higher education: From monitoring to management", *Quality Assurance in Education*, Vol: 11 num 1 (2003): 5–14.

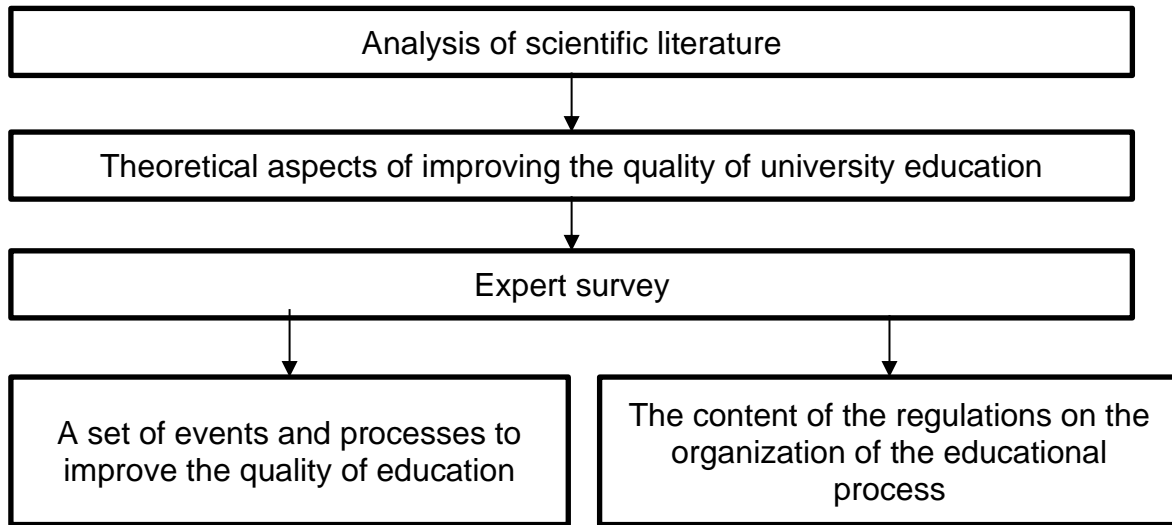


Figure 1
Flowchart

Results

“Enterprises According to epy experts, ensuring the quality of education is the primary task of every university. It cannot be achieved at once, it must be an ongoing process that leads to the formation of a new culture of relations at the university. At the same time, improving the quality of education is a consequence of a set of measures and processes (Table 1).

No	Measures and processes	%*
1	Clear idea of quality, its criteria and measurement indicators	91%
2	Internal quality assurance system	88.5%
3	Quality motivation and reward system	88.5%
4	Zero tolerance for academic dishonesty	86%
5	Society’s request for quality and its participation in quality monitoring processes	83%
6	Maximum transparency of universities and all other parties	77%
7	Independent professional expert environment	77%
8	Healthy competition between universities	74%
9	International benchmarking	71%

Note: compiled based on the expert survey; * – percentage of expert references.

Table 1

A set of measures and processes to improve the quality of education

As the experts emphasize, all of the above activities should contribute to one goal – the formation of a new culture of work at the university, in which all participants of the educational process will be interested in improving the quality of higher education. In this case, the main role belongs to the clear rules of the game in the educational institution and, therefore, according to the experts, all universities should start by developing their own regulations on the organization of the educational process. The experts note that these regulations should cover all areas of the institution, the content and structure of the

necessary documents, as well as the functional responsibilities of all management units. At the same time, the regulations should be implemented without possible deviations, which will help to increase trust between students, teachers, and administrative staff. At the same time, according to the experts, one of the required condition is the abolition of any other regulations and documents on the organization of the educational process, informal traditions, etc.

The standard regulations may include the following sections (Table 2).

