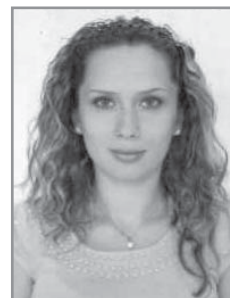


PECULIARITIES OF HIGH EDUCATIONAL ESTABLISHMENTS' LICENSING AND ACCREDITATION IN UKRAINE AND ESTONIA: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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Abstract: In the manuscript the author analyzes the basic criteria for high educational establishments' quality assessing in Ukraine and Estonia through licensing and accreditation. The author has specified organs that control the quality of education in each country, outlined the main stages in the procedure of higher education institutions licensing and accreditation. The types, forms, terms, conditions of accreditation in Ukraine and Estonia, as well as its features and innovation are analyzed. Comparative analysis of licensing and accreditation in two countries was made and priority areas for further improvement of the quality evaluation system in Ukraine were developed.

Keywords: licensing, accreditation, Accreditation Commission Examination Board, the National Agency of licensing, quality of higher education, testing centres, institutional accreditation, accreditation programs, academic accreditation, socio professional accreditation.

1. Introduction

During the last years in the terms of European integration and the creation of a single European educational space, special importance is paid to one of the basic principles of the Bologna Process - quality of education. The main tool, for regulating the quality of education that can ensure both internal and external evaluation at the national and international levels while maintaining respect for the higher educational establishment's autonomy and their academic freedom, is licensing and accreditation mechanism for professional programs in general education. As well as the mechanism that controls compliance with license conditions to provide educational services and rules of carrying out education and educational establishments as a whole and their individual departments. Especially interesting in this regard is the experience of European countries, including Estonia, which are characterized by high quality education and their universities are among the best in Europe and worldwide.

The issue of accreditation and licensing in Estonia were studied by such scientists as X. Bauman, I.V. Borysov, N.V. Volkova and others. In Ukraine modern approaches to the quality of higher education` assessing were studied by R. L. Kovalchuk, M. M. Levshyn, S. A. Svizhevska, V.M. Malykhina. The main regulations are outlined in the laws of Ukraine and Estonia, which regulate the procedure of accreditation and licensing of higher educational establishments, including the Law of Ukraine "On education", Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On approval of the accreditation at higher education establishments", disciplines in higher education and higher professional schools", Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine " On licensing of educational services", Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On changes to the regulations on accreditation of higher educational establishments and disciplines in higher education, higher schools and licensing procedure for educational services", Draft Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine "On

National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education establishment ", the Estonian law "On education", Estonian Ministry of Education report "On implementation of the principles of the Bologna Declaration in Estonia", that are including high education quality assurance.

The purpose of this paper is a comparative analysis of the higher education` quality evaluation in Ukraine and Estonia that is based on the legal documents study and on current research of the subject. We are identifying the main priorities for the system improving of the quality` evaluation of national higher education based on the reforms` achievements and positive experience that has improved the quality of higher education in Estonia.

2. Materials and methods

National quality assurance system is realized through the mechanisms of licensing and accreditation. Educational activities in Ukraine are provided through higher educational institutions on the basis of licenses. Obligatory condition of license issue is compliance with the standards that are set by the Ministry of Education.

Higher education's licensing is the procedure of higher educational establishment` ability recognition to start a particular type of educational activity related to higher education and training, according to the standards. Educational activities of higher education in Ukraine are conducted by higher educational establishments, research institutions and are based on licenses issued by the central executive authority in the field of education and science determined by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine [1].

Licensing of higher education is conducted through the license of Educational Chamber of Ukraine; this license is issued within two months from the application date. According to the results of licensing, higher educational establishment` is receiving a license for educational activity or motivated license refusal. The first license for educational activity is valid for 5 years, followed by a re-licensing for

10 years, if the higher educational institution confirms compliance with licensing conditions.

Evaluation and monitoring of the education` quality or accreditation is a process that is usually provided by external bodies, aimed at the assessment of certain higher educational establishment for clearly defined objectives, which can be determined by the higher education institution or with it's consent by the official expert bodies assessment [2]. As it is stated in the Bologna Declaration, accreditation is the main tool that supports the necessary changes in European higher education [3]. The term for accreditation certificate expiration for higher educational establishment with the status of national is 10 years, institutions of other levels is 5 years [4].

