Higher Education Institution Integrated Quality Management System

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ABSTRACT

To solve the problem of quality in higher education, many different factors, including controversial ones, must be involved. To achieve the required quality of education at universities, teachers must have enough freedom to develop educational content, as well as to involve the results of scientific research and innovative pedagogical technologies into the process of education. It is necessary to establish certain standards and regulations within the university that help facilitate continuous improvement of the educational process to manage the quality of higher education. The integrated approach to management of Higher Education Institutions’ (HEI) educational activities proposed in this paper establishes the regulations of main processes, conditions and incentives to facilitate diversity and creativity at different levels of a contemporary university. These principles have been applied to form the basis of Tomsk Polytechnic University’s quality assurance approach.

Keywords: Competences, Integrated Quality System, Process Approach, Quality Management System, Strategic Management

INTRODUCTION

The problem of the quality of higher education is very contemporary nowadays and to solve this problem several important factors, including controversial, should be involved (Chuchalin & Boev, 2007). In order to achieve the required quality of education at universities academics should have enough freedom to allow for creativity. Different approaches to the development of the educational contents, integration of the results of scientific research into the process of education, as well as introduction of innovative pedagogical technologies allow graduates to acquire the necessary professional competences and transferable skills that satisfy changing customers’ needs. On the other hand, it is necessary to establish certain standards and regulations within the university that would help to facilitate continuous improvement of the educational process in order to maintain the quality of higher education. It is necessary to develop Quality Management Systems (QMS) based on contemporary methods of process management.

In spite of the great number of QMS models, at present there is no model that would fully
correspond to peculiarities of higher educational institution integrating properties of value-based and target-based systems (Pokholkov et al., 2004c). The concept of Total Quality Management, EFQM Excellence Model and ISO 9001:2000 (new version is ISO 9001:2008) implementing a process-based approach to management are popular among Russian universities (European Parliament, 2008). Although the advantages of the process-based approach to quality management of any target-based organizations (e.g., universities) are vivid, there is still much room for improvement. It should be noted that universities’ process management needs some improvement in the field of quality management of the results of scientific and educational activities. Moreover, it is essential to create conditions for generation of new knowledge, students’ practical skills and experience in order to establish the required competencies of graduates (including engineering), academic programmes that include creative and more effective collaboration of students and teachers, and implementation of pedagogical innovations.

Different attempts to set requirements, standards, and guidelines that regulate the educational activity at universities resulted in the development of Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) developed by ENQA in Europe (ENQA, 2009), as well as the IWA 2:2007 guide on application of quality management standards ISO 9001 within the system of education (International Organization for Standardization, 2007). Currently, a general model of QMS of educational institution in Russia is in the process of its development and evaluation (Azaryeva et al., 2006). As a rule, all existing approaches to the establishment of QMS in educational organisations are aimed at enhancing the degree of standardization processes. However, they are not devoted to the development of creativity and diversity in their application. This fact appears to be the main drawback limiting the application of different quality management systems in universities that have academic freedom.

This problem can be solved by introducing of the integrated approach to quality management of HEI’s educational activity. Such an approach appears to form the basis for quality system development at Tomsk Polytechnic University (TPU) and is aimed at establishing the regulations of the main processes and conditions and incentives to facilitate diversity and creativity at different levels of a modern university. The objective of this paper is to elucidate the integrated approach to quality management at the educational institution using TPU’s integrated quality management system as an example.

CRITERIA AND PROCEDURES OF PROGRAMME ACCREDITATION

In Russia, the state evaluation of the quality of educational activity is connected with its state accreditation. The state accreditation of HEIs was introduced in Russia in 1997 on the basis of the Law of the Russian Federation “On education” (Russian Federation, 1992). The objective of state accreditation is to define the type and kind of HEI, as well as to grant the right to issue documents on education of the established state order. As a matter of fact, state accreditation is regarded as being institutional and is based, in many respects, on evaluation of university resources that ensure quality of research and educational activities. Separate academic programmes at their complete evaluation of higher educational activity prior to state accreditation, are considered selectively.

For a long time in Russia, the state accreditation of HEIs was connected with the State Standard of Higher Education of the Russian Federation of the first and second versions that prescribed minimum requirements to the content of education and level of education and training in corresponding fields and disciplines. Once the new Federal Standard of Higher Education of the Russian Federation is introduced the state accreditation of HEIs will be performed in compliance with the first and second versions.
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