Nº	Section	Characteristic
1	General regulations	Definition of all terms used in the document
2	Educational programs	The conditions of access to programs, as well as their opening, closing, and changes are indicated. It is imperative that the university policy is envisaged for the transition from managing educational programs by department heads to specially designated people. They should eliminate the conflict of interest between the quality of education in the educational program and the workload of department employees. A mechanism should be developed to compare the declared and actually achieved results of graduate students and to determine differences between different programs. The regulations should establish clear criteria for automatically closing educational programs.
3	Forms of education	Possible methods of education, their combination, and offset of education outcomes are indicated. Particular attention should be paid to the development of online education and distance education. One should also consider moving from group activities to streaming activities.
4	Educational planning	Schedules of education, possible dates of exams, exam retakes, principles of students choosing disciplines, the formation of the load of teachers are indicated. It must also be indicated in which cases, for what purpose checks may be carried out.
5	Methodological support of the educational process	All the necessary materials that must be prepared for teaching are indicated. Particular attention should be paid to the realism and expediency of preparing certain documents because a large number of them does not contribute to improving quality. It is better to focus on checking the expediency of certain documentation, as well as translating it exclusively into an electronic version.
6	Education result assessment procedures	All principles and means of assessing a student's knowledge are given, requirements for transparency, the possibility of transferring education results between specialties or within the framework of academic mobility are indicated. Particular attention should be paid to academic honesty and fight against academic fraud. Clear rules should be given to check all works for plagiarism and the responsibility of students and scientists for this. Verification should be carried out by a special independent center of the university, which reports only to the academic council. All works requiring evaluation in electronic form must be uploaded to this center and the result of the verification should be sent to the teachers and the academic council of the institution.
7	Obtaining of qualification	The principles and means of certification of applicants for obtaining a certain qualification, formation of appropriate commissions, and requirements for graduate work are indicated. The tasks of the final certification should check all the declared programmed education results and the regulations should guarantee this.
8	Rights and obligations of students and research workers	In particular, the possible consequences of violation of the relevant rules are indicated. Important aspects are: establishing opportunities for electronic communication and work with documents; description of how the university promotes and controls staff development;

		guarantees that teachers will undergo continuing education on the basis of their institution.
9	Administrative responsibilities	The rights and obligations of people who occupy senior positions are indicated, how they are elected and appointed; senior position university activity assessment system.
10	Academic mobility and credits for education results at other universities	All the requirements for the implementation of such mobility, necessary documents, and appropriate reporting are indicated. It is advisable to make the principle of a “single window” when a student or teacher submits documents for academic mobility only once and all signatures or approvals should be made without their participation.
11	Educational process quality control procedures	It is indicated how, with the help of which criteria, the state of the quality of education in a given structural unit is determined, and how often iterations are made to verify it. The procedure for improving the quality of education are to be clearly defined.
12	Additional resources and information	Information resources are indicated. There constantly updated information will be placed: information packages and a catalog of courses; quality indicators of higher education based on own monitoring; aggregated results of grades of all students by program; results of sociological surveys of students regarding their satisfaction with the curriculum; contacts to support students in their studies and everyday life; opportunities for further employment; contacts for appeals and complaints, as well as the results of their consideration.

Note: compiled based on the expert survey

Table 2

The content of the regulations on the organization of the educational process

Discussion

According to the experts, in order to carry out a set of measures and processes to ensure the quality of education, first of all, universities must be autonomous, self-governing, interested in maximum efficiency, setting long-term goals, implementing their own development strategies, and being responsible for the result. It is obvious that each university should have its own unique development strategy, which will take into account the specifics of the institution, its value system and role in the economic environment. At the same time, according to one of the respondents, “this strategy should be approved by the university team and not just formally but become the basis of the activities of each member of the university”.

The strategy should describe clear obligations for the implementation of these institution plans by each structural branch and team member¹³.