3. Accreditation Commission

Ukraine has a state system of licensing and accreditation of educational activities, along with which, as in other European countries, there are: institutional accreditation, program accreditation or accreditation of educational programs, international accreditation, and certification of educational programs [5]. Accreditation of higher education is conducted at the request of State Accreditation Commission, which is a permanent body that ensures compliance with the requirements for licensing, certification and accreditation of higher schools and graduate schools in the directions of training and retraining, providing and changing the status of these institutions [6].

The main tasks of the Accreditation Commission are: formation and providing together with ministries and other central executive bodies that have subordinated educational institutions, observance of higher education` requirements; participating in the organization of licensing, certification and accreditation of educational institutions, professions and areas of training; consideration and admission of licensing decisions, certification and accreditation of educational institutions in accordance with the law; submission of the proposals to the Ministry of Education and Science for changes in licensing, certification and accreditation of educational institutions [1].

The Accreditation Commission includes representatives of the Ministry of Education and Science, other central and local authorities, employers' of organizations, universities, Ph.D students.

For preliminary review of licensing, certification and accreditation materials of educational institutions by the accreditation commission, there are expert councils that carry out preliminary review of licensing, certification and accreditation by the conclusions of expert committees and regional expert advice. They prepare expert opinions. Meeting of the Accreditation Commission and its panellists are held at least once a month during the school year. Solutions of the Accreditation Commission are processed in a form of protocols and are approved by the Ministry of Science and Education [6].

Among the basic procedures of higher education institutions regulation through licensing and accreditation there are supporting procedures that determine the quality

of education. Those procedures are rating and monitoring of educational and scientific institutions and their subdivisions [7].

However, the existing system of quality control is very complex and provides four different procedures: licensing specialties (directions), accreditation specialties (directions), accreditation of institution as a whole, certification. Each procedure is quite long in time, many require registration papers and major labour costs. Ministry declared its intention to cancel certification and simplify other procedures, but the way to a simple and transparent procedure seems more distant. [7]

In terms of Ukraine's integration into the European educational space, expansion of students and university staff academic mobility, more requirements apply to the quality of higher education. The reform process is continuing and provides the changes to licensing procedures and accreditation of educational institutions as the basic mechanisms of development, improvement and quality control of educational services for the future specialists [3]. A significant step in this direction is the admission of the new Law "On Education" dated July 7, 2014.

Thus, the Law states about establishing of the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education that will replace the State Accreditation Commission. It will be a permanent collegial body based on the implementation of the state policy in the field of higher education quality.

The authorities of the National Agency are setting requirements for quality assurance systems of higher education, developing regulations on educational programs accreditation; analysing the quality of educational activities of higher education institutions; carrying out licensing examination, the expert opinion preparation on the possibility of license issuing for educational activity; forming by the submission of higher education institutions proposals on the specialties` list, which prepares candidates of higher education at the appropriate levels; creation of a single database specialties, which also prepares candidates of higher education; accreditation of educational programs; formation of educational quality` evaluation criteria of higher education in Ukraine, which can be determined by rankings of higher education institutions; development of regulations on academic councils` accreditation and submission it for approval by the central executive authority in the field of education, accreditation specialized scientific councils and controlling their activity [8].

The licensing procedure will involve the following steps. First, universities should get expert's conclusion about the possibility of the license issuing for educational activity from the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. University must fill a written application and documents confirming its compliance with the standards of educational activities for relevant specialty.

National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education holds licensing examination and issues an opinion in two months from the date of application and documents reception. Then central body of executive power in the sphere of education and science gets a written statement and

expert opinion for the educational activity license. On the basis of the documents central executive body issues to the higher education institution a license to conduct educational activities or refuses its issuance within 10 days. Licenses are issued separately for each specialty for 10 years. [9]

The National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education annually prepares and publishes a report on the quality of higher education in Ukraine, its compliance to the objective of society` sustainable and innovative development. The National Agency forms the legislative proposals on quality assurance and forwards these documents to the Parliament, the President, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine and higher educational institutions for discussion and appropriate responses [9].

Under the new law "On education" in Ukraine, higher educational institution that is willing to receive accreditation on educational program, must submit to the National Agency of quality assurance a written application and documents confirming its compliance with the educational standard of higher education in the relevant specialty. Within two months from the date of application the National Agency by the examination results decides on the accreditation or refusal of educational programs. The decision on educational programs accreditation must be made on the basis of an expert opinion of relevant expert council, which is represented by the head of the expert council. Within three working days from the day of the accreditation decision the National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education should give a higher educational establishment a certificate.

