

Thematic analysis of the Final Reports of the clusters of educational programmes for the second half of 2019

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Following the instructions of the National Accreditation Board, the National Centre for Public Accreditation conducted the Pareto analysis of the content of final reports of the clusters of educational programmes for the second half of 2019. The analysis was carried out in order to identify standards, which caused the most problems relating to the quality of educational programmes delivery.

18 reports on external review of 10 higher education institutions were analyzed.

NCPA applies 10 accreditation standards in compliance with the c ESG:

1. Policy (goals, development strategy) and quality assurance procedures of a study programme.
2. Design and approval of programmes.
3. Student-centred learning and assessment.
4. Student admission, support of academic achievements and graduation.
5. Teaching staff.
6. Learning resources and student support.
7. Collection, analysis and use of information for managing the study programme.
8. Public information.
9. On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes.
10. Cyclical external quality assurance of study programmes.

The results of the Pareto analysis are presented in Fig. 1.

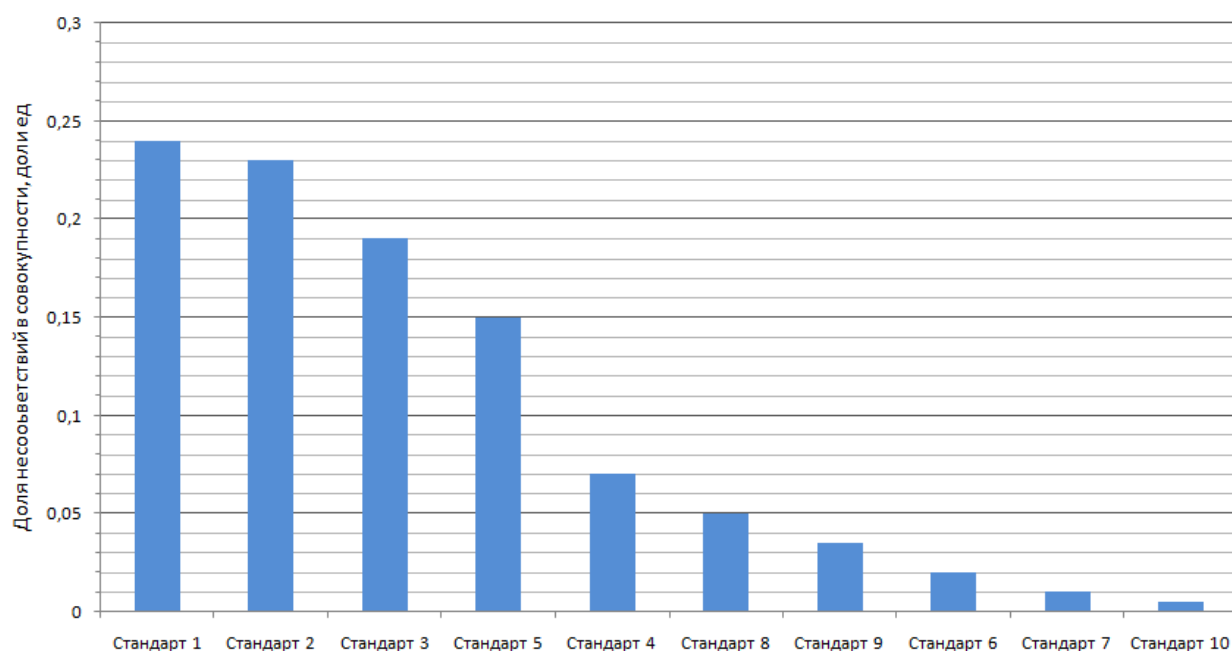


Figure 1. Pareto analysis of inconsistencies

The analysis shows that more than 80% (81%) of problematic issues are accounted for by four standards: Standard 1 «Policy (goals, development strategy) and quality assurance procedures of a study programme»; Standard 2 «Design and approval of programmes»; Standard 3 «Student-centred learning and assessment»; Standard 5 «Teaching staff». The other six standards account for less than 20% of problems.

The common inconsistencies on each standard reflecting the systemic problems related to the quality of educational programmes delivery in Russian HEIs are presented below.

Standard 1. Policy (goals, development strategy) and quality assurance procedures of a study programme.

- Insufficient participation of students, employers and unions of employers in the development and introduction of the quality assurance policy by corresponding entities and processes.
- Insufficient participation of subdivisions of an educational institution in the processes and procedures of the internal quality assurance system.

Regardless of a well developed documented internal quality assurance system in most HEIs, the participation of employers in the development and

introduction of the quality assurance policy is mainly formal, and students are rarely involved in these processes. The situation is improving though – the student committees on quality are expanding, and they are practically involved in the development and introduction of the quality assurance policy.

Unfortunately, the participation of the majority of HEIs' subdivisions in the processes and procedures of the internal quality assurance system is minimal. However, positive changes are noted here as well – a number of positions for people responsible for quality assurance have been opened.

Standard 2. Design and approval of programmes.

- Insufficient consideration of the opinions of students and employers when developing, approving and adjusting educational programmes, including the expected learning outcomes.

- Insufficient or inappropriate introduction of the requirements of professional standards (labour market) in the educational programmes.

The employers' participation in the development, approval and adjustment of educational programmes is minimal, and students' participation is indirect and random, mainly, through surveys.

The introduction of the requirements of professional standards (labour market) in the educational programmes is complicated by the fact that professional standards on some educational programmes are not developed by the subject-specific ministry, and the developed professional standards do not always correspond to the profile of the educational programmes.

Standard 3. Student-centred learning and assessment.

- Insufficient consideration of the requirements of various student groups and the opportunity to form an individual learning path.

- Random use of the procedures of independent assessment of learning outcomes.

This appears to be a major problem. An individual learning path exists on paper, and actually not for everyone, but, for example, only for students having good academic performance and by personal agreement with the teachers.

With the introduction of the amendments to the Regulations on State Accreditation, the problem of random use of the procedures of independent assessment of learning outcomes got even worse. It is not clear what the term ‘independent evaluation’ of education quality stands for. Higher education institutions are confused by the imprecise legislation.

Standard 5. Teaching staff.

- Insufficient involvement of teachers from other educational institutions, including, the foreign ones.
- Insufficient language proficiency of teachers.
- Insufficient level of academic mobility.

Foreign teachers do participate in the educational process but on a short-term basis – participation in conferences, workshops, delivering short-cycle lectures. The involvement of foreign teachers for longer periods (one or more terms) is hindered by the bureaucratic hurdles (it is necessary to hire teachers, and he/she is a citizen of another country). And there is lack of funding for these purposes.

Despite the introduction of numerous free language courses, the issue of teachers’ language proficiency has not been solved. Low linguistic skills alongside insufficient funding put bounds to the academic mobility of teachers.

Conclusions:

The identified systemic problems of the quality of delivering educational programmes highlighted weak areas in institutions’ performance. This analysis could help the review panels to develop common (institutional) and specific (related to a certain educational programme) recommendations. In the follow-up procedures the institutions should pay special attention to the identified areas for improvement.