At the same time, the experts note that the elements of the implementation of the plan may differ in different universities, depending on its type, profile, and chosen development strategy. However, such procedures should become an integral part of the

¹³ R. Abdulaeva; M. Gereeva; V. Bikbulatova; R. Rabadanova y G. Yulina, “Psychological and Pedagogical Technologies of Actualizing Practical Orientation Of Educational Environment In A University”, *Espacios*, Vol: 38 num 40 (2017): 1-10; E. E. Bukhteeva; O. A. Zimovina; S. E. Shishov; R. S. Rabadanova y I. V. Polozhentseva, “Practical and Theoretical Grounds of a Student's Autonomous Learning Activities In Professional Education”, *Amazonia Investiga*, num 8 Vol: 20 (2019): 575-581; S. Shishov; R. Rabadanova; S. Artemyeva; H. Tonoyan y A. Mezhina, “Implementation of Interaction Principle in Teaching Pedagogical Subjects in University”, *Espacios*, Vol. 39 num 21 (2018) y R. S. Rabadanova y G. N. Yulina, “Self-Education - One of The Forms of Increasing the Professional Skill of The Teacher”, *Education and self-education*, num 6 Vol: 22 (2010): 20-23.

internal quality assurance system, which should be made public and understandable to all participants in the educational process. These procedures will only make sense if they guarantee transparent and understandable rules for allocating resources¹⁴.

At the same time, such incentives as level of salary, bonuses, grants, career, professional development (scientific internships, creative leave), support for scientific research publications, academic awards, recognition (academic degree, academic title, honorary doctorate), and other intangible incentives should serve as elements of quality promotion and be determined solely on the basis of these procedures. Any deviations from them, any nontransparent schemes for receiving bonuses or posts are unacceptable; the team simply will not be interested in the further struggle for the quality of education.

According to the experts, the maximum transparency of the functioning of the university plays an important role. This means that any real changes can begin only if each university is as open as possible in reporting to society: students, parents, teachers, the state, educational experts, graduates, employers, international observers, etc. In this connection, each university should publish and periodically update on its own website: the development strategy of the university and each curriculum; regulations of the internal quality assurance system; self-assessment reports of each curriculum; commitments to improve quality; reports on the implementation of commitments to improve quality.

The experts believe that the presence and publication of such documents should create healthy competition between universities, which will require the university to conduct an additional analysis of market conditions: identify the main competitors of the university, advantages and disadvantages of each of its programs compared to others, and formation of the most effective graduate profile of each program, etc.

According to the experts, when analyzing the internal quality system, an assessment of the current state should be made for each criterion. A prerequisite for a quality audit is a university's self-assessment of its activities in accordance with the criteria selected by the strategy. The main goal of a university's functioning should not be to achieve the maximum level but to constantly increase the level of each indicator. At the same time, one of the elements of internal monitoring of the quality of higher education, according to the experts, should be the assessment of the activities of teachers.

The experts point out that updating the content, forms, and teaching and assessment methods (including through the widespread introduction of IT, electronic content in the educational process) should be result-oriented. It should contribute to the formation of general and professional competencies of students and determine how students achieve the planned results. It is necessary to constantly improve the technical support of universities, encouraging teachers to reduce the reproductive component of teaching (due to the placement of educational resources on the Internet or the university's internal Internet network) and to increase the demands on students' work outside the classroom.

¹⁴ R. Abdulaeva; M. Gereeva; V. Bikbulatova; R. Rabadanova y G. Yulina, Psychological and Pedagogical...; E. E. Bukhteeva; O. A. Zimovina; S. E. Shishov; R. S. Rabadanova y I. V. Polozhentseva, Practical and Theoretical Grounds...; S. Shishov; R. Rabadanova; S. Artemyeva; H. Tonoyan y A. Mezhdina, Implementation of Interaction Principle... y R. S. Rabadanova y G. N. Yulina, Self-Education - One of The Forms...

The experts also believe that the ongoing review of educational programs should play an important role in ensuring the quality of higher education.

An important tool for improving the quality of education, according to the experts, is the student assessment process. Assessment of education results during the exam is very subjective; the correct assessment should consist of a continuous process during the semester. At the same time, an important criterion should be a system of transparent and clear student assessment.