The certificate of accreditation is issued for each first accredited educational program for 5 years, while the second and subsequent accreditation is issued for 10 years. The certificate confirms compliance with the educational program of higher educational standards and gives the permission to issue state diplomas in this field [9].

Such reforms, the creation of new institutions that determine the quality of education will adapt the Ukrainian higher education system to the European.

4. Quality assessing of higher educational establishments in Estonia

The system of quality assessing of higher educational establishments in Estonia is a continuous process that consists of four components. They include universities` introspection (faculties or departments), external expert assessment by the Council for the quality of higher education assessing, which makes a decision on study programs and institutional accreditation of educational establishments and self-improvement of the universities.

The leading role in the quality of education assessing belongs to the Estonian Council (Higher Education Quality Assessment Council). It conducts the accreditation and licensing of higher educational establishments and the Center for Higher Education Accreditation, which organizes accreditation procedures. Higher Education Quality Assessment Council was established in 1995 under the Law "On Universities" [10]. The Council includes 12 members representing various scientific organizations, universities,

professional associations, and also from 2003 it includes students` representatives. Council members can not be rectors, vice-rectors of universities, employees of the Estonian Accreditation Centre and the Ministry of Education. The authorities of Higher Education Quality Assessment Council include: universities and other institutions of higher education accreditation, disclosure of accreditation decisions, and the development of higher education that meet international requirements and preparation of recommendations based on the decision on accreditation. The Council, based on the decisions of expert committees, takes one of three possible decisions on accreditation of universities. In most (95%) cases Council decision meets the decision of the expert committee. Further Council resolution is approved by the Minister of Education. The Minister can not change the decision of the Council, but may propose recommendations for review [11]. Since 2009, higher education quality assessment is carried out by Archimedes Foundation Estonian Agency of the quality of higher education that is acting as structural unit [12].

The evaluation of training programs has begun after the establishment of the quality assessment Centre or Estonian Centre for Accreditation (Accreditation Centre), which was established in 1997 by the Ministry of Education (with the help of target institution Archimedes Foundation) [11]. The Accreditation Centre is funded by the state. Centre creates expert groups and agrees the time for schedule inspections among the universities and experts. Centre has more organizational work. It is liaising with the centres in other countries, and mainly through them the universities are involved with foreign experts for accreditation programs. Estonian Accreditation Centre is a member of Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Europe (ENQA) and the world (INQA). Centre arranges experts` staying at higher educational establishments, examines reports of educational institutions, consults, and publishes reports and the results of universities accreditation on its website [10].

Licensing in Estonia is obtained only by private higher educational institutions of all types. State universities, professional higher educational establishments must be registered with the Ministry of Education and Science. For them, there are certain requirements, but the license is not issued. Private educational institutions license each programs separately, not the university as a whole. The license specifies all the programs which the institution can conduct, and indicates the address of the institution. Licenses are issued for a fixed term, for example if there is three-year program; it is usually licensed for 3 years.

To obtain a license for the Bachelor or Master program, high educational institution must provide certain information (e.g. on material base); one of the main conditions is the existence of written agreement on specific subjects teaching by university programs. It is recorded on documents for the license. Each lecturer indicates whether he/she will work on a permanent basis at this institution or not. The Standard of Higher Education states that 50% of the program workload must belong to full-time professors [13].

According to Estonian law the accreditation is not mandatory. However, without this procedure institution has

no right to issue state diplomas to graduates. Exceptionally, in case of significant deficiencies evaluation in the work of higher educational institution Council of Higher Education or the Ministry of Education can initiate accreditation [10]. Private educational institutions have the right to issue state diplomas only after a positive accreditation. Formally, there are same requirements for state universities, but for them the law provides the possibility to issue state diplomas before first accreditation. However, within 7 years after the adoption of the law on universities (1995) all universities were to accredit all programs. Since 2002, public and private universities are accredited under the same conditions [13].

The need for the accreditation` introduction has been linked to many factors, including significant changes in higher education; universities` autonomy; the emergence of private educational institutions. All this led to the creation of an external system of quality evaluation of state universities and private universities.

The process of universities` accreditation in Estonia includes the following steps:

1. Self-examination of the universities.
2. External quality assessment that is conducted by the expert commission.
3. Corrections of the identified deficiencies [11].

Critical self-examination, prepared by the institution is the cornerstone of quality assurance system. Introspection, depending on its purpose, includes analysis of the whole organization` functioning or only education (curriculum). Experts estimate the accuracy of self-examination and facility specific analysis. Then, during the evaluation visit, they will present their observations and recommendations that along with the results of university own analysis is the basis for educational institutions` work improving in general or at the learning process. They also send their recommendations to the Accreditation Centre with full or conditional accreditation or refusal of accreditation. Council makes the final decision whether the institution has the right to issue officially recognized diplomas. A positive decision on full or conditional accreditation is valid for 7 or 3 years, respectively [10]. Since 2003, the legislation of Estonia is amended, so if university receives conditional accreditation, the next accreditation procedure is paid by the university. [14]

Thus, in Estonia, there are three types of accreditation decisions:

- Full (7 years);
- Conventional (until recently it was 2 years, today - 3 years);
- Withdrawal of educational programs` accreditation.

Previously, there was possible re-accreditation after negative decision in 1-2 years, now, if the application receives a negative assessment, it is closed [11].

In Estonia, there are two types of accreditation: institutional accreditation and program accreditation.

Institutional accreditation evaluates internal quality assurance system and its operation, including the tasks of the institution, compliance of management objectives and program of higher education.

High schools are required to undergo institutional accreditation every seven years, but if Higher Education Quality Assessment Council has revealed shortcomings during the previous accreditation, it may appoint three years trial period, during which the institution must undergo institutional accreditation again. The decision on the institutional accreditation is developed by evaluation of quality department of the Agency Council.

During quality evaluation of groups` curriculum, there is an estimated compliance of training programs for legal acts, domestic and international standards and directions of development. Evaluated curriculum, its development, availability of resources, educational process, teachers and students are being analyzed.

Quality assessment is carried out every seven years, if the Quality Assessment Council is not setting up evaluation up to 3 years, based on the results` evaluation. The result is a quality assessment` solution that is proposed by Quality Assessment Council [12].

Estonian Accreditation Centre is mainly engaged in accreditation programs. Today, only two universities have undergone the institutional accreditation. This is due primarily to the fact that by law during 7 years, it was necessary first to accreditate all programs since the issuance of state certificates is associated with accredited programs instead of higher education in general. There are some difficulties with the start of institutional accreditation, as there may occur, for example, a situation where the establishment has accredited program and institutional accreditation is not passed. Quality Assessment Council decides on accreditation of higher education institutions.

Thus, the procedure of accreditation in Estonia includes the following steps:

1. Report of the University on introspection. The Centre shall inform universities about the accreditation at least before 6 months. It takes into account the wishes of the university during it`s participation in the accreditation process (including a seven-year term of accreditation). For public universities passing the accreditation is mandatory, for private schools are not necessarily, but the absence of accreditation will not let the schools to issue state diplomas.

2. Approximately before 1.5 months of expert group arrival the universities provide reports to the Centre, which sends them to the experts. Within a month, experts have the opportunity to study the report. The work of the expert committee at the university lasts about a week [11].

Usually 2-3 universities are participating in accreditation, which implement almost the same educational programs, with a few close programs at all levels (bachelor, master, doctor). One committee usually evaluates about 10 programs. 98% of the experts, participating in the work of commissions, are foreign specialists. Estonian experts are usually invited in the case of professional specialties` accreditation, when it is important to analyze the views of Estonian employers. Basically there are invited experts from European countries (Latvia, Finland, Sweden, and United Kingdom).

Usually during the first four days of institution study, expert is acquainted with the management, students, and teachers, inspect the premises, material resources, cross-checks the data presented in the report. Then for 2 days expert is working on a report. Centre has developed a form with report sections where the requirements for accreditation in other European countries are stated. In addition, there are requirements for accreditation that are approved by the Ministry of Education. So university must meet certain educational policy, attitude towards students, teachers, and quality system within the university. Based on these indicators there is provided expert questionnaire, that expert must complete. Rector of the university receives evaluated report after the commission is finished with its work. The report is also sent to student organizations, the Ministry of Education, the parliamentary committee on culture and education.

The quality of students' knowledge is not verified, but experts can talk to any student. Students' testing during the commission is not performed.

3. Quality Assessment Council is gathering 4-5 times a year, depending on the sufficient material accumulation. In addition to the expert committee' report, the views of the university rector about his agreement or disagreement with the conclusions of experts is also taken into account.