The experts attribute the insufficient work to create a corporate culture of quality and transparent rules of the game among other factors to the lack of communication within universities. In their opinion, although the problem has been taking shape for a rather long period of time, it is the teachers who must organize the various levels of communication that must solve the problem. According to the experts, horizontal communication is very important, which makes it possible to determine the requirements of employers, expert environment, and problems with curricula within universities. Equally important is bilateral vertical communication between teachers and students, which should significantly change the role of lectures in the educational process and modify the role of a teacher from the information carrier to the so-called tutor or facilitator who helps solve various student requests.

According to the experts, the selection of teachers for the university is extremely important in this context. At the same time, one of the key issues – assessing the level of competence of teachers – is limited by a list of formal features, most of which, moreover, characterize (qualitatively and quantitatively) the level of scientific research, while the quality of teaching is mainly described by criteria that cannot be measured. For this reason, when deciding on the professional suitability of an applicant for a teaching position, the dominant, if not the only, assessment is the assessment of scientific activity, which does not always correlate with the competencies of a good teacher.

Thus, the experts believe that it is necessary to introduce new criteria at universities that would certify that those involved in teaching work have the appropriate qualifications and are able to receive and generate new knowledge, adapt it to modern conditions and requirements, and have the necessary skills and experience in order to effectively transmit to students their knowledge and understanding of the subject in various teaching situations. According to the experts, one of the tools for determining such criteria may be the results of independent student surveys on the quality of teaching.

Implementation of measures to ensure the quality of education, its effective support, according to the experts, is impossible without the conscious voluntary participation of all participants in the process, without taking into account their often different points of view. It is possible to do this with the help of regular and sociological surveys, which allow one to get the most objective assessment of the subjective vision of students at the university as a whole, their perception/nonperception, understanding/misunderstanding of specific decisions and actions of students, teachers, teaching and auxiliary administrative staff, personalities, etc. In doing so, it should be ensured that such surveys are conducted honestly and representatively. Confidence in the results of the surveys forms a student's sense of ownership in ensuring the quality of the educational process, which means that it is extremely important for the formation and maintenance of mutual partnership.

Conclusions

The new strategy for the development of higher education requires improving the quality and effectiveness of education and training. Due to this, prerequisites for increasing competition between universities and, therefore, improving the quality of education are created.

A special role in improving the quality of education belongs to the clear rules of the game in the educational institution; therefore, all universities should start by developing their own regulations on the organization of the educational process. This document provides for all types of activities of the educational institution, as well as a strategy for its improvement. An important aspect of such a document should be the rules for monitoring and iteratively viewing indicators of the quality of university education.

However, the actual introduction of incentives to ensure the growth of the quality of education requires a lot of preparatory work. This process cannot be expected to be completed in the short term. This iterative process will require continuous annual improvement of the achieved indicators. At the same time, this process will contribute to the formation and improvement of the quality of education, in which all branches of universities will be involved.

Obviously, an important role in the internal quality assurance of higher education should be played by constant reviews of educational programs. In modern conditions, it is necessary to introduce the technology “less teaching – more individual learning”. Thus, a teacher has the important work to create their own web pages for information support of their courses and increase electronic communication with students.

An important tool for improving the quality of education is the process of correct and transparent assessment of all types of student's work. Teachers should develop simple, valid, and consistent rules for all types of assessments.

This means that the requirements for the teacher should increase. One of the elements of internal monitoring of the quality of higher education should be an assessment of the activities of teachers, based on surveys of students and employers about the corresponding course. One of the tools can be the results of an independent survey of students about the quality of teaching.

In general, the results confirmed the hypothesis of the study. The quality of creation and further continuous updating of the content component (the quality of educational, scientific, methodological, controlling, and reference resources), the level of use of the technological component of IT infrastructure and services, and compliance with the requirements of the organizational component (introduction and compliance with corporate standards of the institution) are proven to be the technologies and tools to improve the quality of higher education.

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