Since 1998, with the beginning of accreditation, about 100 applications are accredited per year. In recent years, 445 received full accreditation programs, 130- shareware, 25 are not accredited. Basically private schools get negative decisions on their implemented programs accreditation.

Estonian centre of accreditation, besides the programs, is also involved in the accreditation of scientific research, but this activity has its own characteristics and uses a different scale assessments. The decision on accreditation of academic programs is developed by special council, which is important for their financing.

Thus, recently in the Estonian education system there are the following changes: changes in the requirements for programs and universities accreditation; increased attention to higher educational professional programs, changed requirements for accreditation; attracting foreign experts to assess the quality of education; improvement of legislation to improve the quality of education according to the Bologna process [11].

4. Main results

We analyzed the peculiarities of licensing and accreditation procedures in Ukraine and Estonia, and there can be defined as similarities and some differences.

Thus, in each country licensing and accreditation are the main state regulators that control the quality of higher education.

The main body of the regulation of the higher education' quality in our country is State Examination Board, the was changed under the new law "On education" into National Agency for Quality Assurance in Higher Education. The leading role in quality assessing of Estonian higher education belongs to the Quality Assessment Council. Unlike the

National Agency in Ukraine, which includes representatives of the Ministry of Science and Science, other central and local executive bodies, rectors of higher educational institutions, the Estonian Quality Assessment Council is not including rectors, vice-rectors of universities, members of the Estonian Accreditation Centre and representatives of the Ministry of Education, while foreign experts are involved in the evaluation process for objectivity. In our opinion, this excludes subjective approach to the education' evaluation of institutions, and there is no place for competition between universities representatives from different countries.

In Ukraine, licensing is an obligatory procedure; higher educational establishments may not conduct learning activities without a license. In Estonia licensing is obligatory only for private institutions and state universities must pass only registration in the Ministry of Education, by following certain conditions. Private educational institutions license each programs separately, not the university as a whole. The license term depends on the length of the program (three-year program - 3 years). Ukrainian universities get the first license for 5 years, each one next for 10 years.

In Estonia, as in Ukraine, accreditation may be institutional when universities are being accredited in general, and individual programs accreditation. In Estonia, accreditation is not mandatory, but without it institutions have no right to issue state diplomas.

In our state specialties are accredited for 10 years for national universities and 5 years for higher educational establishments at other levels. The peculiarity of the Estonian system of accreditation is that it can be complete (within 7 years) and conditional (3 years), if there are certain shortcomings that need to be eliminated during this period. Specific feature of Estonian Accreditation is also a fact that during the accreditation students' knowledge is not tested, students' testing during the commission's work is not performed. In Ukraine, for quality testing residual students' knowledge testing is conducted in a form of comprehensive tests in certain subjects.

University introspection is one main component in the stages of educational system quality control in Estonia, in Ukraine this method only acquires development, and it is a positive development.

Information on the State Accreditation Commission activities in our country is not public, unlike Estonia where all test results are available for review on the website of the Estonian centre of accreditation.

So the only impetus for the development of a new system of education' quality control in our country as well in Estonia, is universities' autonomy and the emergence of private educational institutions.

5. Conclusions

Studying the European experience, including experience in quality of Estonian education assessing, where the level of higher education is quite high, there is a need to revise the current system of licensing and accreditation in Ukraine, formation of new, modern approach to the quality of education monitoring.

Despite legislative attempts to improve the system of higher education quality evaluation in Ukraine, there are still a lot of shortcomings, among which are: lack of various universities' equity ownership, the need to involve foreign experts that are representatives of non-governmental institutions; criteria and requirements that are extended not take into account the specificity of different areas of training; uncertainty of accreditation standards and licensing requirements; the participation of employers, students and the public in the assessment procedure is quite formal; long term consideration of licensing and accreditation and complexity of procedures.

Today the state accreditation procedure cannot fully achieve the goals of education. Therefore, according to S. Svyzhevskaya the government should seriously think about the introduction of social and professional accreditation as not an alternative form, but as well as existing along with the education quality assessment procedure that will complement it and take into account the interests of all stakeholders [7].

With the adoption of the new law "On education", state regulation of licensing and accreditation was of higher educational institutions was changed in connection with the greater autonomy to educational institutions' provision and their rating. However, the issue of education quality still needs further improvement in law.

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